# Young people's construction of masculinity and violence against women: a cross-national comparison of Ireland, Israel, Spain and Sweden

## PositivMasc WORKING PAPER 1

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This working paper explores how gender relations and the construction of masculinities and violence against women (VAW) amongst young people, have been studied within Ireland, Israel, Spain and Sweden, as a basis for building our analysis within, and contextualising, the *PositivMasc* project. The *PositivMasc* project seeks to explore how young people aged 18-24 in Sweden, Spain, Ireland and Israel construct and deploy discourses of masculinity in understanding VAW, and interrogates the potential existence of masculinities which specifically *challenge* violence against women, or what we term **anti-violence masculinities** (Salazar and Ohman, 2015; see also Flood, 2014; Howson, 2006).

We explore the literature in relation to each country around three sub-sections or themes. Recognising that gender relations within each country have been uniquely shaped by differing social, cultural, economic and political forces and events through history, the first sub-section of each country section entitled **'Contextualising gender relations'** provides a historical backdrop to contemporary gender relations within each respective country. In the section entitled **'Young men negotiating masculinity'**, studies that have explored how men (and women) perform and construct masculinities and gender within each country are explored. This section provides a more indicative understanding of what young men and women actually 'do', and how they construct masculinity and gender relations within their respective countries. While the ideal was to focus and discuss studies relating to young men and women around the ages of 18-24, due to the lack of studies that focus on this age profile only, studies that consider younger and older men and women within their methodologies are explored. Drawing upon studies which have explored these questions with a broad age profile is not necessarily a deficit, as differential constructions based on age provide some insights into how historical change and experience differentially impacts how individuals construct masculinities and gender relations more broadly. In the final sub-section, '**Masculinity and VAW'**, the discussion specifically explores studies which have explained and considered the relationship between how masculinities are constructed and young people's attitudes towards, and experiences of, VAW .

# 2. IRELAND

## *2.1. Contextualising gender relations in Ireland*

Discussions of gender relations and masculinities in Ireland cannot be understood without examining the understanding the significant power wielded and deployed by the Catholic Church in shaping social and cultural values throughout the twentieth century, following Ireland's independence from Britain in 1922. Through policy, legislation, and public discourse, women were confined to the sphere of the home, and the idea of 'moral purity' became central to the construction of Irish identity (Brown, 2004; Valiulis, 2011). Particular groups of women who were perceived as transgressing moral boundaries (mostly unmarried women who had become pregnant) were institutionalised during the 20th century, in institutions such as

Magdalen Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes (Titley, 2006). This process of institutionalisation ensured that whilst women were effectively punished, 'male reputations' were safeguarded (Garrett, 2017).

Historically, "masculinity in Ireland was essentially rural, based heavily around the family, marriage and celibacy" (Ferguson, 2001, p. 120). This "powerful agrarian ideology" (Ni Laoire, 2002, p. 18) developed in the early decades of the state. Irish rural life was based on a system of inheritance and was based on the "authority of a powerful father figure" (Ni Laoire, 2002, p. 18). As Brown (2004) highlights, after independence, Ireland remained a 'homogenous' society that was predominantly rural in complexion. It was characterised by a strict division of labour whereby wives were responsible for the domestic economy of the house. The "father was the dominant figure in the family, making all economic decisions" (Brown, 2004, p. 14; Ferguson, 2001; Ni Laoire, 2002) and was supposed to be a 'hard-working man' while the mother cared for the male child until communion wherein the father and older brothers took charge for the remainder of 'boyhood' which could last until the son was forty of fifty (Brown, 2004). The Catholic Church had an impact on normative masculinity, as the ideal man was also heterosexual. Thus, homosexuality was silenced, with same-sex sexual activity not decriminalised until 1993.

Since the 1970s, the decline of the Catholic Church and increased numbers of women working outside the home has changed the dynamic of Irish gender relations. Despite the increase in dual-earners, however, childcare remains a predominantly female profession, and the possibilities of enabling men to develop a 'nurturing self' through the enactment of father roles has generally been met with little or slow support from broader culture (Ferguson, 2001). Unmarried fathers are also not acknowledged as fathers under the constitution and must apply to courts for guardianship (Ferguson, 2001). For Ging (2009, p. 54), contemporary Ireland is characterised by the ironic development of a post-feminist discourse along with a "growing prevalence of essentialist or bio-deterministic accounts of gender difference". These essentialist discourses appear at 'flash point' moments or issues, such as male suicide and the broader discourse of the 'masculinity crisis' (Ging, 2009).

This 'crisis in masculinity' is generally referred to as a "sense of loss, confusion and frustration that can also manifest itself in poorer physical and mental health" (Curtin and Linehan, 2002, p. 66). It has manifested particularly in relation to concern and debate about the underperformance of boys, male suicide, and the separation of fathers form their children (Gosine, 2007). These flashpoints can also be seen in media responses to the *Exploring Masculinities* (EM) programme which was introduced in 2000 and delivered for a short time to secondary school boys. Addressing themes such as violence, power, relationships and health, the EM programme was met with negative reaction from high-profile journalists and the Congress of Catholic. The main criticisms related to claims that the programme negatively portrayed boys, was designed by feminists and had an unbalanced portrayal of domestic violence (Mac an Ghaill, Hanafin and Conway, 2002). Such public debates suggest that notions of hegemonic masculinity still remain a key feature of Irish society.

Indeed, despite some very recent moments that have been positive and progressive in terms of gender relations in the State – namely the 2015 same-sex marriage referendum and the 2018 abortion referendum – other incidents have exposed examples of "a deep seam of misogyny" (Lewis, 2018) at work in Irish society. These include the 2018 Belfast rape trial, the encouraging of the Jury in a Cork rape trial to consider a 17 year old woman's choice of underwear, and the finding of a 'rape list' in a Cork school (Kelleher and O'Brien, 2018).

### 2.2 Young men negotiating masculinities in Ireland

Understandably, given the historical subordination of women in Irish society, Irish gender studies has until recently been predominantly focused on women and women's place in Irish society (see for example Byrne and Leonard, 1997; Connolly, 2003; Luddy, 2001; Redmond and Harford, 2010; Valiulis and O'Dowd, 1997; Valiulis, 2011). In terms of research on men and masculinity in Ireland, the present 'state of the art' is quite limited, with only a few studies having examined boys and young men's own views about various aspects of their lives. Although this research is insightful in itself, it can be argued that our understanding of young men and masculinities in Ireland remains quite limited. This is particularly so in the context of masculinity and VAW, about which there are no studies.

The empirical studies which do exist on young men's masculinity cover school aged young people (12-18 year olds), through to younger adults, and one study (Darcy, 2019) covering a cohort across the lifespan (18-85). Recurring themes emerge in these studies regarding constructions of masculinity. Ging's (2005) study with 187, 15-17 year old young men regarding young people's lives and media consumption found that they held stereotypical constructions of men and women; using a post-feminist discourse of 'equal but different', they understood gender differences in bio determinist terms. For example, although they embraced women in the workplace, the boys understood media stereotypes as reflective of natural differences and not socially constructed. The young men believed that gender equality had been achieved, even though their answers of who does housework at home contradicted this.

While some studies found that young men often found it hard to articulate what masculinity means to them (Darcy, 2019; Johnston and Morrison, 2007), research has shown that young Irish men construct being a man predominantly in terms of emotional, mental and physical strength (Curtin and Linehan, 2002), heterosexuality (O'Beaglaoch, Morrison and Nielson, 2015), drinking, sport, sexualised relationships with women (Johnston and Morrison, 2007), and maintaining a role as a breadwinner (Curtin and Linehan, 2002; Ralph, 2018). In Darcy's (2019) study of 44 white men aged 18-85, for example, participants constructed masculinities in terms of the traditional values of emotional restraint, with some men remarking about feeling uncomfortable being in the presence of a man who is crying. Key constructions of masculinity in the study were based on ideas that men should be "providers, hard-working, philandering, tough and stoic" (Darcy, 2019, p. 23). Ideas of a dominant masculinity were also evidenced in Hyde *et al*'s (2005) study of the

sex education needs of 226 young people (both girls and boys) in schools in Ireland. Whilst both boys and girls wanted more information about topics such as STIs, the authors report that the boys wanted to know more about the physical mechanics of sex, about how to be sexually competent and displayed a "cultural expectation of male control in sexual encounters" (Hyde *et al* 2005, p.337).

The studies show that boys and young men were also aware of societal expectations about enacting masculine norms and behaving differently in different social contexts. O'Beaglaoch, Morrison and Nielson's (2015) study of 54 Irish boys aged 12-18, for example, found that many of the norms of expectation raised by the boys were similar to studies within the North American context. Boys reported that they do not care what others think of them, but the researchers interpreted this as boys saying that they are not meant to show that they care. In the presence of male peers, boys articulated that they feel they must enact dominance over others in order to project toughness and avoid showing emotions. Similar themes were evidenced in Johnston and Morrison's (2007) qualitative study with eight men aged 18-26 years, who described how they regulated their self-presentations in interpersonal situations; thus, in the presence of male peers they describe engaging in 'slagging', sexualised talk and 'have a laugh' (p. 669).

O'Beaglaoich, Morrison and Neilson (2015, p. 323) highlight that there were issues raised in the interviews which seemed to be specific to the Irish context, namely, the requirement articulated by boys that they should be "up for a laugh" and be "entertaining and keeping exchanges light in the presence of other boys". In Darcy's (2019) study, too, men suggested that alcohol, humour and the ability of men to entertain and socialise was constructed as the central distinguishing features of an 'Irish' masculinity. Being 'up for a laugh' however, can have negative consequences. In the study (O'Beaglaoich, Morrison and Neilson, 2015), boys reported on how this 'slagging' makes them careful about projecting non-normative masculinity, especially displays of emotions of sensitivity. Indeed, in Curtin and Linehan's (2002) study, young men reported that non-normative masculinity – such as emotional displays – would be disciplined by name calling such as 'faggot' and 'gay' or by 'slaggin'.

Whilst these studies perhaps point to a dominant form of masculinity, Darcy's (2019) study, also reveals the fluidity of masculinity by illustrating how some men adopted a language of self-determination, as they felt there was more room today to enact more fluid masculinities based on individuality and adherence to personal, rather than wider group norms. Fluidity was also shown by how the age of the men impacted on the extent to which they felt they must adhere to normative masculinity. Darcy (2019) notes that older men seemed able to practice more emotional reflection in the focus groups. Similarly, one man believed that he no longer enacts masculinity based on the beliefs about masculinity he had during his youth. Some participants in Johnston and Morrison's (2007) study also attempted to present themselves as unique and individual but also gendered, in that they attempted to distance themselves from hegemonic masculine norms but at the same time construct an identity that was "recognizably masculine" (Johnston and Morrison,

2007, p. 667). Similar to Darcy's (2019) study, the men presented themselves as what Johnston and Morrison (2007) call "maturational", in that some men argued that they have felt less need to adhere to masculine norm expectations as they have become older, describing instead a need to show that they are "their own man" (Johnston and Morrison, 2007, p. 668).

### 2.3 Masculinities and VAW in Ireland

The only study which explores Irish young people's views and perceptions of VAW is from the Dublin Women's Aid (1999, p. 20) study which concluded that "young people have both high levels of contact with and high levels of tolerance of harassment, abuse and violence". This study is now dated and the Irish literature has predominantly focused on a gathering of prevalence rates of violence (see for example Bradley *et al* 2002; McGee *et al* 2002; Paul, Smith and Long, 2006; Watson and Parsons, 2005; Kelleher & Associates and O'Connor, 1995) and of victims and their experiences. This latter literature has explored Irish children's experiences of domestic violence (Buckley and Holt, 2007), women's and men' experiences of domestic violence (Casey, 1989; Dublin Women's Aid, 1999; McGee, 2002; Ruddle and O'Connor, 1992; Kelleher & Associates and O'Connor, 1995), women's experiences of seeking legal remedies to domestic abuse in the Irish legal system (Safe Ireland, 2014), ethnic minority women's experiences of violence and who live in Ireland (The Women's Health Council, 2009) and women's (Kelleher, 2011) and migrant women's (Fagan, 2008) experiences of domestic violence services. There is also a significant literature on these themes in the Northern Ireland context (Evason, 1982; Montgomery and Bell, 1986; McWilliams and McKiernan, 1993; McWilliams and Spence, 1996; Doyle and McWilliams, 2019; McWilliams, 1997).

Despite this dearth of literature, there is however, one paper (Hyde *et al* 2008) which explores how Irish young people's (15-19 years) heterosexual encounters relate to sexual coercion and another paper from the same dataset which explores young men's experiences of sexual encounters specifically (Hyde *et al* 2009). The former paper does not frame the discussion around VAW but includes analysis of sexually coercive experiences. Hyde *et al*'s (2008) paper draws upon 29 focus groups with 102 young women and 124 young men. Based on inductive analysis, Hyde *et al* (2008) show how young women experienced 'interpersonal coercion', while young men experienced 'social coercion'. Young women's 'interpersonal coercion' involved boyfriends persisting in their 'verbal enticement' (Hyde *et al* 2008, p. 485) and their embodied 'looks' indicating their wish for sexual activity.

Hyde *et al* (2008, p. 487) report a "considerable number of participants who reported interactions with individual men in which the latter had used tactics from verbal cajolery to physical force to stretch the boundaries of physical intimacy" (Hyde *et al* 2008, p. 487). In physically sexually coercive encounters, Hyde *et al* (2008) report how young women seemed to put the blame on themselves given their claims that they would not put themselves in the respective situations again. Also concerning was how there were references

to sexual pressure that "emerged as an aside that were almost treated as unremarkable" (Hyde *et al* 2008, p. 486). In other words, male sexual 'pushiness' was naturalised and its seriousness minimised (Hyde *et al* 2008).

In terms of the young men in Hyde *et al*'s (2008, 2009) study, the focus groups revealed that young men's sexual coercion comprised social pressure ('social coercion'), as some young men spoke of feeling out of place, 'a loser' or 'different' if they did not have sex (Hyde *et al* 2008, p. 488). While narratives of pleasure were evident, there were also displays of sexual dominance in the narratives characterised by an emphasis on sexual prowess, sexual conquests and sexual performance. There is nothing inherently natural about these discourses. In fact, Hyde *et al* (2009, p. 243) suggest that these discourses are coming from normative expectations circulated within peer groups around acceptable sexual practices and constitute a form of 'social control'. Some also indicated that they would face slagging and insults from peers if they did not display appropriate interest in heterosex. They revealed the possibility of being faced with homophobic insults such as "faggot, bottler, wimp, and queer" (Hyde *et al* 2009, p. 243).

### 2.4 Summary

Irish gender studies scholarship has understandably focused on the treatment of Irish women in relation to how Irish patriarchal relations have been enacted and support by the nexus between the Catholic Church and the Irish State. This has led gender to be conflated with women, with the result being a loss in sociological problematisation of men and masculinities. Throughout the 20th century, Irish dominant masculinity was based on making economic decisions, a hard work ethic and the ideal of heterosexuality, consistent with broader scholarship on hegemonic masculinity. The emergence of modernisation and neoliberalism has dramatically altered the gendered landscape. While structural issues remain for women, changes have occurred in how masculinities are constructed on a local and more national level in terms of broader societal discourses. At the turn of the millennium, discourses of gender have revolved around bio determinist accounts of gender differences and worry over an apparent 'crisis in masculinity'. Some structural issues in relation to men and masculinities in Ireland pertain to the delimiting the potential for fostering 'nurturing' masculinities through deconstructing structural and symbolic impediment to enacting fatherhood.

The Irish empirical literature on masculinities suggests that more fluid understandings of masculinity are emerging with both boys and men constructing themselves as being 'unique' and 'individual', or in other words wanting to or at least giving the impression that they are not affected by normative masculine expectations. There is also evidence however, that boys and young men continue to feel pressure to live up to what can be interpreted as hegemonic modes of masculinity, particularly heterosexuality. In terms of the question as to what may distinguish Irish masculinities from other national contexts, one key finding is that boys and men feel the need and wish to be 'up for a laugh'. In practice this means enacting humour and

socialising on the one hand, while on the other demonstrating that one does not take things too seriously and can take a 'slagging'.

The literature on the contemporary relationship between the construction of masculinities in the Irish context and its relationship to violence against women is spare to non-existent. Two papers from a broader study do suggest that in relation to sexual coercion, young men experience social pressure to build up heterosex experience which may ultimately impact on some young men's problematic heterosexual relations with young women.

## 3 ISRAEL

### 3.1 Contextualizing gender relations in Israel

Israel, as a young country, has been involved since its inception in what has been referred to as the 'Arab-Israeli conflict'. For Zionism, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, as the state of the Jewish people, is the outcome of a war of independence. For the Palestinians and Arabs, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 on the land of Palestine is the outcome of Zionist occupation and colonization, supported by European powers. The Palestinians who were a majority in historic Palestine, prior to 1948, became an indigenous national minority, constituting, at present, 20% of the general Israeli population. The superior status of the Jewish community within Israel and the subordinated status of the Palestinian community affect women's status and gender relations in each community and within the Israeli society as a whole (Herzog, 1998, 2004).

Most of Israel's offensive and defensive strength is based on the military system of mobilization and at age 18, men and women are by law, conscripted into the army. The army discourse is central in shaping masculine identity and gender relations in Israeli society. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the *Sabra* (a native-born Israeli) has embodied the ideal of Israeli masculinity. The *Sabra* figure stood as an antithesis to the "old Jew" who lived outside the borders of Israel who did not act for his self-defence. The term *Sabra* represented a brave and rooted warrior who is working hard to settle and protect the land. The *Sabra* is a brave warrior who has no fear or weakness. This masculine combat identity represents the hegemonic masculinity in Israeli society and a whole set of features that are attached to this ideal including self-effacement, courage, power, aggressiveness and self-control (Gluzman, 1997; Lentin, 2000).

Although women and men both enlist in the military, the military serves as a maturation ceremony for men and shapes their masculinity while simultaneously rejecting femininity as an antithesis. The military is the institution that contributes more than any other institution to strengthening inequality between men and women in Israel (Izraeli, 1997). The military is very influential and permeates every aspect of Israeli society. It has been a major player in the building of the nation of Israel and there is almost no area in civilian life that

does not have the imprint of the military including cultural and educational projects. Israel prides itself on being the only country in the world where women are recruited just like men (seemingly symbolizing gender equality) but in practice, the military is one of the key forces in building men's dominance in all aspects of society. The military is a social institution that recognizes women's participation to be symbolic of the national collective, but in practice, it is an agent that contributes to women being marginalized. Gender is one of the most important traits for distinguishing categories of people in the military. Men and women undergo a different sorting process for the military; they take different tests, serve in distinct roles, with men controlling the military discourse (Izraeli, 1997; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 1985).

In the army, the inequality between men and women is no more pronounced than in other institutions, but because of the importance and dominance of the army in Israeli culture, discrimination in the army is the one that leads to the strengthening of inequality most conspicuously (Sered, 2000). The military's centrality in Israeli society and culture discriminates against women even after they are released from the army. Military order is reproduced in Israeli society in terms of better positions for men in the economic and political market and in terms of the creation of management styles that delineate a work environment that is biased against women (Etzioni-Halevy, 1996; Izraeli, 1997). Various decisions are subject to security considerations and thus marginalize various social issues in areas of education and welfare, which affect a high concentration of women (Herzog, 2004). The national resilience discourse addresses the concept of security in a broad context, and as a result, the home area becomes a front, and women are part of the military effort on this front in education, welfare and motherhood. Izraeli (1997) notes that motherhood in Israel is more than a family role, it also has a national role insofar as the expectation of Jewish women to give birth is not only in order to start a family of their own, but also to increase the Jewish population, and this is reflected by the contribution of women to the Israeli collective (Berkovitch, 1999). Increasing the number of children increases a woman's dependence on a man, determines the traditional division of roles, and places a heavy burden on women leaving to work outside the home (Herzog, 2004).

The army not only distinguishes between men and women, but also between men from different national, ethnic and socioeconomic groups (Connell, 1995; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 1985). The state uses ethnic personnel policies to preserve its existing authority and political order (Sasson-Levy, 2003). The army divides the various groups according to their loyalty to the state, and accordingly distinguishes between them in the army's recruitment policy, promotion patterns, division of positions in the army, combat levels, among other areas. All this shapes the differential nature of men's masculinity and citizenship. In Israel, "hegemonic masculinity" delineates a hierarchy within Israeli society, as an idealised man must be Jewish, Ashkenazi, middle-class, heterosexual and also serve in a combat unit in the army. Since Israel is a society where the military play a major role in establishing hegemonic masculinity, men are required to demonstrate toughness and enact emotional restraint. This ideal includes independence, courage, power, aggressiveness and self-

control. The combat soldier is seen as representing hegemonic masculinity and the national values of the love of the homeland and national solidarity. All other identities in Israeli society are shaped and defined in relation to this masculinity. From a very young age, men understand that in order to realize the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, they must serve as combatants, as the combat soldier is seen as a role model for other Israeli men (Sasson-Levy, 2003). This hegemonic masculinity of the Jewish Israeli Ashkenazi man is constructed against a masculinity that is subordinated/marginalized. Palestinian Arab man in Israel, rooted in the East, unlike the Jewish Israeli Ashkenazi men, enact this subordinated masculinity.  As research has shown, Palestinian men in Israel and hegemonic masculinity cannot be coupled together. For example, Palestinian men who do serve in the Israeli army remain marginalized in relation to Israeli Jewish men, which means that they could not transcend their national origin, as it remains the lens through which they are judged by the Jewish dominant group (Kanaaneh, 2005).

In terms of masculinity specifically, since the late 1970s, a number of social processes have begun to emerge which have gradually created new images of Israeli masculinity that have led to the recognition of the illegitimacy of traditional gender roles. The decline in security and undermining confidence in the Israeli military and political system, the decline of collective responsibility and the strengthening of individualist perceptions and democratization processes and the search for peaceful solutions to international conflicts have all influenced traditional masculine stereotypes of combat and force (Nardi and Nardi, 1992). The strengthening of the feminist movement and its contribution to blurring the dominance of the traditional male figure has led to an alternative male ideology that promotes gender equality and the creation of a masculine identity that is liberated from the stereotypical macho identity (Azmon and Izraeli, 1993; Connell, 1996; Hopton, 2003; Rosenmann and Kaplan, 2014). The impetus of the gay movement has also led to the recognition of homosexuality as another form of masculinity, including "aesthetic masculinity" as a type of masculinity that emphasizes body care and external appearance (Nixon, 1997; Zeltzer – Niv, 2008). All of this has led to a blurring of the traditional gender division of roles, the weakening of the masculine combat identity, and the growth of the new concept of masculinity.

The "new masculinity" style is a term associated with therapeutic discourse and expresses the desire to improve a man's quality of life through the renunciation of the model of stereotypical, powerful and domineering masculinity. This desire entails the creation of a new model of masculinity based on the development of a wide range of behaviours, including understanding and caring for one another, expressing pain and distress, demonstrating sensitivity, showing vulnerability, self-realization, the ability to seek and receive emotional support, and a man's self-awareness of his needs and feelings (Connell, 1995). Another aspect of the "new masculinity" style is reflected in the greater involvement of men in children's education and housework.

Changes in the structure of the labour market and an increase in consumption and living standards in Israel have increased the need for two family earners, and the importance of women's economic contribution to the family has grown. Due to those changes in recent years, the prevalence of the normative model of a family in Israel based on the father-as-breadwinner role has been declining toward a model whereby two breadwinners have become common for families in Israel (Fogiel-Bijaoui and Rutlinger-Reiner, 2013).

### 3.2 Young men negotiating masculinity in Israel

Since the 1970s, researchers have undertaken a great deal of research on women and femininity. However, until the 1990s limited research was conducted on masculinity. There is almost no research being conducted that focuses on images of masculinity among young men and women, or on the relationship between the discourses that young people in Israel use in their understanding of masculinity and its influence on young people's attitudes, behaviours and responses to VAW.

Several studies in the Israeli context have examined the extent to which boys and girls hold gender stereotypical images. Shahar (1997) examined whether or not there was any difference in the perceptions of 18-year-old Israeli teens regarding gender roles in 1975 as compared with 1990. She found that in 1990 there was a tendency to abandon stereotypical perceptions among boys and girls as compared with 1975; however, boys' perceptions of the division of roles in the family remained steadily conservative. Geva (1996) also found that boys, more than girls, expressed more stereotypical gender perceptions. However, he found that the traditional distinctions between what are defined as feminine or masculine was declining. Kulik (2007) examined predictors of gender role stereotypes among a sample of 121 Israeli adolescents, 60 boys and 61 girls, aged 13–17. She also found that adolescent boys expressed more stereotyped gender role perceptions than did the girls. Moreover, the study showed that the contribution of ethnicity background was also significant in shaping the gender stereotypes of young people; adolescents of Asian-African background tended to have more stereotyped gender role perceptions than did their mixed-ethnicity counterparts. In addition, the older the adolescents, the less stereotyped their perceptions. The adolescents with higher self-esteem and a greater tolerance for ambiguity, had less stereotyped gender role perceptions.

The only study that exists regarding young men's perceptions of their masculinity was conducted by Hollander (2001). In her quantitative research, of 163 subjects aged 17-18 who were at the traditional stage between formal education and military service, Hollander (2001) examined the images of masculinity and the perception of its costs among Israeli male adolescents. The study revealed the expression of the "new masculine" style in the gender ideologies of the young Israeli male. The "New Israeli Man Masculinity" was, in fact, an attempt to implant feminist characteristics into Israeli masculinity, such as gender equality, respectful communication, and resistance to all kinds of violence. This masculinity model was essentially opposed to the characteristics of the Israeli "Macho masculinity" model, since the Israeli "Macho man"

preserves the superiority of men over women (Cohen, 2018).  The respondents were not deterred from defining their experiences as involving costs and showed a resistance ability to the traditional gender structure. Moreover, the subjects were interested in changing the essence of manhood, as perceived by their social environment. However, the study showed that there was still a commitment to the traditional-normative masculine model, and it seems that preservation and modification simultaneously exist, alongside each other. The Israeli male was still identified the hegemonic male as a muscular man, with a muscular body and physical strength. They also described the hegemonic male as thinking about hormones and sleeping with many girls. On other hand, they described masculinity in terms of empathy, patience and kindness. The study contributes to discussions concerning images of masculinity and its costs as perceived by young males. However, it reveals a lack of qualitative research that could clarify Israeli men's perceptions of masculinity. In addition, the present study does not examine how masculinity is perceived by young women, and thus ignores masculine identity as a product of social construction and gender relations.

Overall, these studies show that there is a trend toward a weakening of gender stereotypes and the image of the traditional-normative masculine model in Israeli society. However, young women, more than young men, tend to develop more liberal attitudes about gender roles and the traditional normative masculine model still remains a key feature of Israeli society.


### 3.3 Masculinities and VAW in Israel

The only study that explores young people's views and perceptions of VAW in Israel was conducted in 2013 by the Women's International Zionist Organization. The study was conducted among 500 young people aged 16-24, and its aim was to examine the extent of children and adolescents' exposure to and perceptions of domestic violence in a romantic relationship. The data shows that 1 in 3 young people (37%) are exposed to, or have been exposed to domestic violence, while one in ten have witnessed physical violence, such as punches, slaps, pushes and more. In addition, 67 percent of respondents admitted to personally knowing a person their age who was subjected to domestic violence. The young people were also asked whether they had had conversations and/or programs related to domestic violence in school; 57% of the respondents answered negatively, noting that the education system had never provided any real tools to deal with this phenomenon. The survey also examined which behaviours among young people are considered to be violent behaviours. The findings show that, alongside actions that are perceived as almost overwhelmingly violent by youth, such as fists (92%), slaps (89%) and hair shrugs (87%), 64 percent of young people defined having sex when there is no real desire between the two parents as violence, while only 42 percent defined financial violence and the control of finances as domestic violence, and only 25 percent defined voice-level during arguments as violence. Overall, the study indicated that young people were exposed to a very a high rate of

domestic violence. Moreover, the survey indicated that many young people do not perceive different levels of violence as violent, such as controlling money or forced sex (Wizo, 2013).

Studies regarding Israeli young people's heterosexual encounters relating to sexual coercion is quite limited. Among the few studies that have been conducted in the field is Stein's (2008) research regarding relationships and sexual behaviour in late adolescence, which discovered that many young girls reported having tried to please the needs of the boys they were with, and that they tried to position themselves as the student, or the innocent in the relationship, in which the man needs to be the teacher. Also, many of the girls describe sexual abuse in their first relationships. However, in their subsequent relationships, they use the interpersonal, resourceful relationships in their lives in order to avoid violent relationships. They feel that they have resources that can be used, like a big sister (big brothers in the family often provide them with knowledge). The girls understand that in order to properly manage the relationship, they need to rely on their social environment for support. Boys also describe changes in their relationships with girls over time, as the boys report becoming more assertive, less scared and less insecure. Over time, boys report how they learned how to develop in terms of speech and to express themselves in a more complex way; they learned to communicate emotionally, which also greatly enhanced their emotional attachments and importance of their relationship. They also report feeling very hurt by the girls who left them and talked about girls who disappointed them in other ways. This study reveals a new dimension of masculinity among young people in that men can talk about their vulnerabilities.

Another survey that was conducted was with 80 Israeli men, aged 20-45, exploring the question of the connection between sexist attitudes toward emotional and sexual monogamy. The study found that for men with sexist stereotypical attitudes, controlling the sexual monogamy of women is more important than for men with equal gender attitudes, which places greater importance on emotion and reciprocity in relationships (Warshaviak, 2015).

### 3.4 Summary

It may be argued that in Israeli society there are two contradictory processes occurring simultaneously. In general, democratization, pluralism and individualization processes are leading to a shift away from traditional masculine images and traditional gender roles and have led to changes in marital and parenting patterns. In contrast, Israeli society is still considered to be a society that is very family orientated (Fogiel-Bijaoui and Rutlinger-Reiner, 2013; Lavee and Katz, 2003; Treas *et al* 2014), and there is a trend of traditional and national conservatism and social forces that reproduce the traditional-normative masculine model, among them the national ethnic class stratification, the centrality of the military, and the nature of political order and social policy. All of these contribute to a strengthening of the male-female dichotomy. Overall, in contemporary Israeli society, more non-traditional, non-hegemonic and heroic masculinities seem to be able

to be heard and influenced. However, the masculine combat identity is still considered to be the hegemonic masculinity in Israeli society (Kaplan, 2006).

The Israeli empirical literature regarding masculinities shows the emerging changes concerning the masculine category in Israeli society. Some studies reveal the ability of some men to oppose the gender structure and the expression of the new masculine style in the gender ideologies of the young Israeli male. However, the literature shows that the traditional-normative masculine model that is identified with male power, aggressiveness and self-control is still very present in the relationships of young people in Israel. The study of masculinity among young people in Israel is quite limited and the literature regarding the contemporary relationship between the construction of masculinities in the Israeli context and its relationship to violence against women is sparse to non-existent.

## 4. SPAIN

### 4.1 Contextualising gender relations in Spain

Gender relations in Spain have historically been shaped by a number of contextual factors. The process of modernization and industrialization in Spain did not occur until the 1960s, as both the Spanish Civil War and the first years of Franco's dictatorship gave way to economic and social setbacks (Juliá, García Delgado, Jiménez & Fusi, 2007). Franco's regime put into place a series of laws and practices based on a strong national Catholic ideology that supported the perpetuation of intensely traditional social identities and relationships within society (García, 2009). Starting in 1939, there were regulations that put into place different socio-political positions of men and women. Men were accorded political and civil rights, although with limitations put in place by the dictatorial regime (Juliá *et al* 2007), and women were assigned the role of 'mothers and wives'. The constraints of this role meant that their freedom and civil rights were limited (Casado, 2002). In the field of education, a rigorous separation between boys and girls was also implemented. They were separated between different classrooms, schools and institutional spaces (20-Samaniego and Santamaría-García, 2008). Women were educated to be able to provide caregiving for children, men and the home while men's education had a strong military and patriotic component and military service was compulsory (until 2002).

During the Franco Dictatorship, masculinities were articulated clearly through the family institution, where authority was performed by *pater familias*. Men were in charge of legal ordination and organization of daily life, as well as the control and decision-making of all of the members of the family group. Legal regulations during that period placed limits on women carrying out any activity in the public sphere and required the express authorization of the man in charge. It was not until the 1960s, with the growth of a society of mass consumption along with industrialization and an urban lifestyle,  that the traditional and autarkic model

began to crack under the weight of new lifestyles that undermined traditional masculinities. In the 1970s, these social transformations resulted in serious tensions, which led to a reconstruction of gender relations, with implications for the construction of masculinities (García, 2009).

In 1978, after Franco's death in 1975, Spain's current Constitution was enacted. In this constitution, recognition of gender equality was included, as were equality policies with the aim of making changes for Spanish women (Alcañiz, 2015). In the context of democratic transition, initiatives promoted the rights of citizens. These included the Organic Law 1/2004 of December 28, on Integrated Protection Measures Against Gender-Based Violence (Vives-Cases, Ortiz-Barreda and Gil-Gonzalez, 2010) and the approval of same-sex marriage in 2005. The work of Subirats and Castells (2007) examined the changes during this time period and the role that gender plays in people's subjectivities and daily lives. In this context, Subirats and Castells (2007) have suggested that men remain imprisoned in a model of masculinity that is at odds with the values and principles of current society. This model of masculinity not only generates inequality with women, but also produces high levels of insecurity and stress within men themselves.

Connell (2000) stated that the diatribes of contemporary masculinity are intimately related to an intense process of transformation of the ways of being a man, whose dimensions are global. In the case of Spain, a condensation and acceleration of a transformative process is noticeable, mainly because, after the transition, the still incipient modernization intermingles with the criticisms of late modernity (Casado, 2003). However, there are still social problems that point to the fact that equality has not yet been achieved. The Spanish Ministry of Home Affairs (2017) indicates that crimes against sexual freedom and indemnity are growing every year, and did so especially in 2016 and 2017, where the victims were mostly women (84%). In turn, the majority of victims of rape are those ages 18 to 30. More current data from the Crime Report of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2019) shows that in the first three months (January-March) of 2019 there were 3,576 complaints of sexual crimes registered, compared to 3,011 complaints during the same period in 2018. Of course, these data are nothing more than the tip of the iceberg in terms of illustrating the conditions of current gender relations.

During recent decades, a new reality in gender relations has begun to take shape. As Bonino (1998) has indicated, on the road to equality, women change both their relationships with themselves and with the world. The questioning of hegemonic masculinity and the vindication of women's rights is a part of that struggle. In Spain, 2018 marked a milestone in the history of the feminist struggle, mainly because of two events (Ubieto, 2018). First, there was International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8. Under the slogan "if we stop, the world stops", IWD gave way to protests on issues such as the wage gap and the different forms of discrimination or sexual violence that women face. The protests caused stoppages and mobilizations in

numerous cities (Fernández, 2019). Second, there was the 'Manada case' judgement which triggered massive feminist demonstrations in support of an 18-year-old woman who was raped by five men in July 2016 (Angulo, 2019). In this contextual framework, there is increased interest in the exploration of changes in the discourses that shape masculinities in Spain.

### 4.2 Young men negotiating masculinities in Spain

Given the agitations that resulted in part from the Franco dictatorial regime, in the second half of the 20th century, there was been increased interest in the study of Spanish society and culture. The first studies of masculinities in Spain took place in this context. They were carried out by various Anglo-Saxon academics (Brandes, 1980; Driessen, 1983; Gilmore, 1987). Research interest was located almost exclusively in the rural area of Andalusia, where highly sexist constructions of masculinity predominated. These masculinities were constructed heavily on the idea that men should be the sole providers for the family and exercise strong sexual control over women.

Many of the studies on masculinities in Spain have focused on the perspectives of men, cisgender and heterosexuals and have a qualitative methodology (Ceballos, 2013; Espinar-Ruiz and Ocampo, 2017; Marcos, Romo, del Río, Palomares and García, 2013; Romero and Abril, 2011; Sanfélix, 2011). Although this work has explored men's discourses about masculinities, they differ in the aspects they focus on. Romero and Abril (2011) studied the construction and deconstruction of male identities in men of different ages (young, adults and older) regarding their use of time. The results provide three models of masculinity around productive, reproductive and free time activities: 'hegemony', where paid work is central; 'negotiation', in which agreements are made with the family that favour the access of men to the reproductive sphere; and 'resistance' (to hegemony), where priority is given to personal and family time. With regard to the youngest men, although they show egalitarian values, there is considerable pressure to adhere to the hegemonic model, in which preparation for the future of work is the structuring axis of these men's time.

From a generational perspective, Sanfélix (2011) used discussion groups with men over aged 22 to investigate masculinities and their implications for gender relations in terms of processes that promote egalitarian social change (greater presence of women in the political, educational public spaces, etc.) that have occurred in recent years. Sanfélix highlights the flexibility in the construction of male identities among young people compared to older men, although this does not imply that the majority of young people are in favour of equality. Overall, young people tend to have more positive attitudes towards change, and they want to be participants in change, though they have some fears for the future. Young people defend close and responsible parenthood and the equal distribution of household chores and respect for women. In other work, Espinar-Ruiz and Ocampo (2017) have analyzed masculinities on dating websites, specifically Meetic.es and AdoptaUnTio.es, based on texts written as personal profiles by users from age 21 to 64. Hybrid male

identities stand out, in which some traits associated with positive masculinity (e.g. no reference to job success, no attention to physical appearance of women, commitment to friendly relationships) are combined with other traits linked to hegemonic masculinity (e.g. lack of expression of emotions, self-definitions related to 'doing' as opposed to 'being').

There is scarce research that has focused only on young men (Ceballos, 2013; Marcos *et al* 2013). One example is that of Ceballos (2013). Based on discussion groups and interviews, he found that adolescents of 15 and 16 years interpret masculinity in a highly schematic way. Masculinity is interpreted in a relational way in clear opposition to femininity. He also found that these young men follow the ideology of hegemonic masculinity that is based on a consolidation of heterosexuality that is clearly confrontational of homosexuality. Marcos et al. (2013) also explored perceptions and meanings attached to the idea of masculinity in relation to health. It was found that young people ages 15-24 linked masculinity to collective and public practices such as dangerous driving, drugs, aggressive behaviour and sexuality. This could be related to the need to show masculinity publicly, which coincides with the conclusions of other research focused on adults (Sanfélix and Téllez, 2014, 2017).

In short, all of this research shows that, to a greater or lesser extent, masculinities are undergoing redefinition. There seems to be a new dialogue about different ways of being a man in contemporary Spanish society. As some research suggests, practices that break with the hegemonic norm are beginning to emerge, destabilizing what is understood as 'masculine'.

### 4.3 Masculinities and VAW in Spain

Issues of violence, power and domination have been shown to be linked with the traditional concept of masculinity in Spain (Beiras, Cantera, and de Alencar-Rodrígues, 2015). This concept of masculinity is based on power and showing one's success and superiority, both of which are aspects that are also related to violence (Subirats, 2007). In fact, the values of hegemonic masculinity related to the desire for power and authority, self-sufficiency, emotional suppression and indifference have been identified in abusive men. In this sense, the lack of emotional abilities, the reduced capacity to recognize, express and manage feelings and emotions in men has been associated with a greater risk of gender violence (Bonino 1998; Rodríguez-Espartal, 2019; Verdú-Delgado and Viejo, 2017)

Emotional suppression is learned by men during the process of gender socialization, which constructs the masculine identity in opposition to those traits culturally considered feminine, among them the expression of emotions (Flecha *et al* 2013). Adolescents (12-18 years) assume as a part of their identity the characteristics that define the masculine ideal in the collective imagination. As a consequence, boys tend to use more verbal aggression, physical violence and abuse (physical and emotional) in their group of friends

(Trillo and Redondo, 2013). Hegemonic or traditional masculinity manifests frequently through violent conduct as a show of superiority over other masculinities and over women that do not meet gender standards (Carrera-Fernández and Lameiras-Fernández, 2018; Ferrer and Bosch, 2016; Guash Andreu, 2008).

Patriarchal values shape gender identities, and traditional masculinity is constructed based on privilege over women (Carrera-Fernández and Lameiras-Fernández, 2018; Ferrer and Bosch, 2016; Guash Andreu, 2008). Gender asymmetry is assimilated by men who use women as objects to satisfy their needs (Verdú-Delgado and Viejo, 2017). Therefore, the interpersonal relationships of men that show hegemonic masculinity are based on behaviours of domination that can easily become abusive and violent in nature (Bonino, 2000, 2003; Santamaría, 2005; Verdú-Delgado and Viejo, 2017). In this sense, Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) propose a classification of three types of masculinities in Spain: *Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM), Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM) and New Alternative Masculinities (NAM)* (Flecha, Puigvert and Rios, 2013). 'Dominant Traditional Masculinities' exhibit the toxic aspects of masculinity, such as reducing women to sexual objects, hiding one's emotions and interiorizing the division of roles linked to caregiving and power. It is linked to boys who commit aggression, but who at the same time attract girls because they are considered popular and sexually attractive given the link between violence, gender and attraction. The 'Oppressed Traditional Masculinities' share the same sexist and patriarchal ideals, although they are associated with boys who are weaker, for whom the DTM boys serve as a model. In contrast, the inter- and intra-gender interactions of the 'New Alternative Masculinities' are characterized by the transcendence of gender inequalities and the construction of sexual relationships that are non-violent (Flecha Puigvert and Rios, 2013). The two first types of masculinities contribute to perpetuation violence against women, while the others prevent it.

The phenomenon of violence in partner relationships has been shown by research to be very evident among young Spaniards (Sánchez Jiménez and Ortega Ruiz, 2008). The studies in Spain on young people and VAW (ages 11 to 28) highlight a number of characteristics. First, research has shown that both boys and girls normalize violence. Certain practices that could be considered abusive or sexual assault in a different contexts (for example in the workplace or on public transit) are not only banalized in the school environment, but are considered signs of affection towards girls and are interpreted as positive by the boys who carry them out (Carrera-Fernández and Lameiras-Fernández, 2018). Both boys and girls justify violent actions in the couple in the context of play or humour, especially among the younger ages (Sánchez Jiménez and Ortega Ruiz, 2008). Various studies suggest that it is habitual for aggressors with attitudes and behaviour that is intimidating, dominant, controlling and depreciative to be unaware that they are doing anything wrong (Fernández-Fuertes, Orgaz and Fuertes, 2011; Sebastián, Verdugo and Ortiz, 2014).

Research has also shown that young boys have greater tolerance and justification for violence compared to girls. This is both direct, through expression of being more in agreement with intolerant attitudes, and indirect, through lower rejection of violence and sexism. Thus, they show a greater risk of using violence (Ferragut, Blanca and Ortiz-Tallo, 2013, 2014; Díaz-Aguado, 2003; Díaz-Aguado, Martínez-Arias and Martín-Seaone, 2004; Lameiras, 2001). In the general population over aged 16, tolerance towards sexual violence is also greater in men (Sirvent, 2019). Furthermore, although they identify sexual violence as gender-based violence, they attribute it to unknown individuals but exclude it when it occurs within their own relationship (Maquibar, Hurtig, Vives-cases and Estalella, 2018). Psychological violence, on the other hand, is considered by both boys and girls as less visible, and therefore, less serious (Maquibar, Hurtig, Vives-Cases and Estalella, 2018; Sebastián, Verdugo and Ortiz, 2014.

Third, boys have been shown to have more sexist attitudes and beliefs than girls (García-Díaz *et al* 2018; Rodríguez et al 2010). These studies apply the theory of ambivalent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 2001), which differentiates between hostile and benevolent sexism that is used to perpetrate and justify violence, respectively. Boys always score higher in measure of both hostile and benevolent sexism (Ferragut *et al* 2014; Garaigordobil and Vasco, 2011; Martinez-Pecino, 2019; Rodríguez Castro *et al* 2010; De Lemus et al 2008). Duran, Megías and Moya's (2018) study suggests that benevolent sexism can play a protective role against the propensity of violence of men. Young men who think that they need to care for and protect women (which is known as paternalistic protectionism, an aspect of benevolent sexism), show less support for the myths about sexual violence and also for those tending to exonerate aggressors and blame the victims.

Finally, boys have been shown to engage in more violence than do girls. Boys display aggression more both against their romantic and sexual partners and against their peers (Fernández-Fuertes and Fuertes-Martín, 2005; Menesini and Nocentini, 2009; Ortega, Ortega-Rivera and Sánchez, 2008). In this sense, the greatest levels of hostile sexism are associated with various manifestations of VAW or aggressive tendencies towards women. These include aggression against girlfriends, particularly cyberbullying via mobile phones and the internet against adolescent and young women by boyfriends (Durán and Martínez-Pecino, 2015; Martinez-Pecino, 2019); sexual aggression, in which the most sexist boys show greater self-reported tendencies to commit 'rape proclivity' (Malamuth, 1981) and sexual aggression within couple relationships. This can occur under the threat of ending the relationship if the partner doesn't agree to sexual relations, or under verbal pressure to continue relations despite the partner's disagreement (Fernández-Fuertes, Orgaz and Fuertes, 2011; Graña Gómez, Rodríguez Biezma and Peña Fernández, 2009; Sánchez-Jiménez, Muñoz-Fernández and Rivera, 2018; Romero-Sánchez et al 2010; Sánchez Jiménez and Ortega Ruiz, 2008; Sebastián, Verdugo and Ortiz, 2014); and severe physical aggression such as strangulation (Muñoz-Rivas *et al* 2007).

Diaz-Aguado & Martínez (2015) also differentiate between three types of boys who exercise abuse against girls: the multiple abuser who uses various types of severe behavioural violence, including abusive control; the psychological abuser who shows a high level of verbal abuse, a medium level of abusive control, intimidation and some sexual or physical abuse; and the controlling abuser, that does not use any other type of abuse. Boys who show abusive behaviours against their partners show a pattern of abusive control related to traditional dominant masculinity that is defined as coercive control violence (Diaz-Aguado and Martinez, 2015). Violent boys also report lower self-esteem and greater justification of masculine dominance in relation to VAW and greater justification of aggression in the resolution of conflicts.

What this and the discussion up to now exemplifies is that particular constructions of masculinities make violence as a form of conflict resolution more permissible, constructions that are consistent with attitudes and beliefs in Spanish society (Garaigordobil and Vasco, 2011).

### 4.4 Summary

Any understanding of gender relations in Spain requires taking into account key historical and political contexts. During the Franco dictatorship, masculinities were articulated from within the family institution, where men were in charge of legal ordination, organization of daily life and control and decision-making of all the members of the family group. With industrialization and urbanisation in the 1960s, this traditional and autarkic model began to break down in the face of emerging lifestyles and their intersection with traditional masculinities. Thus, since the Spanish Constitution of 1978 was adopted, traditional masculinity has been in a process of reconfiguration and, in turn, has been challenged by other forms of emerging masculinity.

With regard to the more than thirty research studies in this field, some flexibility amongst young people has been found in relation to the construction of male identities, and compared with older men, they display more positive attitudes towards change. New progressive dialogues within Spanish society are making way for a transformation or transition in ways of understanding masculinity. Despite these improvements, it is apparent that boys show some apprehension about the future in the context of moves towards gender equality, and there continues to be a certain pressure to adhere to the hegemonic model of masculinity.

Moreover, it is clear that while the potential for alternative understandings of masculinity exist, there is still a worrying normalization and minimization of sexual and psychological violent conduct in the couple relationship. Among the boys and young men who hold beliefs and attitudes associated with hegemonic masculinity, violence is perceived as a way to resolve conflicts and maintain one's dominant position over women and other masculinities.

## 5. SWEDEN

### *5.1 Contextualising gender relations in Sweden*

Driven by industrialization, Sweden moved from poverty to wealth within a 100-year period. The extensive welfare system, developed during the twentieth century, enabled a balance between work and family life for both men and women (Hearn *et al* 2012). While there is room for improvement, Sweden is rated as one of the most gender equal countries in the world (United Nations, 2017). Gender equality, including equal rights, opportunities and obligations for men and women in all aspects of life, is one of the important cornerstones in Swedish society of today (Swedish Institute, 2020).

Throughout history until the present, numerous laws, regulations and policies have strived to improve gender equity and strengthen women's position in society (Hearn *et al* 2012). Rape and abduction were prohibited by law as early as 1250; in 1842, a school reform allowed girls to be educated; widows, divorcees and unmarried women were allowed to work in certain areas from 1846; in 1919 women gained the right to vote; birth control and abortion was legislated in 1938; universal child allowances payed by the government were introduced in 1947; in 1955, working women were allowed three-month maternity leave; joint taxation of spouses was abolished in 1971; maternity leave was replaced by parental leave in 1974; in 1975, abortion permitted until 18th week of pregnancy was legislated; gender discrimination in workplaces was made illegal in 1980 (Swedish Institute, 2020).  A new law on gender equality was launched in 1991 with the purpose to further regulate men's and women's equal rights in working life related to, for example, salaries and sexual harassment. More so, gender equality regulations enjoin organizations with more than 25 employees to present gender analyses of salaries and equity plans (Hearn *et al* 2012). Parental leave of 480 days with 2 months reserved for each parent was launched in 2002, and in 2016 the law was strengthened and came to include 3 months reserved for each parent (Swedish Institute, 2020).

The family political debate in the 1930's marked the first attempt to reconstruct gender relations in Sweden by involving men in family life and questioning traditional gender roles (Hearn *et al* 2012). The traditional family was questioned and the need to change both women's and men's roles was highlighted (Myrdal & Myrdal 1934). The call, however, did not reach public popularity and was labelled as a woman's issue (Klinth, 1999). It was not until the women's movement in the early 1960s, that the debate was publicly recognised. Since the 1970s, as described above, gender equity has played a central role in politics and public debate in Sweden and the government has focused on actively involving men in efforts to increase gender equity. Male emancipation was and is, believed to be achieved by active fatherhood. Before universal funded childcare emerged in the early 1970's, only 10% of children aged 1-6 attended day care. The corresponding proportion today is over 90%. More so, since the mid 1970s men have had access to parental leave. In 2018, men accounted for 29% of all parental leave (Social Insurance Agency, 2018).

The social insurance system closely connects the individual and the state (Hearn *et al* 2012). For example, government funded childcare made labour work for women possible. In 2018, 84% of men and 81 % of women between 20 and 64 years, were working (Statistics Sweden, 2018). The labour market can, however, be looked upon as segregated due to the large public sector (healthcare, social-care, preschool/school) constituting a mainly female workforce and typically low-paid professions. While comparing salaries for men and women with the same university education, women in higher education (physician, economist) earn on average 25% less than men (Statistics Sweden, 2018). Additionally, women tend to work part time more frequently than men, thus their income will consequently be less. Even so, statistics show a positive trend on shared responsibility for household work. In 1990 women did 62% of the unpaid household work while the corresponding number in 2010 was 56% (Statistics Sweden, 2018). The Swedish government constitute 56% women, but less than 30% of head positions in the private sector are held by women (Statistics Sweden, 2018).

Gender equality is emphasized in the school curriculum for pre-school children and throughout the school period (The Ministry of Education and Science, 2010). For instance, teachers have limitations regarding dividing groups according to biological sex. Teachers are also obligated to highlight different perceptions on masculinity and femininity and help students critically explore how gender norms limit people's choices in life. The school is also responsible for counteracting gender patterns that limit students learning and personal development.

In terms of research and debates around men and masculinity, until recent years, most research on men and masculinity has been conducted and presented in the Swedish language and often refers to other national or Scandinavian research (Hearn *et al* 2012). Before hegemonic masculinity was conceptualized, research on men and masculinities in Sweden originated from research on structural gender power and gender equality. Studies on masculinities were conducted foremost by women from a feminist perspective and connected to the social policies of this time period such as parental leave. The article entitled *Women's conditional release* (Moberg, 1961), marked the beginning of a new way to conceptualize gender relations in Sweden. Moberg criticized the development of women's two roles i.e. women should be encouraged to be workers, but only if they promise to maintain primary responsibility for children household and be the mother and wife. Moberg argued that gender order could only be changed if women's entry into public life occurred parallel to men's entry into private life. Emancipation for both men and women was used to describe the long-term political vision of a gender equal society achieved by equal parenthood (Klinth, 2002). The concept of emancipation was also closely linked to the critical sex role theory introduced into the Swedish gender equality movement in the 1960s. The theory highlighted how destructive sex roles forced both men and women into destructive gender positions while the core of humans were in fact androgynous (Hearn *et al* 2012). In 1968, research was presented stating the correlations between lack of active fatherhood and self-

destructive/ destructive behaviour (Liljeström, 1968). Despite efforts, psychologist Jalmert (1979), presented a research report stating that Swedish men appear to agree on gender equality ideas, but do not live accordingly.

From the 1980's, studies on men were influenced by the theory of hegemonic masculinity. Previous research was criticized for not offering tools to understand the dynamics of masculinity and gender relations. Research focused on masculinity as a social construct shaped by power relations, class, ethnicity and sexuality (Hearn *et al* 2012). Hegemonic masculinity was introduced into Swedish society in a research report from 1987 (Bengtsson and Frykman, 1987). They related the term to certain groups of men controlling society economically and politically and thus legitimating men's dominant position. Research was also focused on fatherhood and parental leave. Bekkengen (2002) found that both men and women experienced negative attitudes from colleagues related to parental leave. It was, however, only men who choose and had the choice to decline parental leave. Research on men from 2000 and onwards has expanded beyond hegemonic masculinity and is influenced by different theories (Hearn *et al* 2012). Dominant forms of masculinity are widely criticized, and alternative constructions are explored. Furthermore, research has also focused on understanding why patriarchal relations remain, despite the development of alternative masculinities. Researchers have however found that the perception of the traditional man/hegemonic masculinity has changed in Sweden. To qualify for manhood, it is no longer enough to be career oriented and disciplined, a Swedish man must also engage with their children and seek gender equality (Klinth and Johansson, 2010). In relation to parenting, researchers have explored how fathers structure their parental leave, both in terms of time spent in practice, but also responsibility taken for childcare and household work (Forsberg, 2009). It appears men spend most time playing with their children, and less time attending to household obligations, thus parental involvement does not always translate into gender equality.

### 5.2 Young men negotiating masculinities in Sweden

There are many policies documents and reports from government agencies (Youth and Civil Society Authority, 2012, 2015, 2016, Swedish Gender Equality Agency) discussing masculinity, violence, gender equity and violence prevention strategies among youth. Additionally, numerous essays from university students and research literature describe young men's perception on masculinity (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2018). According to male university students (aged 23-26) in a qualitative interview study, a man should be physically well built, be strong, stable, fearless, protective, active and hard-working (Lagergren and Engström, 2014). Consequently, men are not allowed to cry or show emotions. In yet another qualitative study conducted among men aged 21-31 (Nyberg and Ogbe, 2017), ideal masculinity norms target what Connell (1995) described as hegemonic masculinity. The ideal man should be tough, rich, problem-solving and physically fit. The demands were described to originate both from the man himself and from society (Nyberg and Ogbe, 2017).

Thus, literature shows that traditional masculinity norms are still highly present among young men in Sweden and are based on the notion that men should be strong, performance-orientated, able to control their emotions, and independent (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2018). Masculinity norms are defined and constructed in a binary relation to norms of femininity. It has been described, by Swedish young men, that masculinity norms can be both positive and negative for the individual (Hagerman, 2015). On the one hand, these norms provide opportunities to take on leading roles, take on responsibilities of different kinds and offer security and safety to others. On the other hand, these traditional norms restrict men from showing emotions, dressing in certain ways or acting/behaving in a non-masculine way. Additionally, the same men in Hagerman's (2015) study stated that they had been shaped by peers and father figures from an early age in terms of how to behave in a traditionally masculine way.

In recent years, mental ill-health has been described as a growing public health problem in Sweden (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2018). It has been emphasised that the narrow norms of masculinity constrain men from expressing the correct emotions regarding mental ill-health. Clinical depression may manifest in the form of aggression and violence, and so young men will not receive the help they need or are entitled to. Policy documents and implementation research have highlighted the negative consequences of traditional masculine norms on young men in Sweden, but also how reconstructing masculinity norms can enable positive change in the mental and sexual health of young men (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2018). Young men between the age of 20-30 who participated in focus group discussions and individual interviews at a clinic for men's sexual health (unpublished material, Bo Helsing, MUM-Clinic for young men, Gothenburg) described that they have created an image of themselves as invulnerable - that showing emotions is considered a sign of weakness and femininity. The same men described that discussing emotions such as anxiety and depression with male friends was feasible in situations where symptoms were related to a specific cause or situation such as a break-up with a partner. When experiencing anxiety without a known cause however, the young men preferred to discuss feeling with women (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2018). By turning to women, the risk of losing status among male peers decreased.

In relation to sexuality, in one study young men aged 16-24 described the expectations on them to always play the role of initiator (Berg, 2016). They described exposing women to pressure to have sex by not interpreting the signals given in a correct way. Silence was considered the same as consent. The demands related to masculinity norms also decreased opportunity and of turning down sex for young men. Thus, traditional masculinity norms can affect men's decisions relating to crossing their own and their partners' boundaries in relation to sex (Berg, 2016).

### 5.3 Masculinities and VAW in Sweden

Since the 1970s, part of the public debate in Sweden has related to a connection between gender inequality and VAW (Wemrell *et al* 2019); thus, VAW is considered to be a societal, rather than individualised problem. These ideas have sprung from feminist research and thought which views violence as a *means* to maintain power. In the Swedish context, there is also a more individual explanation offered for VAW related to psychological and/or socioeconomic vulnerability. In this line of thought, VAW is viewed as a *result* of, for example, upbringing. As a consequence of these different understandings of VAW, the term is often replaced with the more gender-neutral and inclusive (men as victims, and violence in LGTBQ relationships) term - intimate partner violence (IPV). There are however, researchers who warn that this might shift from a more structural understanding of violence towards focus on specific groups (Wemrell *et al* 2019). While the consideration of gender inequities and masculinity norms in VAW research is the dominant approach, there are also researchers blending the feminist approach with a more individually oriented perspective. Thus, VAW or IPV is a complex problem where unidimensional understanding and solutions are considered insufficient.

In recent years, the responsibility for supporting VAW-victims has shifted from women's shelter organizations to governmentally-funded services where both victims, perpetrators and children are targeted (Ekstrom, 2018). It has been argued however, that although these units hold a structural gender approach towards VAW, in practice, issues of gender and power not addressed (Edin, Lalos, Hogberg and Dahlgren, 2008; Wemrell *et al* 2019) as on the individual level the problem is complex.

The gender perspective in the public Swedish discourse is not shared by male perpetrators. In a study conducted among male perpetrators, violence was described as a result of particular circumstances such as psychological problems, unemployment, difficult childhood, or drugs and alcohol (Edin and Nilsson, 2014). Furthermore, in different studies, the woman was also described by violent men (aged 29-60 years) as the cause of violence. It was explained that violence was related to the woman being provocative, nagging or pushy, bad wives, or violent themselves (Edin and Nilsson, 2014; Haland et al 2016; Wemrell *et al* 2019).

Similar explanations are found among female victims, especially when the woman is still in the relationship. The violent partners have been described and understood by pathology, social situations or substance abuse (Wemrell *et al* 2019). Power and control has been mentioned in studies but not connected to broader social or gender inequity explanations (Enander, 2010) and women blame themselves for the violence. Furthermore, studies have referred to 'gendered shame', expressed by victimized women in the Nordic context. These women expressed feelings of shame having allowed violence or subjecting oneself to violence in the Swedish gender equal society where laws and regulations addresses VAW (Alsaker et al 2016; Enander, 2010).

The national perception of Sweden as being a gender-equal country, reinforces the image of the perpetrator that differs from the 'ordinary', 'normal heterosexual Swedish man'. Low or no acceptance towards VAW was described by male perpetrators themselves (Wemrell *et al* 2019). According to professionals working with men inclined to violence, violent men reject VAW (Edin et al 2009). However, some studies suggest that certain forms of violence could be considered legitimate, for instance dominant behaviour, the right to unlimited sexual access, and imposing feminine behaviour in your partner (Wemrell *et al* 2019). Nevertheless, VAW is not considered a way of being a real man in Sweden. A real man, according to male participants in an anti-violence programme, should practice self-control, care for his family, and be gender-equal (Edin and Nilsson, 2014; Wemrell *et al* 2019).

### *5.4 Summary*

Ranked as one of the most gender equal countries in the world, Sweden has a long tradition of gender equality research, laws and policies. The common thread during the past 60 years has been a strong belief in women's, but also men's, emancipation and equality through shared parenthood, shared responsibility for the household and equal access to working life. From the beginning, the debate and the research were driven by feminists in the women's movement in the early 1960s. Sex role theory was introduced into the movement, i.e. destructive sex roles imposed on both men and women were criticized. Later, research and public debates made efforts to understand masculinity and gender relations from the perspective of social construct related to class, power, ethnicity and sexuality.

Despite political actions, gender equality in school curricula, and initiatives from the civil society during the past six decades, young men in Sweden still report an understanding of masculinity that is closely connected to traditional manhood. Nevertheless, in addition to believing in being strong, being in control of one's emotions and taking on the role of being the main family provider, young men in Sweden today have incorporated gender equality and household responsibility into the equation. Societal demands on young men trying to live according to the narrow norms of masculinity appears to affect their mental health.

Men's VAW is highly present in Swedish society and also in young relationships. Violence against women is considered a societal problem, where men's violence is viewed as a means to maintain power. There is also a more individual explanation offered related to psychological and/or socioeconomic vulnerability of the violent man. The responsibility for supporting VAW-victims has shifted from women's shelter organizations to governmentally funded services where both victims and perpetrators are treated. There is an unmet demand from feminist civil society for all men to take an active stand against VAW.

## 6. COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

Our review of literature in the four countries enables us to explore the diverse contextual factors that give rise to geographically-specific constructions of gender relations and understandings of masculinities, and facilitate a transnational comparison of how young people make sense of masculinities in the context of violence against women. While this review is very much a starting point for the *PositivMasc* study, it is apparent that a number of conclusions can be drawn based on the discussion above.

Firstly, it is clear that economic, political and religious systems have all had a key role in shaping gender relations in each of the countries. In Ireland, for example, the historical dominance of the Catholic Church contributed to the subordination of women, by placing women in the role of carer and home-maker, and exerting a moral authority which involved a surveillance and control of women's bodies and sexual conduct. Similarly, the dominance of the military system in Israel has been, and remains, strongly implicated in constructing and maintaining a traditional gender order. In all countries, historical representations of masculinity have been tied up with ideas of hegemonic masculinity: the male as breadwinner, father-figure, provider, or as heroic soldier and protector of the nation.

What is also apparent from the literature in each of the countries however is a process of transition and destabilisation of the traditional gender order, in which the changing nature of women's (and men's) roles in society, shifts in government policies, and moves towards gender equality are rupturing traditional understandings of what it is to be a 'man'. In some contexts, these 'ruptures' have been associated with societal discourses and concerns about a 'crisis of masculinity', in which growing concerns about rates of male suicide (Ireland) and men's mental health (Sweden) are increasingly coming to the fore. However, they are also providing opportunities to develop alternative understandings of masculinity, which reject the association of manhood with self-control, aggression, and independence. Overall, there appear to be multiple, and sometimes conflicting processes at work, in which hegemonic masculine identities are co-existing alongside alternative understandings.

While there is considerable variation in the amount of research that exists across the four countries on young people's understandings of masculinities, particularly in the context of VAW, this complex dynamic is evidenced in young people's attitudes and behaviours. Young people appear more likely to be willing to explore and subscribe to more flexible or alternative masculine identities. However, our review shows that young people (and particularly young men) still report the need to conform to more hegemonic masculine identities, particularly in the face of peer pressure. Perhaps more worryingly, the normalisation of sexual harassment and violence seems to be a key feature of young people's perceptions of the gender order and as illustrated by the Spanish context, intimate partner relations. The review of the four countries therefore seems to substantiate international literature which suggests that young people are willing to excuse and justify violence in certain contexts.

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