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Reviewing responsibilities and renewing relationships: an intervention with men on violence against women in India

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Violence against women is increasingly seen as a key women's rights issue in India. Some efforts to address it have started to engage men. The current study focuses on the impacts of Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW), a network of men working on gender-based violence in the state of Uttar Pradesh, in India. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which MASVAW activists incorporate gender-equitable attitudes and practices into their own lives and to identify their influence on men around them. The cross-sectional study includes three groups: activists, men living in an area where activists conducted outreach activities and a control group living in an area with no MASVAW activities. Both activists and activist influenced men scored higher on measures of gender-equitable beliefs and practices than controls, suggesting that MASVAW activism is successful. Furthermore, men from the activist influenced group scored higher in gender progressiveness even if they did not have contact with MASVAW themselves, suggesting a diffusion effect of social change. However, there were some areas where the activists had low scores, suggesting need for additional inputs.

Keywords: community interventions; domestic violence; gender; India; men

Introduction

Violence against women (VAW) is a significant problem across the globe. In India, it is considered a private matter but field studies reveal high rates of VAW. In a study from rural Gujarat, two-thirds of women reported some violence, with 42% experiencing physical or sexual violence (Visaria 1999). In a multi-site study covering nearly 10,000 women 50% of respondents reported physical or psychological violence (International Clinical Epidemiology Network 2000). This was subsequently confirmed through the National Family Health Survey (International Institute for Populations Sciences [IIPS] and Macro International 2007). The widespread occurrence and acceptance of VAW has led to a number of community-based interventions for violence prevention and for supporting survivors. Until recently, these interventions focused on women. However, globally and in India, programmes have started to work with men as well. Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) is a network of men who feel it is their responsibility to fight against violence in their communities.

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Introduction to MASVAW

The MASVAW network was initiated in 2002, by men who supported a state-wide campaign against VAW in Uttar Pradesh (UP), India.¹ These men decided to direct their efforts towards men because men are involved in VAW, either as perpetrators or witnesses, and even mute witnesses endorse violence through their silence. Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women activists are urged to take action at the individual and community level to address VAW and change gender relations. Though not formally registered as an organisation, MASVAW is organised through district units and a state-level core group. Today the organisation has 20 district forums and a membership of over 700 activists working in more than 600 villages across the state. There is a secretariat with two paid staff and hosted by a member organisation. Initially MASVAW activists were from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but currently they include youth in communities, students, teachers, media professionals, social activists and elected councillors. The organisation's activities are initiated by the secretariat or by district units and individual activists. Secretariat initiated activities include trainings, workshops and campaigns. Past campaign messages include Chuppi Todo Hinsa Roko (Break the Silence, Stop Violence) and Ab To Jaago (Wake up Now!). Individual activists organise activities wherever they are located: teachers conduct classes, media professionals report cases, NGOs organise and train men's groups. Casework is done by all and consists of advocacy and support for survivors including pressing for legal charges and linking survivors to support centres. Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women also provides men with space and opportunity for reflection and discussion of doubts and dilemmas within a peer group. Activists are recruited by encouraging interested men to participate in trainings and then to join meetings and other activities of the district forum. Having emerged from a women's campaign, MASVAW continues to have a close relationship with the women's movement.

Setting of the study

This study was undertaken in UP, where MASVAW is most active. Uttar Pradesh is predominantly rural and poor and is India's most populous state. It ranks 13th out of 15 larger states in Human Development Index (Planning Commission 2002). The status of women in UP is low, with female literacy at 50% (Registrar General of India 2011), and 33% of girls are married before the age of 18 years. Of currently married women, 60% are illiterate and only 13% have had 10 or more years of schooling (IIPS 2010).

Violence against women is common in UP. Surveys show that 42% of ever married women have experienced spousal violence (IIPS and Macro International 2007). The National Crime Records Bureau reports that 23,254 crimes against women were registered in 2009 in UP, including 2232 dowry murders, 1759 rapes and 8566 cases of cruelty by husband or relative, making UP the third in such crimes. The majority of crimes against women are committed by family members (Government of Uttar Pradesh 2006). Women are victimised for marrying across castes/religions or engaging in pre/extra-marital relations. Over the last two decades there has been a decline in the sex ratio of girls from 927 to 899. Past research has suggested that VAW is considered normative rather than exceptional (Martin et al. 2002).

Past research

The relationship between violence against women and patriarchy has been described extensively in literature (Heise 1998; Michalski 2004). Patriarchy creates a sense of

superiority of men over women, an entitlement to use power to control women (Segal 1999). Programmes on VAW address the asymmetry of power between women and men by empowering women. However, studies from Bangladesh (Koenig et al. 2003) and India (Mogford 2010) that explore the relationship between women's abuse and existing patriarchal norms show that women's exposure to violence can be higher with the increasing autonomy of women, depending upon existing cultural contexts of patriarchy. A study from Chennai, India, draws attention to the existence of socially acceptable thresholds after which violence ceases to be acceptable both to women and men (Go et al. 2003).

There is increasing scholarship on gender as it affects men, masculinity and violence, and interventions with men have emerged in different parts of the world. Work is seeking to 'examine the specific ways in which men exist as and in gendered power relations' (Hearn 2004, 50) and men's use of power is a central concern. Hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995) has been described as the dominant ideal of the use of power by men over others. However, there are many men who occupy subordinate positions in social hierarchies as well as gay and transgendered men, giving rise to the idea of multiplicity of masculinities. In India, especially for Hindus, men's roles and relationships are further described by age, life stage and caste (*varnashrama dharma*²) (Kakkar 1978). It has been argued that Mahatma Gandhi used the feminine, non-violent mode in his opposition of British colonial rule, drawing from the tradition of the *ardhanariswar* (male-female form) ideal (Nandy 1983). Amartya Sen (2006) has pointed out the heterodox tradition in the sub-continent, which allows both dominant and contrary positions to co-exist. In the context of masculinity, power and violence the alternate ideologies of submission and surrender espoused by the *sufis* and *bauls* are but two examples of living traditions of the region (Dasgupta 1994). Sexuality and masculinity have been shown to be related to VAW in different states in India (Anandhi and Jeyaram 2002; Dagar 2002; Kumar, Gupta, and Abraham 2002), but it has also been observed that while spaces are gender-segregated in India, men's sexualities are more fluid within these spaces and a strict heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy may not be operational (Boyce and Khanna 2011).

While men's involvement as perpetrators of violence is undeniable, men have also come forward to resist VAW. The White Ribbon Campaign is the most well known among such efforts. Programme H, an intervention with young men, has been tested in many settings across the world, including in India. This intervention has shown significant changes in participant's gender consciousness, based on tests that use a validated GEM Scale (Barker et al. 2007). A review of 58 different interventions with men and boys, (Barker, Ricardo, and Nascimento 2007), including some from India, showed that gender transformative approaches, which included a set of interventions like community outreach, mobilisation and campaigns, were effective in obtaining behaviour changes.

A previous in-depth qualitative study investigated nine MASVAW activists who were purposively selected as best-case examples (Mogford and Das 2007). These triangulated case-studies, developed through interviews with the men and their close male and female associates, show that MASVAW had influenced their behaviours, attitudes and beliefs about violence, gender roles, masculinity and sexuality. Mogford and Das identified six domains of MASVAW influence, such as changed relationship with a wife, embracing a broader definition of violence against women, greater participation in household and childcare work, exhibiting a broader range of emotional experiences, having deeper and more fulfilling friendships and displaying greater respect in the community. However, the study found that these MASVAW activists did not represent the 'typical' patriarchal man and were more gender sensitive from the outset, suggesting a process of self-selection. Despite self-selection, Mogford and Das found that the activists experienced substantial changes.

Current study

Objectives

The current study is a follow-up to the Mogford and Das (2007) analysis. One objective of the current study was to quantitatively assess across a larger sample of MASVAW activists whether and how they have become more gender progressive. In addition, we attempt to assess the effect of activists' actions on other men. While it is understood that men join MASVAW because of pre-existing interest, it is interesting to understand how the organisation's campaigns and actions impact other men. Are activists shifting the social environment through their actions? We attempt to explore the potential diffusion effect by measuring levels of gender progressiveness not only in MASVAW activists, but also in men who live in a community where the group is active. We refer to this group as 'MASVAW-influenced men'. It includes both men who participated in one or more MASVAW events/activities and those who have not. Finally, we included a control group of men who live in an area with no contact with MASVAW activists and activities. Our study is particularly important to understand the methodologies and possibilities of working with men on gender issues given the increasing international focus on engaging men as active partners in addressing VAW.

Methods

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used to select survey participants, with some randomisation where possible. The total sample size was arbitrarily fixed at 375, but we were only able to recruit 373 persons. Group 1, referred to as activists, consists of 98 men (originally expected to be 100) who are active MASVAW members, either at their district or state level. Group 2, referred to as MASVAW-influenced men, includes 175 men who were drawn from a sample of villages where activists have conducted some campaign or activity, but who are not identified as MASVAW activists. Group 3, the control group, consists of 100 people who are from a district where no MASVAW activities have taken place.

We used a two stage sampling process to identify respondents for Groups 1 and 2. First we identified five districts where the MASVAW district forums were most active through a field study using different criteria.³ A total of 15 activists were chosen from each selected district (based on the district members list and their availability), giving a total of 75. Additionally, 23 activists who were members of the state-level core group were included, giving a total of 98 MASVAW activists. In order to identify MASVAW-influenced participants for the study, 35 men were included from each of the five districts, giving a total of 175. District Forums were asked to provide lists of those villages that were exposed to campaigns and activities and, from these lists, five villages were selected randomly by lottery. Using convenience sampling, seven men were interviewed from each village by randomly knocking on a door and asking permission, talking to someone at a tea-shop, speaking with somebody on the streets and so on. The third group included 100 persons from a district where MASVAW has no activities. The district was chosen by convenience but 10 villages were selected randomly using the lottery method. Once the villages had been chosen, 10 men were interviewed from each of these 10 villages using the same convenience strategy described above.⁴

The survey instrument consists of 93 questions, including 43 questions on gender role attitudes, 14 on gender-related actions (such as who performs particular household duties like cleaning) and 10 on decision making. Questions for the survey instrument were also

adapted from other existing survey instruments for men, like the International Men and Gender Equality Survey.⁵ After pilot testing, the instrument and training the interviewers, the questionnaire was administered orally in Hindi to respondents from all the three groups. The field investigation for the study was conducted by two of the authors along with post-graduate students in social work from local university. The field researchers were provided a two-day training in data collection by the first author.

No formal ethical review process was undertaken, but interviews were conducted after obtaining consent, informing respondents that they had the option to refuse and assuring respondents that the data would remain anonymous. Data collection took place between April and September, 2009.

Our dependent variables consist of eight gender behaviour/belief scales, which are designed to capture domains of men's perspectives on gender roles, violence against women and different aspects of men's relationships with women. To identify the different domains represented in each scale, we relied on the findings from the earlier study by Mogford and Das (2007). To construct the scales, we converted the survey questions into dichotomous variables wherein a positive value (1) equals the more progressive gender response. Responses were coded as gender-equitable only if they are non-ambivalent answers. For example, for statements such as 'married women should not have rights to their father's property', only 'disagree' is coded as gender-equitable, while 'partially agree', 'haven't thought about it' and 'agree' are not. The alternative 'haven't thought about it' was included after field tests revealed that to give an 'agree' or 'not agree' response, respondents need to have a thought out opinion, which was not always the case.

Given the inter-relatedness of some of the domains, we occasionally include a single survey question in more than one scale. For example, the statement: 'it is okay for a man to hit a woman if she cheats' is included in the 'progressive attitude about sexuality' scale as well as the 'progressive attitude about gender roles' scale. Scores were calculated by giving each gender-equitable response a value of 1 and summing them into a total. Cronbach's alpha ratings of the scales range from .742 to .876. Correlation analysis of the scales indicates sufficient variation in the items to assure that the scales are measuring different dimensions of gender behaviours and attitudes; 70% of the correlations fall below .49.

Findings

The first two columns of Table 1 display frequencies and percentages for the study variables. The group is predominantly Hindu, married and young, with a mean age of 32.7 years. Over 70% of the men have had at least nine years of education, 29.2% of the population belongs to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe, 42.4% to a Backwards Caste and 39.9% live in a nuclear family household.

The remaining columns of Table 1 display crosstabulations of demographic characteristics by each group. There is relevant variation across groups in several of the indicators because of the purposive nature of the sample and the phenomenon of self-selection. Activists from MASVAW have much higher levels of education and have a higher percentage of General Caste members (40%) compared to the other two groups. Additionally, the activist and influenced groups have higher percentages of individuals working in private sector jobs or non-farm-related work. These differences may confound our findings. We therefore conduct multivariate analysis to statistically control for background characteristics and assure that any group effects we find are non-spurious.

Table 1. Study variables by study group.

	Total		Activist	Influenced	Control
	<i>n</i>	%	%	%	%
Occupation					
Farmer/sharecropper/farm laborer	140	37.5	15	28	76
Day labourer/artisan/own business/ government worker/other	120	32.2	39	38	16
Private job	80	21.4	39	23	2
Student	33	8.8	7	11	6
Total	373	100	100	100	100
Education (years)					
None	22	5.9	0	4	15
1–8	61	16.4	3	10	40
9–12	130	34.9	20	43	34
13–15	97	26	46	25	8
16 +	63	16.9	31	17	3
Total	373	100	100	100	100
Caste					
SC/ST	109	29.2	27	35	23
OBC	158	42.4	33	37	63
General	101	27.1	40	29	14
Total	368	100	100	100	100
Family					
Nuclear	149	39.9	28	47	50
Extended/joint extended/other	224	60.1	72	53	50
Total	373	100	100	100	100
Marital status					
Married	299	80.2	83	74	88
Not married	74	19.8	17	26	12
Total	373	100	100	100	100
Age (years)					
18–25	97	26	13	33	27
26–35	152	40.8	45	34	48
36–45	85	22.8	33	21	16
46–55	30	8	7	10	6
56 +	9	2.4	2	2	3
Total	373	100	100	100	100
Religion					
Hindu	336	90.1	84	95	88
Muslim and other	37	9.9	16	5	12
Total	373	100	100	100	100
Gender Attitude/Behaviour Scales (min = 0)					
Progressive attitude about gender roles	10	5.67	3.25		
Progressive attitude about women's role in work/public and women's autonomy	9	6.47	2.34		
Progressive attitude towards domestic work	2	1.25	0.83		
Degree to which respondent knows woman and child laws	6	2.76	2.32		
Progressive attitude towards masculinity	7	3.46	2.26		
Progressive attitude about sexuality	8	4.12	2.26		
Not progressive: women do 'traditional women's work'	10	4.89	2.81		
Not progressive: men do 'traditional male work'	9	3.36	2.79		
<i>N</i>	373				

The lower section of Table 1 provides means and standard deviations for each of the eight gender attitude/behaviour scales we constructed.

Table 2 displays a comparison of means across each study group for the eight gender attitude/behaviour scales. Although this is a bivariate analysis, and does not control for demographic characteristics, the sample means vary significantly across each of the three groups for all eight dependent variables. (We conducted *t*-tests for independent groups and found that *p*-values are $< .000$ for each comparison.) For each of the gender attitude/behaviour scales, the difference in means shows that the MASVAW activist group has the most gender-progressive response, followed by the MASVAW-influenced group, with the control group having the least progressive response. For the last two measures, a higher number indicates a *less* progressive response, so a lower average indicates greater gender equity. In those scales, activists have the lowest means, followed by the influenced group and then the control group. The range in group means across each gender attitude/behaviour scale is substantial for all of the scales.

In order to assess whether the bivariate analyses conducted in Table 2 are capturing the effects of MASVAW interventions, as opposed to differences in the sample populations across factors such as occupation, education and caste, multivariate analysis is necessary. Table 3 presents ordinary least squared regression models predicting each gender attitude/behaviour scale. The primary independent variables of interest are the three groups, MASVAW activists, MASVAW-influenced and the control group (which is the reference group in the regression models). The models contain controls for age, education, caste, marital status, family structure, religion and occupation.

For Models 1 through 6, a positive regression coefficient indicates that a given indicator is associated with a higher, or more gender-progressive, score on the particular gender attitude/behaviour scale. In contrast, for Models 7 and 8, a negative regression coefficient is associated with a more progressive response. Table 3 regression models confirm the bivariate findings from Table 2. First, the coefficients for the MASVAW activist and MASVAW-influenced groups are statistically significant at $p < .000$ in all but one case (the influenced group is not significant in the model that measures the degree to which the respondent knows about laws protecting women and children). Second, in each model, the regression coefficient for the activist group is the largest (that is, it is associated with greater gender progressiveness), followed by the coefficient for the influenced group, with the control group being smallest. Furthermore, the group effects are not spurious. That is, between-group differences in education and each of the other covariates do not account for the higher levels of gender progressiveness of MASVAW activists and influenced groups. In fact, most of the control variables are not statistically significant in the regression models.

Although the control variables do not account for the differences between the three study groups, they do attenuate the magnitude of the group effect to varying degrees. This can be assessed by comparing the regression coefficient for a particular indicator (such as 'MASVAW activist') in a no-controls model with the magnitude of the same indicator's regression coefficient in a model with demographic controls added. In a supplemental analysis (available upon request), we calculated the percentage diminution in the regression coefficient for MASVAW activist once demographic controls are added and found that, across all of the dependent variables analysed, the addition of control variables attenuates the size of the MASVAW activist coefficient from 9 to 19%, with the exception of one indicator: 'degree to which respondent knows about progressive women's and children's laws'. In this instance, the difference between the MASVAW activist coefficient with and without the controls is 57%. This finding suggests that knowledge

Table 2. Comparison of means between MASVAW activists, influenced and control group along gender attitude/behavior scales.

	Attitude about women's role and autonomy (0-9)*		Attitude towards domestic work (0-2)		Attitude towards masculinity (0-7)		Attitude about sexuality (0-8)		Degree to which R knows woman/child laws (0-6)		Women do 'traditional women's work' (0-10)		Men do 'traditional male work' (0-9)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sample average	6.47	2.34	1.25	0.83	3.46	2.26	4.12	2.26	2.76	2.32	4.89	2.81	3.36	2.79
Activist	7.92	1.64	1.69	0.60	5.15	1.56	5.41	1.98	4.43	1.99	3.26	2.77	1.94	2.41
Influenced	6.94	1.91	1.35	0.80	3.67	2.04	4.25	2.23	2.40	2.28	4.84	2.86	3.22	2.74
Control	4.22	1.98	0.62	0.74	1.45	1.58	2.64	1.63	1.77	1.77	6.58	1.48	4.97	2.39

Note: *The range for each scale varies and is indicated in parentheses beneath the scale heading; all values are statistically significant across groups ($p < .000$), based on independent group t -tests for significance of difference of means.

Table 3. Multivariate OLS regression models predicting gender attitude/behavior scales.

	Women's role/autonomy			Gender roles			Domestic work			Masculinity		
	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p
Group (ref = control)												
Activist	3.01	.340	.000	4.89	.470	.000	0.90	.134	.000	3.27	.338	.000
Influenced	2.27	.279	.000	3.19	.386	.000	0.64	.110	.000	1.93	.277	.000
Age	0.00	.011	.906	0.00	.015	.890	0.01	.004	.082	0.00	.011	.923
Education (years)	0.28	.107	.011	0.16	.148	.290	0.06	.042	.185	0.00	.011	.971
Caste (ref = general)												
Scheduled caste/tribe	0.49	.265	.063	0.24	.367	.521	0.28	.104	.007	0.08	.107	.432
OBC	0.12	.246	.623	-0.37	.341	.277	0.14	.097	.144	0.23	.264	.377
Marital status (ref = not married)												
Married	-0.34	.302	.263	-0.24	.416	.563	-0.12	.119	.328	-0.35	.300	.244
Family structure (ref = extended)												
Nuclear	-0.22	.214	.298	0.21	.298	.479	-0.04	.085	.638	-0.14	.213	.509
Religion (ref = Muslim /other)												
Hindu	0.35	.346	.320	-0.32	.479	.511	-0.04	.135	.751	-0.16	.341	.636
Occupation (ref = misc)												
Farmworker	-0.31	.258	.231	-0.50	.357	.162	0.03	.102	.788	-0.52	.256	.041
Private job	0.09	.279	.757	-0.21	.386	.584	0.23	.110	.038	-0.24	.277	.394
Student	-0.67	.409	.101	-0.96	.565	.090	-0.15	.162	.368	-0.76	.407	.061
Constant	3.97	.592	.000	3.30	.811	.000	0.29	.232	.219	2.26	.582	.000
R-squared	.411			.417			.276			.383		
N	364			363			366			365		
	Sexuality			Knowledge of women/- child laws			Women do 'traditional women's work'			Men do 'traditional male work'		
	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p
Group (ref = control)												
Activist	2.51	.369	.000	1.14	.361	.002	-2.86	.435	.000	-2.53	.477	.000
Influenced	1.43	.303	.000	-0.19	.297	.532	-1.57	.359	.000	-1.41	.392	.000

Table 3 – continued

	Sexuality			Knowledge of women/- child laws			Women do 'traditional women's work'			Men do 'traditional male work'		
	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p	B	s.e.	p
Age	0.02	.012	.178	0.03	.012	.012	0.00	.014	.851	-0.02	.016	.215
Education (yrs)	0.13	.117	.277	0.82	.114	.000	-0.47	.137	.001	-0.37	.151	.014
Caste (ref = general)												
Scheduled caste/tribe	0.91	.287	.002	-0.11	.281	.687	-1.14	.337	.001	-0.66	.373	.078
OBC	0.28	.267	.301	0.11	.262	.671	-0.98	.314	.002	-0.36	.346	.303
Marital status (ref = not married)												
Married	-0.53	.327	.109	-0.06	.320	.852	0.09	.384	.824	0.79	.426	.064
Family structure (ref = extended)												
Nuclear	-0.09	.234	.711	-0.18	.228	.432	0.43	.273	.115	0.34	.302	.258
Religion (ref = Muslim/other)												
Hindu	0.36	.380	.344	0.00	.364	.993	0.14	.436	.745	0.09	.480	.859
Occupation (ref = misc)												
Farmworker	-0.07	.281	.815	-0.14	.273	.607	0.09	.329	.790	-0.34	.364	.350
Private job	-0.14	.303	.642	0.08	.296	.781	1.07	.354	.003	0.05	.391	.905
Student	-0.31	.444	.491	-0.18	.434	.684	0.95	.528	.073	0.40	.575	.488
Constant	1.81	.644	.005	-0.16	.622	.804	7.48	.747	.000	5.79	.823	.000
R-squared	.244			.321			.260			.190		
N	363			364			361			362		

about these laws is largely explained by the respondent's level of education (and education is a statistically significant variable in this regression model).

It is also noteworthy that, although the differences in the size of the coefficient between the MASVAW activist and the MASVAW-influenced group varies across the dependent variables, the MASVAW activist always has the more gender-progressive result. To assure that the difference in means between the activist and influenced groups remains significant even after the control variables are added, we conducted a supplemental analysis (also available upon request) utilising the MASVAW-influenced group as the reference category. That is, in the supplemental models, we tested whether the MASVAW activist means varied significantly from the MASVAW-influenced group means. As anticipated, the differences are significant in every model, confirming that MASVAW activists' responses are indeed more progressive than the MASVAW-influenced group.

For the final part of our analysis, we assess whether the MASVAW influence is specific to men who participate in MASVAW activities or whether being in a 'MASVAW-influenced environment' may have an effect. To assess this, we divided the MASVAW-influenced group into two subgroups, based on whether the respondents had participated in any MASVAW-related activities (namely, meetings, trainings, campaigns and casework). Among the MASVAW-influenced men, a majority (65%) had participated in at least one activity. We refer to this subgroup as 'MASVAW-influenced-high' in our analysis. In contrast, nearly 35% of the MASVAW-influenced group had not participated in any MASVAW activity. We refer to this subgroup as 'MASVAW-influenced-low' in our analysis. We then reran our Table 3 regression analysis with four groups, specifically to compare (1) the difference in gender progressiveness between MASVAW-influenced-high and influenced-low men and (2) the difference in gender progressiveness between MASVAW-influenced-low men with the control group (not in a MASVAW-influenced environment).

Table 4 displays the results of these analyses (to preserve space, we do not display the demographic controls, but they were included in all models). This analysis shows that the 'MASVAW-influenced-high' group is more gender progressive across all domains compared to the 'MASVAW-influenced-low' group (and the differences are always statistically significant – analysis not shown here). Furthermore, we found that MASVAW-influenced-low men score significantly higher in gender progressiveness than the control group across all but one domain ('thinks men should do traditional male work' is not statistically significant, although the mean is still higher for the MASVAW-influenced-low group). This indicates that some diffusion effect is operating in environments where MASVAW is active. Even men who have not personally participated in MASVAW activities are more gender-progressive than men living in environments where MASVAW is not active.

Study limitations

While our findings suggest that MASVAW activists may be influencing others with respect to gender progressiveness, the results must be taken cautiously. Even though the results are statistically significant we would like to emphasise there may be alternate explanations for the results. It is possible that the MASVAW-exposed groups (both the activist and influenced) are providing the socially desirable response having been exposed to such messages. It is impossible to know whether the beliefs these men express are practiced consistently in their relationships.

Another limitation of the study is that the results are cross-sectional and no causal assumptions can be made. We need longitudinal analysis to better measure whether

Table 4. Regression comparing activist, influenced (exposed) and influenced (non-exposed) to control group.

	Women's role/autonomy			Gender roles			Domestic work			Masculinity		
	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.
Activist	3.02	.333	.000	4.90	.465	.000	0.91	.133	.000	3.28	.334	.000
Influenced – MASVAW activity	1.51	.337	.000	3.56	.405	.000	0.76	.116	.000	2.23	.291	.000
Influenced – no MASVAW activity	1.51	.337	.000	2.43	.471	.000	0.41	.134	.003	1.31	.336	.000
R-squared	.435			.430			.295			.400		
N	364			363			366			365		
	Sexuality			Knowledge of women/child laws			Women do 'traditional women's work'			Men do 'traditional male work'		
	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.	B	s.e.	sig.
Activist	2.52	.368	.000	1.14	.357	.002	-2.86	.432	.000	-2.54	.473	.000
Influenced – MASVAW activity	1.60	.321	.000	0.13	.311	.669	-1.88	.378	.000	-1.80	.412	.000
Influenced – no MASVAW activity	1.07	.373	.004	-0.83	.360	.022	-0.96	.437	.029	-0.63	.478	.192
R-squared	.250			.339			.273			.208		
N	363			364			361			362		

Note: Controls included in models, but not shown here (age, education, caste, marital status, family structure, religion, and occupation).

and how MASVAW is changing men. Additionally, a mixed-methods study (including qualitative questions) could have provided a more nuanced understanding of the reasoning and perceptions of MASVAW activists. The study is also based exclusively on men's own perceptions and has no inputs from others with whom they interact or who have observed them, especially the women who have experienced these changes.

Discussion and conclusion

Our results suggest that MASVAW membership and exposure is correlated with more progressive gender attitudes and behaviours in men. Our findings also suggest that the MASVAW influence is both environmental and specific to individuals who participate in the organisation's activities. Across all eight gender-progressive scales, the scores of MASVAW-influenced-low men are higher than the control group. It shows there was a MASVAW effect in the region where MASVAW activities were being implemented and this went beyond the participation in group activities, suggesting a change in overall social standards and expectations. Even if the apprehension that men are proving socially desirable answers is true, they have been consistent throughout a large range of questions. At the very least, their understanding of how one *should* behave is significantly different from men who have had no contact with MASVAW. Changing minds is often considered the first step to changing behaviours and may be considered encouraging for the intervention.

MASVAW activists and activities could affect overall societal norms

This study allows us to compare two groups within the MASVAW-influenced, the exposed and the un-exposed to understand whether self-selection is a limitation to larger societal change. The difference observed between these two groups may reinforce the idea that there is an element of self-selection into such processes and that all men cannot be expected to be interested. However, the more encouraging finding is that the MASVAW-influenced-low group shows a significant difference from the control group. This indicates that even without a pre-existing interest (one that contributes to self-selection), MASVAW activities appear to be exerting an environmental influence. The mechanism of this environmental influence is beyond the scope of this study but it is useful to draw attention to the social change possibilities emerging from such findings.

The existence of socially acceptable thresholds has been described earlier (Go et al. 2003) and one of the findings of the earlier study on MASVAW activists was an increase in the conceptual understanding of what constitutes violence (Mogford and Das 2007). This change can be interpreted to mean that the threshold of acceptability of violence reduces as a result of MASVAW influence. If this change takes place throughout the area of such interventions, we can reasonably expect that the social threshold or norms of violence will become lower and gender discrimination will become more unacceptable. This larger social change (in societal gender relations) through changes in 'acceptable thresholds' appears consistent with the concepts of 'force-field analysis' and 'quasi-stationary equilibrium' described by Kurt Lewin.⁶ MASVAW's approach of using participatory experiential learning methodology that explicitly incorporates analysis of power and privilege is also consistent with contemporary understanding around learning and social justice (Lechuga, Clerc, and Howell 2009).

Well begun but still half done: areas that need to be strengthened

It is not enough to know that the gender-related knowledge and attitudes of MASVAW activists is higher than others. It may be seen as a matter of concern that while there are significant differences across all domains, the absolute value of gender-equitable responses around some questions and domains is not very high, indicating scope for change. Two such domains relate to work/roles and sexuality. The mean score of the MASVAW activists was below 70% on the sexuality scale (activist mean score was 5.4 out of a total 8). For some statements like 'Sometimes a woman is also responsible for being raped' only 61% of the activists gave a gender-equitable response. Similarly for the two statements related to homosexuality, less than 40% of the activists provided a gender equitable response indicating a degree of homophobia. In terms of work roles, only 36% activists said that they participated in preparing food and one third believed that women's primary role was being a homemaker and men's being a breadwinner. Similar analysis of single statements shows that while men are comfortable with the relational dimensions of being a man, there was confusion where it came to men's own notions of what it means being a man. The statement 'to be a man you need to be tough' had only 31% activists giving a gender-equitable response, while on the other hand the statements 'only men can have sex before marriage' or 'men should have the final word in family decisions' gave a 90 plus percent gender-equitable response rate.

Gaps or areas that were not sufficiently explored

One area around gender power relations that the study provides no information about is the actual practice of violence. It was a deliberate choice not to include questions relating to physical and psychological abuse. Previous research indicates that estimates of incidence of violence are very sensitive to the methodology used and there are risks of under-reporting (Ellsberg et al. 2001). The researchers also believe that incidence of violence may not be a good measure of gender power disparity because violence may not manifest in a situation of accepted submission with no challenge to domination. Similarly, this study starts but does not explore sufficiently the issue of sexuality. Dimensions related to sexual behaviour such as sexual relationships, sexual violence or contraceptive practice were not explored. One reason for leaving these out of the study was that the field investigators included students in the department of social work at a local university who were not sufficiently experienced. In a quick survey where there is limited rapport between surveyor and respondent there are possibilities of denial of a socially non-acceptable behaviour, despite the assurances of privacy and confidentiality. A final domain that emerged from the earlier qualitative study, but was not included in this study, relates to the management of anger by men.

Areas for future action

Interpersonal violence has been highlighted as a serious area of concern by the women's movement. The work with men that led to the formation and strengthening of MASVAW also draws upon this concern. However, there is an increasing demand that the work with men needs to move beyond the area of interpersonal violence and to address the larger violence and discrimination that patriarchy is implicated in. Work with men needs to challenge the deeply ingrained social norms and relationships around gender, which influence among others things, son preference and sex ratio, early marriage and childbirth, dowry and women's control over their own sexual lives and sexuality. Work with men can also explore deep social divisions around caste, religion and ethnicities. Not only are these

areas of discrimination and violence, but these become defining identities of men, fuelling a cycle of mistrust, discrimination, contests and conflicts.

While work with men needs to understand and respond to social divisions, it also needs to understand and address masculinities as the understanding of self (man) in terms of his own locations along social (caste, ethnic, religious), sexual and gendered axes. This calls for greater action in the so called public and personal domain of relationships, but also needs deeper reflection on understanding ones' own self. Our work started as a simple response to the increased violence that our colleagues in the women's movement had highlighted. It started as a mechanism for men taking some accountability for the gendered violence and discrimination that we saw around us, but the more we are working with ourselves and our colleagues on this issues, the more we realise that we have perhaps just begun to unravel a very complex issue and we not only need more effort and persistence, but also support from our colleagues and friends who feel the importance and need of such work.

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Notes

1. This campaign called *Hisaab* or *Hinsa Sahana Band* (Stop Tolerating Violence) was coordinated by women's organisations of Uttar Pradesh.
2. Varna shrama dharma refers to a prescription of men's roles, responsibilities and relationships in society, which relates to their age and stage in life. Ashrama comprises of four stages: *brahmacharya* – student, *grihastya* – householder, *vanaprastha* – retired and *sanyas* – renunciation; and the varna or caste system comprises of the four castes – Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.
3. Some of the criteria used to rank districts were number of activists, regularity of meetings of the district forum, independent action by district forum, maintenance of records of activities, relationship with the secretariat and participation in secretariat activities/campaigns.
4. This study was designed and conducted by individuals who are closely associated with, or are part of, the MASVAW core group. Thus it is not a third-party assessment and may therefore indicate some conflict of interest. The resources available for this study were limited and the participation of field researchers was voluntary. The low-resource base also limited the sample size of the study. While the study sample is small, and the researchers personally motivated, care was taken to design the study carefully and sample respondents systematically in order to avoid bias.
5. IMAGES is a survey conducted as part of the multi-country Men and Gender Equality Policy Project coordinated by Instituto Promundo (Brazil) and International Center for Research on Women (USA).
6. Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) was a leading social psychologist of his generation. His propositions have been very influential in group theory, behavioural sciences and organisational learning and change.

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Résumé

En Inde, la violence à l'encontre des femmes est de plus en plus considérée comme un problème clé relatif aux droits de la femme. Pour la contrer, des initiatives engageant les hommes ont été lancées. Cette étude porte sur les résultats obtenus par un réseau d'hommes mobilisés contre les violences basées sur le genre dans l'Uttar Pradesh, appelé Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW). L'objectif de cette étude était de déterminer jusqu'où les activistes du MASVAW intègrent des attitudes et des pratiques favorables à l'équilibre entre les genres dans leur propre vie, et d'identifier leur influence sur d'autres hommes autour d'eux. L'étude était transversale et comprenait trois bras: les activistes; des hommes vivant dans une région où ces activistes conduisent des activités de proximité; et un groupe de contrôle composé d'hommes vivant dans une région où ces activités du MASVAW sont inexistantes. Les activistes et les autres hommes sur lesquels ils avaient une influence ont des scores plus élevés en ce qui concerne les croyances et les pratiques favorables à l'équilibre entre les genres que les hommes dans le groupe contrôle, ce qui suggère que les activités du MASVAW sont efficaces. De plus, les hommes du deuxième bras ont les meilleurs scores en ce qui concerne la progressivité du genre, quand bien même ils n'ont pas eux-mêmes été en contact avec le MASVAW, ce qui suggère un effet de diffusion de l'information sur les changements sociaux en cours. Dans certains domaines, les activistes ont cependant de faibles scores, ce qui suggère la nécessité d'un accroissement des efforts de mobilisation.

Resumen

En la India cada vez se considera más que la violencia contra las mujeres es un problema clave de los derechos de las mujeres. En algunos programas se ha empezado a contar con la participación de los hombres para solucionar este problema. En el presente estudio prestamos atención a los efectos que tiene la organización Hombres en Acción para Detener la Violencia contra la Mujer (MASVAW), una red de hombres que colaboran sobre el tema de la violencia de género en el estado de Uttar Pradesh, en la India. La finalidad de este estudio fue determinar en qué medida los activistas de MASVAW incorporan actitudes y prácticas de igualdad entre los sexos en sus propias vidas así como identificar cómo influyen en los hombres a su alrededor. En este estudio transversal se incluyen tres grupos: los activistas; los hombres que viven en un área donde los activistas llevaron a cabo actividades de apoyo; y un grupo de control que vive en un área donde los miembros de MASVAW no realizan actividades. Tanto los activistas en general como los hombres influidos por los activistas obtuvieron una mayor puntuación sobre las medidas de creencias y prácticas de igualdad entre los sexos que el grupo de control, lo que indica que el activismo de MASVAW está dando sus frutos. Además, los hombres del grupo influido por los activistas obtuvieron una mayor puntuación en lo que respecta al avance de la igualdad sexual, aunque no tuviesen contacto con miembros de MASVAW, lo que indica un efecto de difusión del cambio social. Sin embargo, existían algunas áreas en las que los activistas obtuvieron bajas puntuaciones lo que indica que son necesarias aportaciones adicionales.