

Book Review

Men and Masculinities

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Messner, Michael A., Max Greenberg, and Tal Peretz. 2015.
Some Men: Feminist Allies & the Movement to End Violence against Women. New York: Oxford University Press. 256 pp. \$24.95 (paperback). ISBN-10: 0199338779.

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The authoring team of *Some Men: Feminist Allies and the Movement to End Violence against Women* takes on the daunting task of chronicling nearly half a century's worth of men's engagement with feminism and, more specifically, with the movement to end violence against women in North America. Messner, Greenberg, and Peretz rely on life history interviews with fifty-two men who have been involved in feminist efforts to end violence against women to illuminate the dynamics of an evolving movement of ally activism. Existing academic scholarship on men's involvement in violence prevention for the most part exists in the form of evaluations of specific programs or ethnographies of particular communities. Where the field risks missing the forest for the trees, *Some Men* takes a broader perspective by both assuming a social movement approach and historicizing men's involvement in violence prevention.

As I see it, the book offers two main contributions, the first of which is the chronological mapping of the trajectory of men's involvement in violence prevention from a grassroots movement in the 1970s to the professionalized field that we know today. The first half of the book focuses on tracing this history. While that mapping in and of itself is valuable, the takeaway results from the careful consideration of how transformations in the scope and substance of ally activism in this field relate to paradigmatic shifts in how we conceive of gender and violence. For example, the authors argue that the rapid expansion of efforts to reach men and boys with prevention education in the 1990s and early 2000s can be explained, at least in part, by the shift toward an understanding of violence against women as a public health issue. This mapping of the trajectory of violence prevention work not only contributes to scholarship on social movement dynamics but also provides insight into what we may expect to see from this form of ally activism in the future.

The second major contribution of the book is the honest consideration of some of the contradictions and tensions inherent to ally activism. Who decides what makes an effective or desirable ally? To whom are allies accountable and what does that accountability look like? How can allies most effectively do the work without stealing the spotlight? Messner, Greenberg, and Peretz offer valuable insight into these difficult, and perhaps impossible, questions by uplifting the voices not only of men from various generations of this work but also of some of the women who have worked alongside them. While presenting multiple voices on these complex issues, the authors avoid the temptation to dole out incomplete answers to the various tensions in ally work to end violence against women and instead illuminate how activists navigate the contradictions in the field.

Some Men fills major gaps in multiple fields. Perhaps of most interest to readers of *Men & Masculinities*, the book provides the fullest historical perspective to date on the rapidly shifting role of men in the movement to end violence against women and contributes to ongoing conversations about contentions and contradictions in that work. The book also contributes to social movement scholarship on ally and superordinate activism—a field in desperate need of invigoration. Even with this meaningful contribution, we still know far too little about the process and efficacy of identity-based activism by individuals in superordinate positions.

I cannot recommend this book more highly. It is a must read for men seeking to be responsible and effective allies in the struggle to end violence against women and would be a valuable contribution to courses on gender or social movements.