Chapter 4
Change among the Change Agents? Men's Experiences of Engaging in Anti-Violence Advocacy as White Ribbon Australia Ambassadors

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4.1 Introduction

Recently, researchers have shown increased interest in male advocates engaging in anti-violence work. This upsurge in academic interest is a reflection of increasing efforts to engage men in preventing men's violence against women (MVAW) and in building gender equality across a broad range of domains (Flood 2015a) and research into men mobilizing as gendered actors (Newton 2004). This research project was intended to generate an understanding of men's experiences as anti-violence advocates and agents of change, and thus to assist the violence prevention organisation, White Ribbon Australia, in making practical changes to improve its engagement efforts and to explore ways these findings could be applied to similar organisations around the world.

In efforts to prevent men's violence against women, and to build gender equality more generally, there has been a growing emphasis on 'engaging men' over the last two decades. This shift focuses on men not just as potential perpetrators of violence, but as active agents of change (Smallbone and McKillop 2014; Edström et al. 2015). The need to involve men in violence prevention efforts often is driven by a three-part rationale: while most men do not use violence against women, most of this violence is perpetrated by men; constructions of masculinity are central in shaping that violence; and men have vital and positive roles to play in preventing this violence (Flood 2015a). Men are seen to have a shared responsibility for preventing

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men's violence against women (Berkowitz 2004). There is also, however, increasing debate over 'engaging men', including over these tenets. For example, in some contexts 'most men' *do* in fact use violence against women (Fulu et al. 2013), the extent of men's use of violence is much greater once we acknowledge the range of physical and non-physical forms violence and abuse can take, and an emphasis on most men's non-violence can divert attention from male advocates' complicity in and perpetration of violence (Flood 2015c).

Male anti-violence advocates represent, in one sense, a typical form of political masculinity, in this instance as citizen participants in a political movement: the wider anti-violence movement, itself overlapping with and part of wider feminist movements. Yet in another sense, theirs is a highly unusual political masculinity. Their movement activism is self-consciously *by* men *as men* and, what is more, directed towards undoing the privilege held by that social group (Flood, 2004). The men who are the focus of this chapter, the public 'Ambassadors' for the White Ribbon Campaign, therefore participate in a form of political masculinity which is distinctive in several respects. Its gendered character is explicitly thematised, in that the campaign is 'focused on men as agents of change' (White Ribbon Australia 2017, p. 4), rather than the ostensibly un-gendered and normative masculinities of so many political masculinities (Starck and Luyt 2019, p. 4). Moreover, this particular political masculinity does not share, and indeed rejects, the agenda of the collective assertion of men's patriarchal interests sought bluntly by men's rights and fathers' rights groups and more discreetly by various other political actors. At the same time, male anti-violence advocates' efforts, like those associated with any political masculinity, take place in the context of and are inflected by systemic gender inequalities (Flood, 2004).

There have been a series of studies examining men's involvement in work related to preventing men's violence against women (Coulter, 2003; DeKeseredy, Schwartz, and Alvi, 2000; Fabiano et al. 2003; Funk, 2008; Stein, 2007; Casey and Smith 2010). Additionally, academic research on men's experiences of their involvement in preventing violence against women appears to have increased in recent years (Peretz 2017, Casey et al. 2017; Kimball et al. 2013; Messner et al. 2015). However, the impact on advocates themselves of involvement in anti-violence efforts is currently understudied, with most studies comprising broad quantitative surveys (e.g., Casey et al. 2017) and fewer qualitative and case studies (e.g., Edström et al. 2015; Minnings 2014). This study, by exploring advocates' own accounts of why they get involved, and what works and what does not, is intended to improve the reach and effectiveness of efforts to engage male anti-violence advocates. It asks how does involvement in the social movement to prevent violence against women impact men in the areas of relationship change in their personal and professional lives, their positive and negative experiences related to engagement with social movement organisations, and their own views on masculinity? This retrospective research thus aims to contribute to the growing field of male anti-violence advocacy research to understand the impact of advocacy for these men. The overarching goal is to increase male involvement and to improve advocacy outcomes based on the lived experiences of the participants themselves.

Men have long been involved in efforts to prevent violence against women, although the number of men mobilised in grassroots anti-violence campaigns

typically is small (Pease 2008). Several systematic reviews of various global interventions support the efficacy of engaging men and boys as agents of change to help prevent men's violence against women (Barker et al. 2007; Ricardo et al. 2011; Dworkin et al. 2013). It is important to acknowledge that the growth of male involvement has also raised questions and concerns (Macomber 2015; Casey et al. 2013; Meer 2011). There are risks in involving men in violence prevention, including the possibility of silencing women, reducing funding for women's programs and services, and men gaining more attention than women for their anti-violence efforts (Pease 2008; Flood 2015c).

Numerous global campaigns have emerged which engage men in efforts to stop men's violence against women, in addition to promoting gender equality and equity. These include MenEngage, an alliance of non-governmental organisations, and Promundo. However, the world's largest collective mobilisation or social movement group engaging men to help stop men's violence against women is the White Ribbon Campaign. In Australia, this campaign is led by White Ribbon Australia (WRA), a non-profit organisation that coordinates White Ribbon activities around Australia.

WRA is a social movement organisation, that is, 'a complex, or formal organisation which identifies its preferences with a social movement or a counter-movement and attempts to implement those goals' (McCarthy and Zald 1977, p. 1218). It focuses on engaging men, as part of the larger social movement to end men's violence against women. Before describing WRA in more detail, let us clarify the term 'social movement' itself. The definition of a 'social movement' is contested, because of disparate approaches to social movement theory despite notable attempts at synthesising them (Diani 1992, p. 1). Nevertheless, typical definitions include three components: 'networks of relations between a plurality of actors; collective identity; [and] conflictual issues' (Diani 1992, p. 17). For this chapter, Diani's long-developed definition is used, whereby a social movement is defined as 'a distinct social process … through which actors [are] engaged in collective action; are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; and share a distinct collective identity' (della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 20).

Research on social movements has emphasised the different bases and orientations of diverse movements. In the 1960s and 1970s, new social movement theory emerged to explore developing social movements that did not have the same 'motivation' as traditional labour-based movements led by the working class and concerned with wages and workers' safety. In contrast to these, new social movements are mostly based on the politicisation of lifestyle and identity, with members who are typically middle-class and educated. For example, the women's rights and environmental movements that arose in the 1950s and 1960s are classed as new social movements (Johnston 2016, p. 85–86).

While there are debates as to what makes a social movement a *new* social movement instead of a traditional social movement, there is largely consensus on the 'core concepts and beliefs' that differentiate the two (Pichardo 1997, p. 412). New social movements arise from a shift to a post-industrial economy, are markedly different from the working class social movements (i.e., labour movements) of the industrial age based on economic inequality, and focus on the post-materialist quality of life

issues instead of the instrumental issues of industrialism (Pichardo 1997, p. 412). This approach permits the study of loosely related collective actions instead of the traditional social movements based on proletarian revolution (Flynn 2011).

4.1.1 Australia's White Ribbon Campaign

This research focuses on the men who have taken up public advocacy roles as 'Ambassadors' for the White Ribbon Campaign in Australia, via White Ribbon Australia (WRA). WRA works towards the primary prevention of violence against women through school-based education, workplace accreditation programs, community events, and social marketing. The organisation seeks explicitly to make men public advocates: its mission is '[m]aking women's safety a man's issue too' (White Ribbon Australia 2015). The national organisation is based in Sydney, Australia, with around 20 members of staff and in 2016, and revenue of over four million AUD (White Ribbon Australia 2017, p. 38). Australia's White Ribbon organisation is distinctive from others around the world primarily because of its national scope and budget, and it is the largest campaign in the world by formal enrolment.

The White Ribbon Campaign in Australia is a significant presence in the violence prevention field. It has achieved substantial recognition and support, with over 800 community events each year and sponsorship from businesses as well as state and national governments, and it has generated significant media coverage and community awareness. The campaign and the national body have also attracted controversy and criticism. Predictably, anti-feminist and socially conservative commentators accuse it of exaggerating the extent of violence against women and being 'anti-male', in what are typical forms of anti-feminist backlash (Mann 2008). From a different direction, some feminist advocates in Australia have argued that WRA engages men largely in tokenistic and superficial action, relies on women's labour while men receive status and accolades, does not act in alliance with feminist organisations and networks (Funnell 2016b, 2016a), and neglects men's collective privilege (Seymour 2018).

Beginning in 2005, WRA introduced the Ambassador Program, in which men are engaged as formal representatives or 'ambassadors' of the campaign. Ambassadors are expected to take part in and contribute to annual WRA events, often as speakers, to give media commentary, and to advocate for the campaign in other ways. While some Ambassadors' participation is limited to attendance at the one or two major White Ribbon events each year, others' involvement includes year-round advocacy in their workplaces, networks, and communities. The role is voluntary, with around 1200 men currently acting as Ambassadors. These men are a subset of a pool of men who support and take part in WRA activities. While anyone can take up and support the White Ribbon Campaign, men can only become

Ambassadors through following WRA's selection process.[1] Ambassadors and public supporters of the campaign have included national political leaders, media personalities, and high-profile athletes.

One of the primary determinants of a social movement's success is the mobilisation of resources by motivated and committed actors with a collective identity to achieve a goal (Edwards and Gillham 2013). WRA's Ambassador Program has been an important vehicle for generating media and community attention and attracting institutional support. WRA's resources and the Ambassadors' power, privilege, and capital are combined to confront men's violence against women in a move towards the vision that all women can 'live in safety free from all forms of men's violence' (White Ribbon Australia 2015). At the same time, the controversies mentioned above have also attached to the Ambassadors program. Some high-profile Ambassadors have offered commentary on violence against women counter to White Ribbon and feminist approaches (Ford 2015), while others have been seen to offer only superficial or self-interested support for violence prevention efforts (Funnell 2016a). Such incidents have negatively impacted the 'brand' of WRA and thus how the organisation's ethos can be used to promote social change.

To become an Ambassador, individuals must be nominated by another Ambassador or may self-nominate for consideration. Potential Ambassadors must apply to the national organisation WRA, submit letters of recommendation attesting to their character, undertake a screening process by staff members, and complete several online training modules. If an individual's application is accepted, they become an Ambassador and receive a metal 'Ambassador' white ribbon. The national organisation distributes regular e-newsletters to its Ambassadors, calls on them for speaking and media engagements, and invites them to education and other events.

Research on the Ambassadors for the White Ribbon Campaign in Australia provides valuable information on the character and experience of these advocates. There has been little demographic data on male engagement in this space in Australia or globally. Because of the national reach of WRA, our project was able to create a useful profile of male engagement across the country. This research was conducted over the period 2014–16, with the first outcome being a public report (Bell and Seaman 2016) distributed to the Ambassadors and the broader community, identifying key research findings and recommendations to improve the Ambassador Program. WRA released an Operational and Strategic Response to the research, which further guided changes to the program.

This chapter describes who these men are and their experiences. This serves to elucidate how involvement as agents of change in the social movement to prevent violence against women affects the participants. Specifically, what are the positives

[1] In late 2017, White Ribbon Australia launched a similar program strictly for women, whereby they could become 'Advocates' (not Ambassadors).

experiences of their involvement; what challenges have they had as part of an anti-violence organisation; how has their involvement affected their relationships with women and men; and how has their understanding of masculinity shifted due to their involvement?

4.2 Method

A total of 2062 Ambassadors were invited to take part by White Ribbon Australia (WRA) in the study, with recruitment via email to self-select for participation in the anonymous survey and an interview. All the current members of the Ambassador Program were approached for inclusion, with all members being above the age of 18. Of this pool of potential participants, 370 surveys were commenced, yielding an overall response rate of 17.9 percent. Only 296 surveys were considered complete enough for inclusion, giving an 80 percent completion rate and a 14.4 percent final response rate. The Ambassador population was in flux at the time of the data collection due to all Ambassadors undergoing a recommitment process at the same time, thus the actual final survey response rate (the proportion of Ambassadors who responded) is likely higher. Additionally, a separate sample of 86 Ambassadors took part in a confidential interview, including 10 face-to-face and 76 via Skype or telephone. The interviews were conducted over May to November 2015, while the survey occurred over September to October 2015.

The survey and interviews were used as complementary methods to triangulate the findings. The respondents did not need to answer all the survey questions and could choose whether to leave certain questions unanswered. The survey built on prior research (e.g., Casey et al. 2013; Carlson et al. 2015) and consisted of closed, multiple-choice questions and open questions. Additionally, most closed questions included an option to include an 'other' response to mitigate researcher bias and to be more indicative of participants' authentic experiences. Where possible, the demographic data in the survey was compared to census data on men in Australia aged 18–80. The survey results were analysed using SPSS software to provide primarily descriptive statistics, with open-ended responses recoded using grounded theory. Due to the complexity of the project, another researcher, Claire E. Seaman from the University of Wollongong, reviewed the themes and data to assure trustworthiness, and minor adjustments to the coding framework were made.

The interview schedule was developed building on prior studies (e.g., Messner et al. 2015; Casey and Smith 2010) and pilot interviews carried out in 2015. All the interview participants completed a single interview either in person or over the phone in English. All Ambassadors had the opportunity to participate, and interviews ranged in length from fifteen minutes to three hours, with a mean of fifty-five minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, with broad questions about WRA and general questions about participants' anti-violence work. The semi-structured

interview method allowed participants to express what they felt was relevant and to have control over the direction of the interview. The interviews were analysed using grounded theory to identify key themes (Bryant 2017; Charmaz 2006). Grounded theory is an inductive research method that 'codes' repeated elements found in data to create themes to provide a possible explanation as opposed to a deductive model, which applies a theoretical framework first and then tests a hypothesis.

Data analysis occurred concurrently for both the quantitative and qualitative data. All the interviews were recorded digitally, de-identified, and then transcribed. Names and identifying details were changed in the reporting of the data to protect participants' confidentiality. Due to space restrictions, the results reported here are primarily statistical, with quotes from interviews serving to complement the findings. The University of Wollongong granted ethics approval for this research.

It is important to note that this data was collected as part of a process evaluation that actively sought to find issues that could be improved within WRA and similar organisations (see Bell and Seaman 2016). WRA worked closely with the researchers by providing feedback on research instruments and facilitating contact with the study population. However, WRA was not given access to the data but only the subsequent analysis, and the organisation used this to make changes to the Ambassador program.

4.2.1 Demographic Profile

The men who are the formal advocates for the White Ribbon Campaign in Australia tend to be older, more highly educated, more socioeconomically advantaged, and less religious than the average adult male in Australia. The mean age in years of the surveyed Ambassadors was 50.6, several years older than that of the general male population in Australia (M = 46.1) and the population of adult men in Australia who undertake voluntary work (47.8 years). Ambassadors were also significantly more highly educated: 67.2 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 20.9 percent of the broader male population. They earned more money than the male population: 57.1 percent of Ambassadors earn more than $2000 a week versus 17.8 percent of the broader male population in Australia. Ambassadors identified overwhelmingly as heterosexual (95.3 percent), and a higher percentage of them were currently married (77.4 percent) as compared to the broader male population in Australia (52.1 percent). A majority of Ambassadors had children (84.1 percent).

What about the advocates' political orientations? In Australia, people are sometimes referred to as being politically on the 'left' or on the 'right', where reductively, the former indicates socially progressive and latter indicates socially conservative. The respondents were thus asked to identify their political leaning on a Likert scale. The respondents indicated a broad range of positions but were primarily moderate to left-leaning (60.7 percent in total); no respondent reported that

they were entirely right-leaning. The political affiliations of the respondents were varied but were mainly the Australian Labor Party (32.4 percent), which is broadly socially progressive, and the Liberal Party/National Party (29.4 percent)[2] which is broadly socially conservative. Additionally, 23.6 percent indicated that they had no party affiliation. For comparison, in the 2016 Federal Election, voters were 34.7 percent Australian Labor Party and 37.2 percent Liberal Party/National Party (Australian Electoral Commission 2016). The White Ribbon Ambassadors were more likely than men in the broader male population to be born in Australia (80.7 percent versus 71.6 percent), almost all (96.6 percent) primarily speak English in the home, and were are far more likely than men in general to have no religious affiliation (44.3 percent, versus 26.1 percent).

The men who have become public advocates for the White Ribbon Campaign in Australia are remarkably homogenous (typically 50 or older, highly educated, married, and in white-collar professions) and privileged relative to men in the broader male population. One factor shaping this may be that many came to the campaign through White Ribbon's Workplace Accreditation Program, which takes place largely in white-collar organisations. These men's social locations may enable them, more successfully than other social movement advocates, to reach other relatively privileged men, given tendencies for homophily – for people to have social ties with others similar to themselves (Dutta 2015, p. 44). In addition, their economic and social capital (their social status, education, and other resources) may be useful to their advocacy efforts. At the same time, Ambassadors' narrow demographic profile may lessen the campaign's ability to connect and engage with diverse communities in Australia.

4.3 Results and Discussion

4.3.1 Positive and Negative Experiences of White Ribbon Ambassadors

Ambassadors indicated a median length of involvement of 3.6 years. They were asked about their experiences of engagement and how these could be increased to extend and deepen their involvement in activism. Survey questions were closed response, with fixed choices, allowing for multiple choices, and included an 'other' option with space for an open-ended response.

[2] To maintain respondent confidentiality, responses for these two parties were combined. These parties exist as a coalition at the national level in Australia.

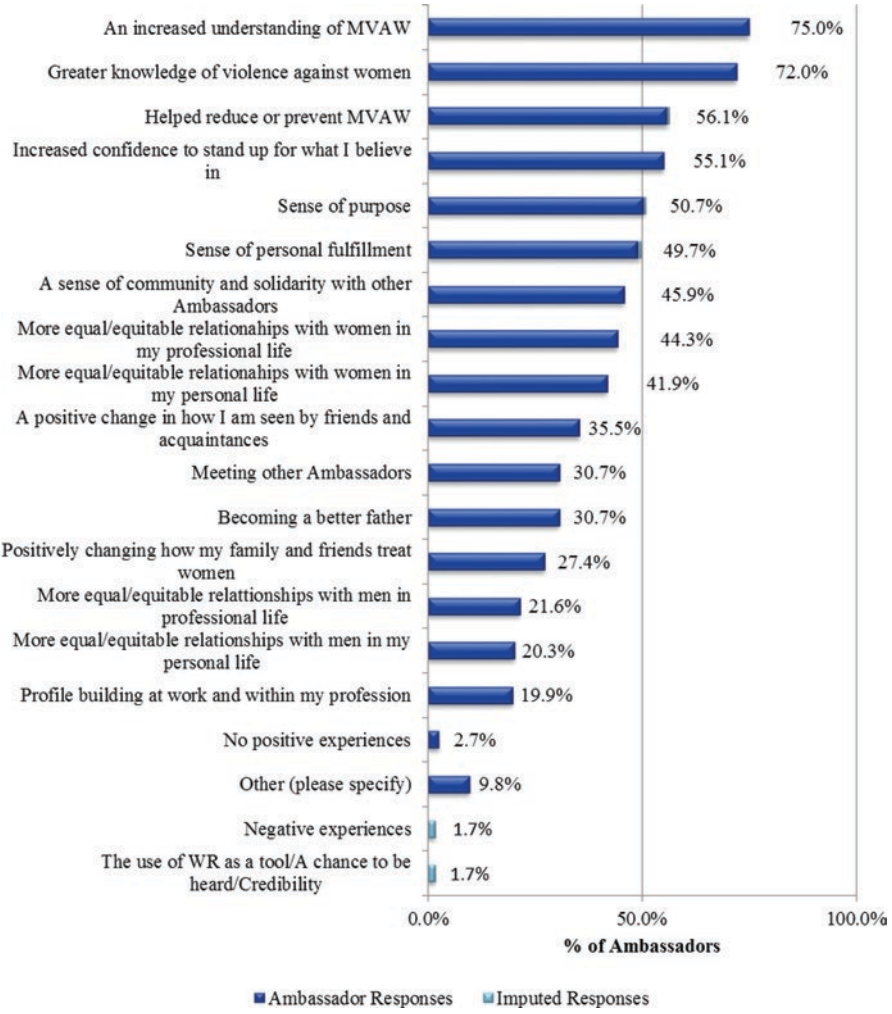

Fig. 4.1 Positive Experiences of Ambassadorship (Fixed choice, Multiple response, Other imputed)

4.3.1.1 What Positives Have White Ribbon Ambassadors Encountered?

When asked what aspects of their experience as Ambassadors were positive, the Ambassadors were most likely to choose to increase their understanding of men's violence against women (75 percent) and their knowledge of violence against women (72 percent) (see Fig. 4.1). Their involvement had improved their knowledge and understanding of violence against women in general, and violence perpetrated by men specifically.

Other positive experiences chosen by Ambassadors included making an impact through their advocacy efforts and having more confidence engaging in advocacy work. More than half (56.1 percent) of the respondents felt that they had helped reduce or prevent men's violence against women, as one survey respondent eloquently wrote in an open-ended response:

> It's about educating people, men, to stop violence against women. Being a part of an organisation that has a large market share allows you to be heard better. Your voice singularly and as a collective is heard. This, in turn, educates men about the issue. This is the positive experience – educating men to stop the violence and hence protecting women from violence.

Over half of the respondents (55.1 percent) agreed they had increased confidence to stand up for what they believe in. One survey respondent echoed the sentiment of others by saying that by being an Ambassador 'I am no longer reticent about speaking up or committing myself to stopping violence against anyone'.

The role of an advocate can give a sense of purpose and personal fulfilment through action, and this could be clearly seen as half of the Ambassadors surveyed also felt a sense of purpose (50.7 percent). One survey respondent, whose intimate partner had been killed by her former partner, achingly described how WRA provided him with a purpose:

> I think well it's just the sense of trying to let my partner's [death] not be meaningless. You know, I want to make sure that she didn't die for nothing. You know, she was a good person, and she had a lot to offer the world […] it's just my responsibility to try and do whatever I can to ensure that that ray of sunshine doesn't completely extinguish. So, I feel it's a really important thing for me in terms of my recovery, and in terms of remembering and honouring her; it's an important part of what I do.

Half of the Ambassadors indicated a sense of personal fulfilment (49.7 percent) as a positive experience. Several Ambassadors, in both the survey and interviews, discussed how the community reacts to them as Ambassadors, including one survey respondent who commented that he received 'personal thank you[s] and encouragement messages from complete strangers who have been affected by such violence'.

Research into advocacy work shows that social movement actors feel a sense of joining with others and feeling connected (Casey and Smith 2010). This is similar to the surveyed Ambassadors, who indicated that they felt a sense of community or solidarity with other Ambassadors (45.9 percent) and felt positive about meeting other Ambassadors (30.7 percent). For example, one survey respondent wrote that he enjoyed 'meeting [and] exchanging thoughts with other likeminded men [and] women at [WRA] events and hearing their stories'. Ambassadors also agreed that, since joining WRA, they had more equal and equitable relationships with women in their professional life (44.3 percent) and personal life (41.9 percent). Since this was a closed question without qualifiers, the Ambassadors determined if this change had occurred based on their own criteria. Additionally, a little over one-third (35.5 percent) of Ambassadors reported that their friends and acquaintances viewed them more positively. Finally, one-fifth (19.9 percent) of respondents agreed that the title of Ambassador assisted in their profile building at work and within their profession.

The positive experiences of the Ambassadors varied, but perhaps they can best be summarised by one survey respondent who wrote, 'I believe I am playing a very small part in that process. The quote "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing" is quite true in my opinion. I believe I am a good man "doing something"'. It is clear that these men felt that working with WRA is one way that they can act as agents of change and 'be the change' they want to see in the world.

4.3.1.2 What Challenges Have White Ribbon Ambassadors Encountered?

Being involved as an activist and advocate in the prevention of violence against women often involves challenges for participants. The White Ribbon Ambassadors were presented with a list of possible challenges as a closed question and an open 'other' option (Fig. 4.2). Among those who did report challenges (75.3 percent), some involved challenges they faced themselves as advocates, while others also considered the limitations of the organisation or the movement itself and its relations with them. One-quarter (24.7 percent) indicated they had encountered 'no challenges'.

The most common challenge reported by the White Ribbon Ambassadors was a 'lack of time' (36.5 percent). However, four of the next five most frequent responses related to issues of resource mobilisation – that is, how WRA makes use of its advocates. The survey respondents indicated they were 'not being utilised properly' (24.3 percent); for example, their particular skill sets were not being used. As one respondent wrote, 'I'd like to be used more to speak… I'm a huge, appropriately skilled resource'.

Ambassadors were also concerned about not being utilised often enough due to their lack of year-round involvement (21.6 percent). For example, one survey respondent commented, 'I have never been contacted personally to attend, speak or participate', while another commented on 'only being called upon during White Ribbon Day and Night'. This finding was not limited to WRA, the banner organisation, but also the community at large only seeking out Ambassadors to speak or appear at events sporadically outside normally scheduled events. Two further challenges for the respondents were the 'lack of communication from White Ribbon Australia' (19.3 percent) and the 'short notice from White Ribbon Australia to assist in an activity' (17.2 percent). As one survey respondent stated,

> Some invitations (not all) have only been given a few days' notice to attend when they were not able to find an available Ambassador. It would be more helpful for the Ambassador (whoever it may be) to have ample time to prepare a message or speech suitable for the event rather than just a face who shows up last minute.

Among the Ambassadors, about one-quarter (24.3 percent) of the men surveyed, felt that the organisation could utilise them much more effectively. One could counter this by suggesting that advocates in a social movement should take their own

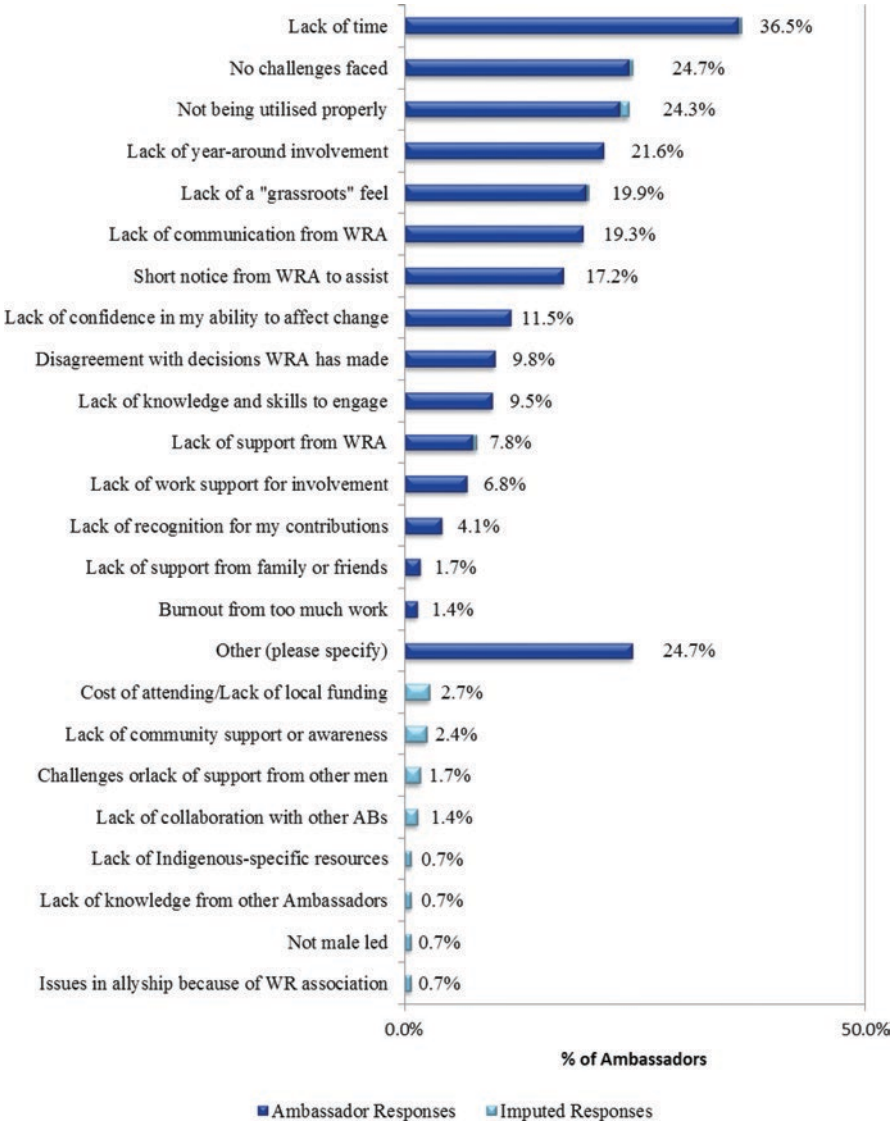

Fig. 4.2 Challenges of Ambassadorship (Fixed choice, Multiple response, Other imputed)

initiatives rather than waiting to be called upon, but this perception of poor utilisation nevertheless is significant.

Some White Ribbon Ambassadors were critical of the organisation responsible for the national campaign. One-fifth (19.9 percent) felt that WRA lacked a grassroots feel. Open-ended comments in the survey corroborated this sentiment, with survey respondents noting that ‘generally there is a feeling that White Ribbon

Australia targets celebrities and ignores grassroots actions', 'I am not a celebrity and thus am not an attractive Ambassador for public events', and there is 'no database or contact with other Ambassadors except what you create yourself'.

In a challenge again to do with the perceived shortcomings of the national organisation, one-tenth (9.8 percent) of the survey respondents disagreed with decisions that WRA had made. For example, one survey respondent reported,

> I felt extremely uncomfortable with the way White Ribbon seemed to corporatise the Ambassador [P]rogram, choosing powerful people to be Ambassadors regardless of their ideology…Tony Abbott [a former Australian Prime Minister and White Ribbon Ambassador] is renowned for his sexist, outdated views of gender roles.

Other criticisms offered in the open-ended responses included that WRA works with alcohol companies, had closed down White Ribbon regional offices around Australia and was thus too 'Sydney-centric', has too many women in corporate positions, and does not direct sufficient funds to local WRA committees.

In fact, there was a significant level of disquiet among White Ribbon Ambassadors about the shortcomings of the national organisation and the campaign, including an awareness of the criticisms of these from others in violence prevention or feminist fields. Some feminist commentators in Australia's popular press have expressed concerns that the White Ribbon campaign does not sufficiently challenge men to make a change and treats men like 'white knights' (Funnell 2016a; Ford 2015). One survey respondent stated that being an Ambassador 'made advocacy more difficult' due to the perception that WRA 'is only really active for a couple of days a year' and 'is a male-led initiative taking credit for the work women have been leading for decades'. He continued, 'as an advocate before becoming a White Ribbon Ambassador, I actually found I had more cut through' as 'it was easier to engage with men without the pretext of representing White Ribbon' and that 'feminist spaces are highly critical of White Ribbon's role and strategy', which makes 'meaningful partnership and engagement within these spaces more difficult too'. Another survey respondent stated,

> I personally feel that there is a huge difference in public perception of how White Ribbon operates and how the reality works at an internal level. For example, there seems to be limited engagement with individuals [Ambassadors]. In particular, most events appear to have a ticket price, formal dress code. Personally, it would be more beneficial if there was an ongoing grassroots support network that Ambassadors didn't need fancy clothes, big wallets or large job titles could tap into.

Many other respondents echoed this Ambassador's comments. For example, another respondent commented, 'I am disappointed as I feel left out of being a part of a global movement because I'm not rich', while another Ambassador lamented,

> White Ribbon events seemed to cost hundreds of dollars to attend. I understand this was to fundraise, and that many of the businessmen involved could easily spend that money, but it locked out a large portion of other interested people and certainly negated any attempts White Ribbon made at being perceived as grassroots. I volunteered at some events just to be able to attend, and the speeches and atmosphere were excellent. People should not miss out on those speeches simply because they do not have enough money.

One of the key tasks of social movement organisations is to build networks and community among advocates, to foster both personal empowerment and collective mobilisation. The data here suggest that WRA needs to improve in these areas. Several survey respondents indicated they had withdrawn from WRA or had focused their efforts elsewhere. These respondents did this for a number of reasons. For example, 'they [WRA] seem to not really care about the local communities directly'. When discussing engagement in the anti-violence against women movement, one respondent commented that he had 'continued [his] activism against male violence towards women, but distanced [himself] from the White Ribbon brand' and another survey respondent reported he had 'disengaged from formal White Ribbon Day (WRD) events, instead focusing on small grassroots events which recognise WRD'. One survey respondent summarised others' complaints saying, 'Unfortunately I did not feel heard and… feel isolated from the White Ribbon community and not exactly empowered'.

While some advocates focused on the national organisation's or campaign's failings, a few criticised other Ambassadors. One Ambassador noted that 'some of our current Ambassadors have little or no understanding about gendered violence, and I've heard comments such as "men are equally affected by [domestic violence]" coming from some Ambassadors'.

A different type of challenge reported by some male advocates concerned their violence prevention efficacy. One-tenth of Ambassadors indicated that they had a 'lack of confidence in [their] ability to affect change' (11.5 percent) and a 'lack of knowledge and skills to engage' (9.5 percent). As one respondent commented, 'It is such a huge issue, and it is difficult to see how we are truly making a difference'. Another Ambassador agreed that he was 'Unsure what I am being asked to do, beyond my own personal undertaking not to commit or condone violence'. Ambassadors were also concerned about other Ambassadors' skills levels and wanted them to be 'skilled up' (e.g., in public speaking and presentation of White Ribbon's core messages).

While resource mobilisation is one key issue, another was the character of the campaign as a social movement. One-fifth (19.9 percent) of Ambassadors would have liked a more 'grassroots' campaign, while around one-tenth (9.8 percent) were critical of the organisation or the campaign, including for reasons overlapping with this. This kind of criticism – that WRA is far too little focused on movement-building – has also been made elsewhere. Flood, himself a White Ribbon Ambassador, has argued, for example, that WRA should do less to build 'brand awareness' and more to mobilise and politicise its activists, build alliances and networks with women's groups and movements and other social justice movements, and effect structural change (Flood 2015b).

4.3.2 Changes in Relationships Due to Involvement in the White Ribbon Ambassador Program

The surveyed Ambassadors self-report that their involvement had primarily changed the way they relate to other men, but not to women. The changes in relationships with men were overwhelmingly related to their increased likelihood of challenging sexist behaviour by other men. The changes in how they relate to women largely involved changes in their actions related to speaking, listening, empathy and the promotion of gender equality and equity in their lives.

Over one-third of ambassadors (39.5 percent) indicated that their relationships with women had changed (see Table 4.1). Most of these Ambassadors indicated, via a closed question, that they are more conscious of what they say and how they say it (86.3 percent) or more conscious of promoting gender equality and equity in their professional life (84.6 percent) and personal life (84.6 percent) (see Fig. 4.3). Almost half (48.7 percent) of the survey respondents indicated they were now more empathetic to women and over 40 percent indicated they listened more to what

Table 4.1 Have your relationships with women and men changed? (Fixed choice, Single response)

	Yes (Changed)	No (Unchanged)
Relationships with women	39.5%	60.5%
Relationships with men	68.6%	31.4%

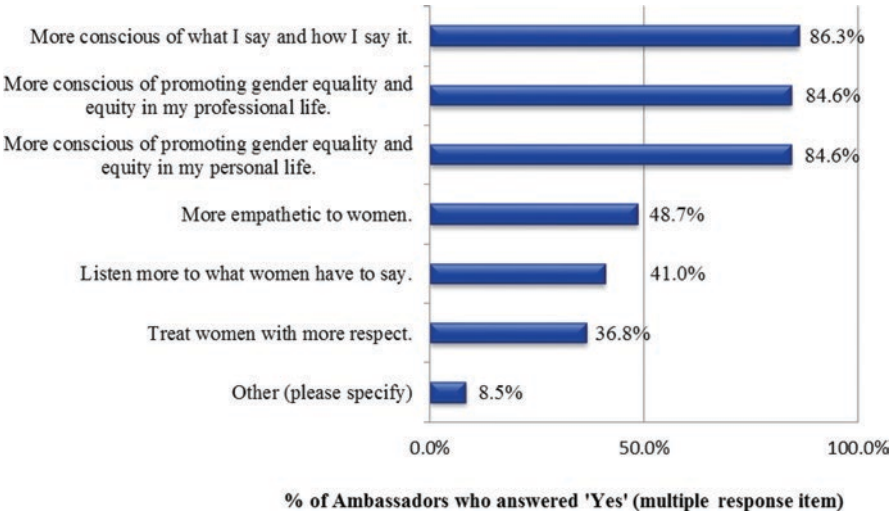

Fig. 4.3 Yes, I have changed how I relate to Women (Fixed choice, Multiple response) Note: 39.5% of survey respondents indicated a change

women have to say. The survey respondents also added a range of additional 'other' comments, but two primary themes emerged: an 'evolving understanding' and 'commitment'. These themes reflect common norms in men's anti-violence work, that men should strive for gender-equitable relations with women and take up collective action (Flood 2014).

In the open-ended text, the survey respondents explained their evolving understanding. As one stated, 'Although my attitude towards women has always been one of respect, as an Ambassador it has only grown and expanded' and 'I am no longer intimidated by the feminist movement, and no longer see that movement as a threat to my masculinity or male freedom! I feel I can stand side by side with strong women who have been fighting against gender inequality'. The survey respondents expressed how the title of Ambassador came with commitment. As one man commented, 'It's something I think about really frequently – I'm really conscious of the commitment I have made'.

Additionally, the responses from the survey were echoed in the interviews. For example, an interview participant said,

> I wouldn't be so presumptuous as to say that [my relations with women are] equitable. They've certainly improved, I'm a much better listener, I don't take personally women's anger and fear and frustration. I take personal responsibility for my roles in my individual relationships, of course, but I also don't take it personally when women struggle with masculinity or rather, I see it for the bigger picture that it reflects, I don't see it as just about my failings, which are still present, of course.

In the interviews, many Ambassadors offered narratives of personal change regarding their views of and relationships with women, in which they had reflected upon their early years of marriage, how they were as young men, or how they had changed since becoming a father. This is similar to earlier work that showed men often have a 'sensitizing experience' or 'opportunity experience' that leads to 'shifting meaning' in their lives, and that can change their worldview and compel them to action (Casey and Smith 2010). Many of the Ambassadors were introduced to the White Ribbon Campaign through WRA's workplace accreditation programs which are increasingly common, and interview participants discussed being able to see inequality and inequity in their workplaces more clearly because of the work of WRA.

Of the survey respondents who reported that their relationships with women had not changed (60.5 percent), most of these men (73.7 percent) responded that they already respected women or believed in equality and equity (see Fig. 4.4). Additionally, 11.2 percent indicated that their parents and family instilled respect into them and 7.3 percent indicated they had previous experience in efforts to prevent violence against women, thus explaining the lack of change. A small proportion (5.6 percent) of survey respondents mentioned that having 'strong women' in their life or women in general (e.g., relatives, work colleagues) had shaped their relationships prior to involvement and they had not shifted. Typically, the open-ended responses related to participants stating that they understood the issue of men's violence against women before their Ambassadorships, and this was the impetus for them to join WRA. There was thus a widespread narrative among these male anti-violence advocates of 'having always respected women'. Other survey

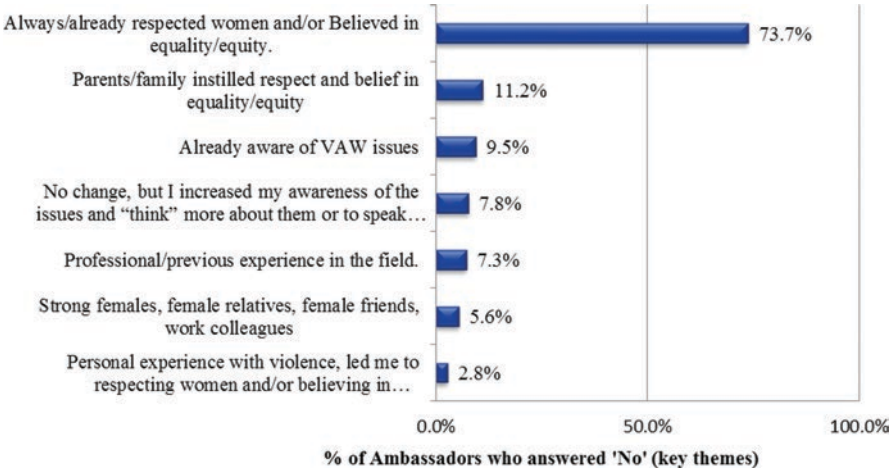

Fig. 4.4 No, I have not changed how I relate to Women (Open-end, Themes identified) Note: 60.5% of survey respondents indicated *no* change

respondents expressed their position more fully, such as 'I was sensitive to my relationships with women prior to becoming an Ambassador – I did not sign up to learn' and 'White Ribbon complements my attitudes and behaviours, which I held before I became involved with White Ribbon' and 'I have been a campaigner… before I was a White Ribbon Ambassador… the White Ribbon organisation and structure and opportunities have validated my own beliefs, values and actions. How I relate to women has not changed'. This position resonated in the interviews as well. For example, one interviewee said,

> Actually, it wasn't the White Ribbon Campaign that changed my views or my attitude, it was really seeing what my mother went through and the abuse that she copped and what we as kids – myself and my sisters, what we went through. That was the only turning point. We joined the White Ribbon Campaign, it didn't really affect my perspective or my talk as such but the only thing that it did change was the volume of my voice. Before I was just a victim or a witness of domestic violence but being part of the White Ribbon Campaign…as I'm introduced at events, as an Ambassador, it just adds a lot more momentum and oomph into what I've got to say. That's how it's changed.

However, during some of the interviews, men provided a more qualified account of lifelong gender-equitable relations. Often men initially said that their relations with women had not changed, but later in the interview, they expressed ways that they had, such as listening to women more closely and discussing changes in their relationships with their partners. It may be that during the process of the interview, as participants spent more time reflecting on their relationships and their work with WRA, they found more changes, or these responses reflect impression management caused by speaking directly to an interviewer. Additionally, the interviews may have created a space for trust and rapport to develop such that uncomfortable truths could be discussed openly.

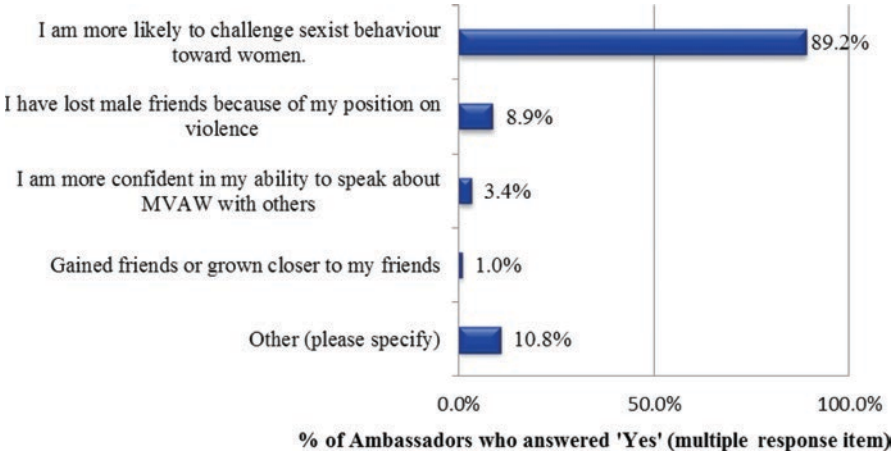

Fig. 4.5 Yes, I have changed how I relate to Men (Fixed choice, Multiple response) Note: 68.6 percent of survey respondents indicated a change

The difference between the survey findings and the interview insights suggests that the survey data may underestimate the extent of change and in fact, more Ambassadors than the reported 39.5 percent had changed their relationships with women through their participation with WRA. On the other hand, it may be that those men who self-selected to be interviewed had undergone more change in their relationships with women than the other survey respondents.

What about the Ambassadors' relationships with other men? Nearly three-quarters (68.6 percent) of the surveyed Ambassadors indicated that their involvement with WRA had changed how they related to other men (see Fig. 4.5). Most of these men indicated they were more likely to challenge sexist behaviour (89.2 percent). As one survey respondent stated, 'I believe I am more likely to challenge men about the language they use and what they think is acceptable'. Another respondent indicated that before when he had spoken up against inappropriate language, his concerns were dismissed because he was in law enforcement. However, now he says, 'I am able to assert that I'm also an Ambassador for White Ribbon along with many other men… this statement alone holds a lot of weight and even more weight with the growing strength and recognition of the White Ribbon brand'. Some survey respondents had even lost friends because of their position on violence (8.9 percent).

Those Ambassadors who had not changed how they related to men (31.4 percent) indicated (see Fig. 4.6) that they had always been clear with other men on where they stood against men's violence against women (34.4 percent) or had always had respectful relationships with other men (30.1 percent). The survey respondents explained their position typically by adding, 'I would challenge men's reactions to women before I became an Ambassador' or 'All my male friends and colleagues knew how I felt about violence towards women prior to becoming an Ambassador'.

Far more Ambassadors indicated a change in their relationships with other men than in their relationships with women. One explanation is that men who become

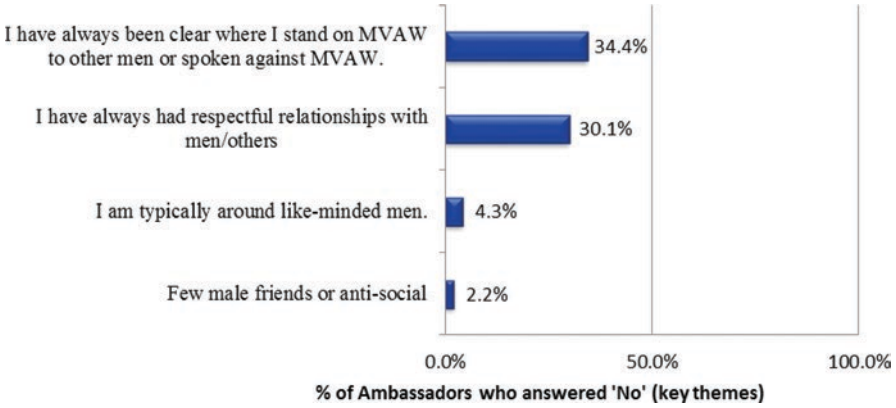

Fig. 4.6 No, I have not changed how I relate to Men (Open-ended, Themes identified) Note: 31.4 percent of survey respondents indicated *no* change

involved in anti-violence advocacy already have respectful relationships with women, and thus it is their relationships with other men that must change more. Additionally, perhaps they had patriarchal and violence-supportive attitudes in the past and expressed these behaviours in their everyday interactions more with other men than with women, and this is what they changed.

4.3.3 Masculinity and Change

White Ribbon Ambassadors were asked whether involvement in the campaign had changed their view of what it meant to be a man, based on responses to a closed question, and most reported that it had. Only about one in seven (13.9 percent) reported that they had experienced 'no change' in their view (see Fig. 4.7). Three-quarters (74.7 percent) of the surveyed Ambassadors agreed that they were 'more aware of the need for positive male role models'. Just under half reported that they placed more 'emphasis on promoting gender equality and equity' in their personal life (49.7 percent) and professional life (49 percent). They also 'question the notion of "boys will be boys"' (47.6 percent) and had an "increased ability to self-reflect" as a man' (45.9 percent).

For men to participate in advocacy against men's violence against women is to question dominant constructions of masculinity. Much violence prevention work takes as given that gender inequalities and patriarchal gender roles and norms are at the root of men's violence against women (Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), and VicHealth 2015). In men's anti-violence work, there is a pervasive expectation that, as part of their involvement, men will strive for gender-equitable identities and interpersonal relations. In line with this, large proportions of the White Ribbon Ambassadors – on most items,

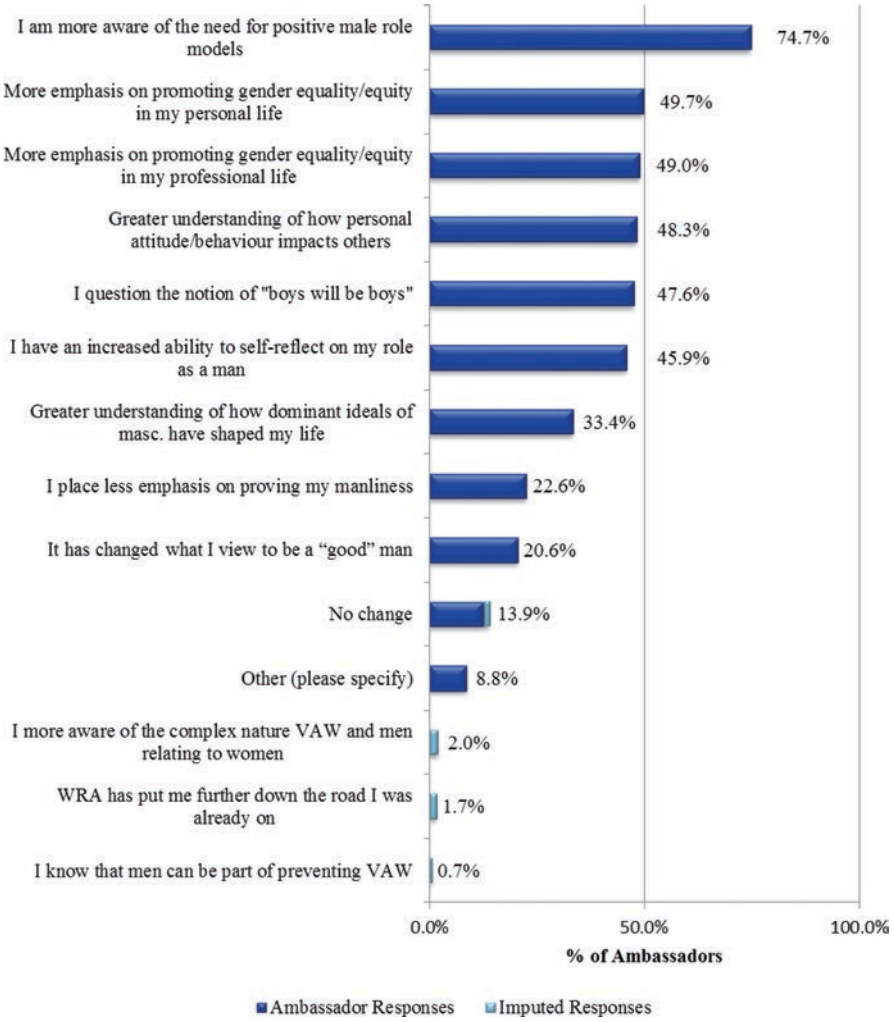

Fig. 4.7 Change in what it means to be a Man (Fixed choice, Multiple response, Other Imputed)

between one-fifth and a half – reported changes in their practices and understandings of masculinity because of their involvement.

A small number of Ambassadors gave resistant responses to the survey question about shifts in the meanings of manhood. One man, seemingly defending an essentialist view of gender, commented,

> I don't like the option of "less emphasis on proving my manliness". This denigrates men and shouldn't be in this survey! A man is a man as is a woman is a woman. Proving or disproving is not what this about, and any suggestion of either is offensive.

Another survey respondent expressed concern that involvement with WRA, in fact, had made maleness and masculinity suspect *per se*:

> If anything, the campaign has made me feel that all men are complicit in violence, including myself, even though I have never been violent towards women. It has made me feel that at no point am I allowed to get frustrated or lose my temper in response to the actions of women in my life (no matter what they do) because the campaign is very black and white (literally, but also in that there is never any excuse for violence, and there is a very broad definition of violence). I believe part of the issue with the campaign is that it makes an implicit connection between being a man (a man's man) and violence. So, the only way to prevent violence is for men NOT to be men, but to be more feminised versions of men - more like women. This then creates a dissonance for men about their identity and creates further issues in relationships because, in my and others' opinions, women are attracted to the masculine (not violent) qualities of men. Women lose respect for men when they don't demonstrate strong male qualities (not violence) such as strong character, mental strength, decisiveness and being in control (not controlling). The White Ribbon Campaign has muddied the waters around men's masculinity.

Such responses highlight how anti-violence advocacy may invite men into renegotiations of masculinity which they find uncomfortable or threatening.

The extent to which men-focused violence prevention efforts explicitly encourage men into a questioning of hegemonic masculinity varies: campus men's anti-rape groups in the United States seem to emphasise this, for example (Piccigallo et al. 2012), while the materials on the Australian White Ribbon website only briefly address this issue. Nevertheless, these research findings echo findings in other research of the positive changes in the understanding of masculinity among male advocates (Flood 2014). Still, most Ambassadors also reported that they had not changed how they related to women, typically because they already treated women in gender-equitable ways.

Although WRA already involves its Ambassadors in education and training, it could intensify this and extend its attention to a more critical reflection on gender and masculinity. When the research began for this paper, WRA had a few continuing education modules in place, but in 2017 it developed a more substantial online eLearning platform for Ambassadors and others. It is also embedding information to inform practice in the new WRA monthly newsletter. As part of such efforts, WRA could include curricula on masculinity, particularly given the evidence that violence prevention interventions that target men are more effective if they explicitly address masculinity (Dworkin et al. 2013; Fulu et al. 2014).

4.4 Conclusion

The survey respondents and interview participants made it clear that their participation in White Ribbon Australia's (WRA) Ambassador program and the social movement to stop men's violence against women had changed them, and that change made them more able to affect others. Arguably, the most telling finding of the research is that these men indicated that their involvement had impacted their

relationships with other men, more than their relationships with women. This suggestion may at first seem counter-intuitive. However, this should not be viewed as a negative; it is an indicator that these men came to be agents of change partly because of the positions they already held, and WRA gave a platform to affect change. These advocates emphasise that they have changed how they relate to men and thus are now more apt to 'stand up, speak out and act'.

This is the intent of WRA, to support men to be agents of change to speak to other men about their behaviour and to support efforts to prevent men's violence against women. Additionally, these men emphasise personal change through their involvement. The surveyed Ambassadors report that they stress the need for positive models of manhood, they emphasise gender equality in both personal and professional life, they reject essentialist accounts of men's behaviour, and they self-reflect on being male. Involvement with WRA has brought both positive and negative experiences for the Ambassadors. The survey respondents felt they had increased their understanding of men's violence against women, over half felt that they had helped to reduce or prevent violence, and they reported increased confidence to stand up for what they believe.

However, some Ambassadors also report they feel underutilised, undertrained, and unconnected with other Ambassadors. Their experience suggests that WRA, as a social movement organisation, does not do enough to foster networks and community among its advocates. Importantly, the organisation has changed the Ambassador program dramatically in the two years since this research, both in response to the research and initiatives concurrently happening within the organisation. The number of Ambassadors has decreased by half, from 2062 when this research was conducted to 1091 in August 2018. The decrease is due to general attrition due to age and changes within the program to increase the requirements for formal engagement as an Ambassador. For example, Ambassadors have had to go through a recommitment process with training, and all must provide evidence of actual prevention activity each year to maintain their standing. Additionally, communication has improved through a bi-monthly newsletter and more regularly scheduled events for Ambassador training and networking.

There are several limitations to the research. The change in these men is self-reported, not based on longitudinal data related to the impact of involvement and cannot be taken as undeniable evidence of the wider impact or effectiveness of WRA. The representativeness of the study was limited by the self-selecting nature of the design, there was evidence of 'clusters' of respondents (e.g., from the same workplace), and it is likely that some respondents who agreed to participate were motivated in some way to do so. In addition, only currently involved members of the Ambassador Program were contacted, but not those who were no longer active.

The particular form of political masculinity under examination here, men's public anti-violence advocacy, is unusual in being marked by a (broadly) feminist political orientation and the rejection of a defining patriarchal practice, men's violence against women. Such efforts do have the potential to weaken male dominance (Myrttinen 2018). This study's findings support the claim that such 'male allies' undergo progressive personal change and contribute towards feminist social change.

However, we must also be cautious about this conclusion. In the first place, while this research largely takes the men's accounts at face value, we must also be attentive to the ways in which men's narratives of gender equity are constructed and reconstructed. More broadly, and as some advocates in this research themselves were aware, men's anti-violence advocacy is vulnerable to a series of criticisms and its potential to shift patriarchal social relations may be limited (Flood 2015c; Myrttinen 2018).

This research has practical implications, nevertheless, for violence prevention advocacy. The capacity of men to act as agents of change in political and social arenas is greater due to their higher levels of capital in the social order, and movement organisations should engage men on how these strengths can be mobilized locally, federally, and globally. It highlights the need for diversity among advocates: increasing the range of men engaged will increase access to diverse forms of social and cultural capital. The more effective mobilisation of advocates based on their individual skill-sets will improve outcomes through more efficient resource mobilisation. Movement organisations should provide opportunities for advocates to meet informally to build up their social networks and strengthen the movement through resource sharing. Finally, WRA and similar organisations need actively to assist men to continue their journey as advocates and agents of change, through repeated critical reflections on masculinity.

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Michael Flood is an associate professor in Sociology at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). He is an internationally recognized researcher on men, masculinities, and violence prevention. He is the author of *Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention* (2018) and the lead editor of *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality* (2015) and *The International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities* (2007). He has contributed to social change campaigns; worked with organizations such as VicHealth, the Australian Football League (AFL), and the Australian Defence Force (ADF); participated in international expert meetings; and shaped national prevention frameworks. He has provided expert advice to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Human Rights Commission, White Ribbon Australia, Our Watch, and other organizations. Furthermore, he has contributed to agenda-setting frameworks for violence prevention, including Preventing Violence Before It Occurs (2007), Respectful Relationships Education (2009), National Standards for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Assault Through Education (2009), and Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women and Their Children (2015). He has had a lifelong involvement in advocacy in support of feminism and social justice.

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