VI. Men and the Man Box – A commentary

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The Man Box provides invaluable data on men and masculinities in Australia. As the first nationally representative study of the gender-related attitudes and behaviours of young Australian men, it offers an informative snapshot of young men's experiences and perceptions of gender and the norms of manhood that structure these.

Men and gender

We have known for a long time that men and boys are as implicated in gender as women and girls – that men's lives are shaped, as much as women's, by gender. 'Gender', defined simply, refers to the meanings given to being male and female and the social organisation of men's and women's lives. Five decades of scholarship have documented extensively that gender is socially constructed – it is the outcome of social forces and relations. Boys and men learn to be 'proper' men for example through parental socialisation, peer groups, schools and universities and other institutions, sports, communities, and media and popular culture.

One of the key insights of contemporary scholarship on gender is that in any particular context particular definitions and images of womanhood and manhood are dominant. Whether in a country, a community, or a more local setting, particular versions of femininity and masculinity will be the most celebrated, most desirable and most influential representations of how to be female and male. There are dominant forms of gender in media representations, but also in most settings, institutions and contexts. This is true for example of schools, sporting clubs, workplaces, faith institutions, governments, and so on. In other words, particular ways of being a boy and man are dominant, while others are stigmatised, punished, or silenced. These dominant constructions of gender shape boys' and men's lives. Boys and young men may conform to the dominant form of masculinity, or they may resist it or fail its expectations, but all live in its shadow.

Various terms have been coined for dominant constructions of masculinity. Influential Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell wrote of 'hegemonic masculinity' (R.W. Connell, 1987), and this term has been taken up very widely in scholarship on men and masculinities around the globe (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The term superceded older terms such as 'sex role' and 'gender role', and indeed involved a rejection of the simplistic assumptions which had accompanied these older terms. New terms for dominant constructions of masculinity have emerged outside academia too, such as 'toxic masculinity' (Flood, 2018b).

The Man Box survey follows a well-established tradition of quantitative measurement of men's attitudes towards masculinity. Like other, influential measures of masculinity ideology such as the Masculinity Role Norms Inventory (Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, & Cozza, 1992) and Male Role Norms Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986), it assesses men's agreement with a series of 'men should' statements. Another, widely used measure, the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (James R Mahalik et al., 2003), instead focuses on men's individual masculine beliefs, couched in 'I' statements, in addition to asking young men about the social pressures they perceive about masculinity, although *The Man Box* survey also asks about men's own endorsement of beliefs about manhood.

The notion of the 'Man Box' names influential and restrictive norms of manhood. The 'Act Like a Man' box or 'Man Box' has been a common teaching tool in efforts over the past three decades to engage men and boys in critical reflections on men and gender (Kivel, 2007). The 'box' names the qualities men are expected to show, the rewards they earn for doing so, and the punishments they are dealt if they step 'outside' the box. It emphasises that these dominant standards are restrictive and limiting for men, as well as harmful for women. Individual qualities in the Man Box are not necessarily bad, and indeed some may be useful or desirable in some contexts. On the other hand, some of the qualities are negative in themselves, the range of qualities available to men is narrow, and men are expected not to deviate from them. The Man Box norms also sustain forms of privilege and unfair advantage for men, and men's attitudes and behaviours that underpin inequality between man and women. The reference to 'acting like a man' makes the point that masculinity is a 'performance', a set of qualities and behaviours practised in particular contexts.

Before exploring the findings in this report, three further points are relevant. First, dominant constructions of masculinity are not all powerful, and there may be other influential ideals of masculinity in circulation. Second, dominant ideals are not static – they may change over time. Third, men's actual lives do not necessarily conform to dominant ideals of manhood, and typically there is a gap between men's lives and these. The findings of this report bear out of each of these points, as I return to later.

This survey, *The Man Box*, provides crucial information on contemporary Australian norms of manhood – on both perceived *social* norms of manhood, and on young men's *own* norms of manhood. What does it tell us?

Ideals of manhood in Australia

Do young men in Australia agree that the Man Box is an accurate account of social expectations of manhood? The Man Box, as represented in the survey used here, defines being a man in terms of seven qualities: self-sufficiency, toughness, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control over women.

Young men in Australia agree that societal norms for manhood include the expectation that men will act strong and tough, be the primary income earner, and not say no to sex. Here, they echo the "Guy Code", the ideas about 'real men' documented in interviews with young American men aged 17-26 (Kimmel & Davis, 2011). Lower proportions agree that societal norms for manhood include non-involvement in household work and care of children, using violence to get respect, and shunning gay men. So if it was once true that dominant definitions of manhood in Australia included such expectations, then these are weakening. They have not disappeared altogether, but around two thirds of young men reject these. While one-third or close to half show a troubling endorsement of male aggression, decision-making, and control of women, most do not endorse these patriarchal norms.

Young men's perceptions of masculine social expectations seem contradictory or ambivalent, for example for homophobia, paid work and parenting, and violence. On homophobia, although just under half (47 per cent) agree that society tells them "A gay guy is not a 'real man'", two-thirds (64 per cent) agree that society tell them friendships between heterosexual and gay men are 'normal'. This may represent what others have described as contradictory trends regarding homophobia among young men: on the one hand, increased support for same-sex marriage and comfort with gay men as friends, and on the other, the continued policing of masculinity through homophobia (Bridges & Pascoe, 2016). Homophobia continues to be a key means through which young men socialize each other into normatively masculine behaviours, practices, attitudes, and dispositions, including through homophobic joking and demonstrations of heterosexual prowess and power.

Young men's perceptions of breadwinning and care work also seem contradictory, with simultaneous support for men as primary breadwinners *and* as skilled in domestic work and caring for children. While more than half (56 per cent) agree that under societal norms "Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women", only a little over one-third (38 per cent) agree that "It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children". So while men and not women should be the primary breadwinners in families, men also should have some home-making skills. While one-third (35 per cent) agree that they receive the message that "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary",

far higher proportions perceive societal messages that men must 'act strong' and 'fight back when pushed'.

Traditional definitions of masculinity have hardly disappeared among young men in Australia. Strength, toughness, aggressive responses to challenge, perpetual sexual readiness, and emotional stoicism continue to define manhood, at least as far as these young men's perceptions of societal norms are concerned. Yet many young men also believe that contemporary men also are expected to contribute to household work and parenting and to be comfortable around gay men (but not actually be gay themselves).

Personal support for the Man Box

If the above findings tell us about young men's perceptions of *societal norms* of manhood, then what about young men's own, *personal understandings* of manhood? To what extent do young men themselves accept or endorse the masculine expectations they perceive?

Research on men and gender finds a consistent gap between perceived social norms of manhood and men's own attitudes about being a man. In any society or culture, the lived or performed genders of the majority of men do not need necessarily to correspond to the culturally dominant ideal. Most men live in a state of tension with, or distance from, the dominant masculinity of their culture or community (R.W. Connell, 2000).

The Man Box survey finds two important patterns here. First, in line with other scholarship, there is a significant gap between young men's perception of societal support for the Man Box rules and their own endorsement of these rules. While young men agree that many of the traditional messages of the Man Box are part of contemporary societal expectations of manhood, they are less likely to support such messages themselves. This accords with other research suggesting that the dominant code of manhood "is perpetuated by men's need for approval from other men, secret shame about not living up to the masculine ideal, and the false perception that most men believe in it" (Berkowitz, 2011, p. 162).

This data shows that young men's own views of masculinity are more progressive than the social norms they perceive. The biggest gaps between societal norms (as perceived) and personal attitudes were for the ideas that a 'real man' would never say no to sex, men should figure out their personal problems on their own, and a guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak. Despite this apparent progressiveness, young men show troubling levels of support for men's domination of relationships and families, with one-quarter to one-third endorsing male privilege over and control of women.

Second, most young men largely reject the Man Box. There were *no* Man Box rules with which a majority of young men agreed. Young men's own beliefs about

masculinity show a particularly strong rejection of the Man Box messages that men should be hypersexual, avoid household work and care, and use violence to get respect. Only about one-quarter of young men agreed personally with the Man Box statements associated with these ideals. They were more likely to personally endorse the Man Box message that men "should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside", with close to half (47 per cent) agreeing. A significant minority, around one-third, also agreed personally with Man Box messages that men should be the primary breadwinners, respond to challenges with violence ('fight back when others push him'), and need to look good to be successful. This gap persists even when the young men are divided into quintiles, and there is no cohort of young men who feel that their own views of masculinity are more traditional than the societal ones they perceive.

A gender gap

The Man Box survey asks only men about their attitudes to gender. But if it had asked women too, it would have found a profound gender gap, as numerous other studies have done. Men's attitudes to gender are consistently less progressive than women's (Flood, 2015). As documented in another recent Australian survey, *From Girls to Men*, men are less likely than women to agree that sexism against women is extensive and systematic in Australia, less supportive of principles of gender equality, and more likely to perceive that men are being neglected or even disadvantaged by gender equality measures (Evans, Haussegger, Halupka, & Rowe, 2018). Focusing on young people, young men are less likely than young women to recognise gender inequalities and sexism, more likely to endorse male dominance of relationships and families, more likely to have violence-supportive attitudes, and less aware even of the constraints of masculinity on men themselves. (Some studies described here are not strictly comparable, as some focus on younger cohorts aged 16 to 24 rather than the 18-to-30 year-olds on whom the *Man Box* survey focuses.)

Among young people in Australia, we find among 16-to-24 year-olds that young men are significantly more likely than young women to agree that "On the whole men make better political leaders than women" (29 per cent of young men, 19 per cent of young women) and "Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia" (17 per cent of young men, 10 per cent of young women) (Harris, Honey, Webster, Diemer, & Politoff, 2015). In the Australian *From Girls to Men* survey, among 16-23 year-olds, young men were more likely than young women to agree with various defensive statements about gender equality: political correctness gives women an advantage in the workplace, men and boys are increasingly excluded from measures to improve gender equality, and so on (Evans, Haussegger, Halupka, & Rowe, 2018). Similarly, young men in the US are less likely than young women to believe that women face significant discrimination in

society or that women are depicted negatively in news and entertainment media (Jones, Cox, Fisch-Friedman, & Vandermaas-Peeler, 2018).

Young men in Australia are more supportive than women of men's domination of relationships and families, with one-quarter to one-third agreeing with statements endorsing this. Among 16-to-24 year-olds, young men are more likely than young women to agree that "Men should take control in relationships and be head of the household" (27 per cent of young men, 17 per cent of young women), and "Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship" (38per cent of young men, 31 per cent of young women) (Harris et al., 2015). Virtually identical levels of endorsement of men's patriarchal control of relationships are evident in the *Man Box* survey, e.g. with 27 per cent of young men agreeing personally that "A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage".

Australian data also documents that young men have more violence-supportive attitudes than young women. Again among 16-24 year-olds, 43 per cent of males and 36 per cent of females agree that "Rape results from men not able to control their need for sex", and 22 per cent of males and 17 per cent of females agree that "Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'" (Harris et al., 2015).

Young men are less aware than young women of the harms of the Man Box among men themselves. US data finds that young men show lesser recognition than young women of the pressures on men of, and impacts of conformity to, masculinity. Among 15-24 year-olds in the US, young men are less likely than young women to believe that men experience pressure to conform to traditional ideas of masculine behavior. In turn, they are less likely to agree that societal pressure to act masculine prevents young men from expressing their emotion in healthy ways, limits the type of friendships men can have with other men, leads men to treat women as weaker and less capable, encourages sexually aggressive behavior, encourages violent behavior in general, or encourages homophobic attitudes (Jones et al., 2018).

Diversity among young men

One of *The Man Box* survey's key findings is that there is significant diversity in young men's own views of gender. Presented with 17 statements which represent a traditional or stereotypical view of manhood, some young men endorse many or most of these, while other young men reject them. This is likely to reflect differing and distinct clusters of ways of doing gender among young men.

Other research finds that there are distinct peer cultures among young men. Qualitative studies document that some young men have peer groups or social circles which are highly sexist and male-dominated, while other men have peer groups which are much more gender-egalitarian (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Some

young men move in groups with norms of a predatory male sexuality and sexual double standard, while in others these are largely absent and the men express ideals of companionate relationships (Mac An Ghaill, 2000; Wight, 1996). Recent quantitative research in the US makes similar points, that among young heterosexual men aged 18-25 there are diverse and distinct patterns of masculine identity and practice, with large variations in young men's endorsement of sexist masculinity and hostility towards women (Casey et al., 2016).

Diversity in young men's ideals and practices of manhood also is associated with other forms of social difference including ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Contemporary scholarship on masculinities documents that men's lives are shaped not only by gender but by intersections between gender and ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, region, and so on. *All* men are located in multiple relations of privilege and disadvantage (Flood, 1994-1995). Dominant cultural images of masculinity often involve a white masculinity. Popular culture places the lives of white, Anglo-Celtic men at centre stage, while those of men from non-English-speaking and indigenous backgrounds are marginalised or made invisible. Men from marginalised ethnic groups often are portrayed in derogatory ways in media (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). In turn, men from ethnic minority or indigenous groups may resist or protest such representations (Messner, 1997; Poynting, Noble, & Tabar, 2003).

Although the *Man Box* survey's sample is too small to examine this, other research among young men finds that men's attitudes towards gender and manhood do vary with ethnicity. US data documents that among young men, recognition of discrimination against women is lowest among white young men and higher among Hispanic and black young men (Jones et al., 2018).

Shifts in gender?

Norms and practices of gender are shifting among young people, as they are in Australian society in general. The Man Box data is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal so it cannot help us here, but other data does point to shifts over time in gender norms and relations. There are in Australia both signs of progress towards gender equality and of persistent gender injustices. For example, among young men aged 16-24, levels of attitudinal support for violence against women declined over 2009 to 2013 (Harris et al., 2015). Among young people there are some signs of a growing acceptance of gender equality, the blurring of gender boundaries, and the weakening of the homophobic policing of manhood (Flood, 2008).

However, not all the Australian news is good. Overall attitudes towards gender equality among young men aged 16-24 showed no improvement over 2009 to 2013 (Harris et al., 2015). Men's monopoly of political and economic decision-making has worsened over the past decade, with either no progress in, or even worsening

in, women's representation in parliamentary politics and corporate boards. While ideals of fatherhood have shifted radically, the gap between men's and women's actual involvement in parenting and domestic work has barely changed. Progress towards gender equality in Australia is constrained by lack of political will, weak policy mechanisms, and the shrinking and silencing of feminist voices (Voola, Beavis, & Mundkur, 2017). And in Australia and internationally, there has been a resurgence of aggressively anti-feminist online cultures and patriarchal religious movements and a pushing back of the gains of the women's movements.

Impacts: Living with the Man Box

Conforming to the Man Box exacts a real cost, both among young men themselves and for the women and men around them.

The Man Box is bad for young men's health. Young men who endorse the traditional ideals of masculinity represented by the Man Box are more likely than other men to have poor mental health (including feeling depressed, hopeless, or suicidal), seek help from a narrow range of sources, and take part in risky behaviours (here, as assessed by involvement in binge drinking and traffic accidents).

This finding accords with a very large volume of other scholarship. In contexts where men are expected to be stoic, self-reliant, tough, brave, vigorous, daring, and aggressive, conformity to these norms is associated with poorer health, greater risk-taking, and lower help-seeking (Courtenay, 2000; James R. Mahalik, Burns, & Syzdek, 2007; O'Neil, 2008; Wong, Ho, Wang, & Miller, 2017). Men who endorse dominant norms of masculinity are more likely than other men to have greater health risks and engage in poorer health behaviours (Courtenay, 2000). A recent meta-analysis of 78 studies among close to 20,000 men documents that conformity to masculine norms is associated with negative mental health and particularly negative social functioning (Wong et al., 2017). Traditional masculinity also is implicated in particular areas of men's health, such as suicide (Coleman, 2015) and occupational deaths and injuries (Nielsen et al., 2015; Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015). Traditional masculinity informs men's participation in particular forms of risk-taking behaviour such as excessive alcohol use (De Visser & McDonnell, 2012; De Visser & Smith, 2007; Mullen, Watson, Swift, & Black, 2007; Peralta, 2007) and dangerous or aggressive driving (Krahé & Fenske, 2002; Roberts & Indermaur, 2005; Vick, 2003).

Men's conformity to traditional manhood also is bad for women and other men. One of the starkest findings in *The Man Box* study is that men with higher levels of conformity to traditional masculinity are far more likely to perpetrate violence, both against women and against other men. Those 'further in' the Man Box are much more likely to perpetrate violence, and much less likely to intervene in others' violence.

On violence against women, the study's behavioural measure addresses only sexual harassment, and only one form of this (sexual comments to an unknown woman in a public place or online in the last month), omitting sexual violence and relationship violence. Even only addressing this, the study finds that young men with above-average endorsement of the Man Box were six times more likely to have perpetrated this harassment than other men. Among young men with the highest levels of endorsement by quintile, 70 per cent had perpetrated harassment in the last month, compared to 3 per cent and 9 per cent of those in the first and second quintiles. There are corresponding patterns for bystander intervention: young men with higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculinity were far less likely to intervene in violence, and far more likely than other men to do nothing or even to join in.

Conformity to traditional masculinity is a well-documented risk factor for men's perpetration of violence against women. Focusing here on sexual violence, a meta-analysis found that patriarchal masculine ideologies (based for example on a desire to control or dominate women and a defensive and distrustful orientation towards women) were strong predictors of men's sexual aggression against women (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002). Similarly, a review on rape perpetration found that key risk factors include gender-inequitable attitudes such as hostility towards women, desire for sexual dominance, belief in traditional gender roles, and greater acceptance of rape myths, and a sense of entitlement to women's bodies (Jewkes, 2012). A multi-country study in Asia and the Pacific found that men's partner violence and non-partner rape were "fundamentally related to unequal gender norms, power inequalities and dominant ideals of manhood that support violence and control over women" (Fulu et al., 2013, p. 14).

Contemporary research continues to bear out this finding. In a study methodologically similar to *The Man Box* study, among 18-25 year-old heterosexual men in the US, 8 per cent of the men showed high endorsement of rigidly traditional notions of masculinity and high hostility toward women, and these men also reported committing far more physical intimate partner violence (IPV), control IPV, and sexual assault than any other group (Casey et al., 2016).

Similarly, violence by men against *other men* is shaped in powerful ways by the Man Box. Some men use violence as a means to achieve or prove masculinity, particularly in front of male peers (Flood, 2007). Violent incidents in and outside pubs and clubs, for example, often represent contests over male honour and status (Polk, 1994). Masculinity is a significant risk factor in male-to-male violence, including in forms of violence also shaped by homophobia or racism (Whitehead, 2005). Indeed, men's violence against women and men's violence against other men are interrelated, with both

fundamentally shaped by the norms and relations of masculinity (Fleming, Gruskin, Rojo, & Dworkin, 2015).

While the preceding discussion has discussed the 'Man Box' as if it were an undifferentiated whole, there are signs that some dimensions of traditional masculinity are more dangerous than others.

Which norm? Which outcome?

There is evidence that the impact of masculine conformity on men depends on *which* aspects of masculinity or the 'Man Box' are being conformed to. A recent meta-analysis of the impact of conformity to masculine norms on men's health drew on a scale comprising 11 distinct dimensions of masculine norms: winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, dominance, playboy, self-reliance, primacy of work, power over women, disdain for homosexuals, and pursuit of status. It found that masculinity's influence on mental health and help-seeking was particularly evident for three dimensions of these norms: self-reliance, playboy, and power over women. In contrast, primacy of work was not associated with any mental health outcomes measured, while risk-taking had associations with both negative and positive mental health (Wong et al., 2017). Similarly, a content analysis of studies assessing men's conformity to masculine norms found that particular masculine norms can have positive *or* negative associations with men's health (Gerdes & Levant, 2018).

Therefore, we must ask *which* masculine norms are influential, on positive and negative outcomes. Rather than assessing men's overall conformity to masculine norms in a generic sense, at times it may be more useful to focus on men's conformity to specific dimensions of masculine norms (Wong et al., 2017).

It also matters which *outcome* is the object of our concern. Particular masculine norms have more influence on some outcomes than others. For example, men's sexual violence against women is shaped more by the acceptance of aggression against women and negative, hostile beliefs about women than by other stereotypically masculine norms (Murnen et al., 2002).

What to do

There is an urgent and powerful need to promote change in dominant norms of masculinity in Australia. The Man Box – the social expectations that boys and men must be tough, aggressive, stoic, in charge, and so on – takes a high toll on both men and women. There are three key tasks here: (1) highlight the harms of the Man Box; (2) weaken its cultural grip; and (3) promote healthy and ethical alternatives.

1. Highlight the harms of the Man Box

The first task is to raise public awareness of the harms associated with traditional norms of masculinity. We need "a public discourse about masculinity that

illuminates the price of blindly consuming masculine hegemony and raises consciousness so that boys and men can become the authors of their lives" (Kimmel & Davis, 2011, p. 12). The good news is that conversations about these are already underway, for example in media and popular discussions of 'toxic masculinity' (Flood, 2018b). There is also resistance and backlash among men to critical scrutiny of men and masculinities, and this is both predictable and preventable (Flood, Dragiewicz, & Pease, 2018).

As well as raising awareness in the community at large, we must also sensitise particular areas of public health, welfare, and service provision to the harms of the Man Box. Given the compelling evidence that traditional masculinity is implicated in key health and social issues such as mental health, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, male-male public violence, and a host of other problems, efforts in these areas should include attention to masculinity. Many of the troubling behaviours with which organisations and governments wrestle, from campus sexual harassment to risky driving to suicide, are shaped by masculine social norms and relations.

Efforts to raise awareness of the costs of traditional masculinity must be careful also to acknowledge the fact of male privilege. While the Man Box constrains men's physical and emotional health, it also brings forms of privilege or unfair advantage for men, and it imposes deep costs among women (Flood, 2018b). If we focus only on harms to men, we miss the systemic gender inequalities which continue to characterise Australian society. These inequalities are sustained in large part by men's attitudes and behaviours, and the Man Box survey finds disturbingly high levels of endorsement of male privilege among young men.

In appealing to men to move away from the Man Box in their own lives, therefore, we must address both privilege and disadvantage. Our appeals must be based on both ethical obligation – that men have an ethical obligation to let go of unfair privileges and to support gender justice – and personal self-interest – that men themselves will benefit by stepping away from the Man Box. Internationally, there is a well-established field of work engaging men in progress towards gender equality (Flood, 2015). This field is practised at balancing these different appeals, although there is ongoing debate about how best to do this (Flood, 2018a; ICRW, 2018; MenEngage Alliance, 2016), and Australian efforts would benefit from its experience.

2. Weaken the cultural grip of the Man Box

How can we weaken the normative force of the Man Box, the grip of that narrow set of ideals on the Australian social imagination? Ideals of manhood already are changing in Australia, in large part in positive ways, but how can we accelerate progressive change? Four strategies are particularly valuable.

Highlight the gap between masculine social norms and men's own ideals

Perhaps the most important way to undermine the Man Box's hold on gender norms is to highlight that the Man Box has far less personal support among men than many men think.

Young men in Australia do largely agree that the Man Box is an accurate representation of societal expectations for men, with close to half or more than half agreeing that this is the case for 11 of the 17 statements defining traditional masculinity. At the same time, young men's own endorsement of these statements is considerably lower. None of the 17 statements receives majority support, and only two receive support above 40%.

Other research finds that men routinely misperceive other men's gender-related attitudes and behaviours. Men overestimate other men's sexist and violence-supportive attitudes, comfort with sexist, coercive and derogatory comments about and behaviour towards girls and women, and willingness to use force to have sex. Men underestimate other men's discomfort with sexism and violence, willingness to intervene to prevent a sexual assault, and desires for social justice (Berkowitz, 2011).

Such misperceptions feed into both 'pluralistic ignorance' or 'false consensus'. In the first, the majority of men who in fact reject patriarchal norms of manhood may falsely believe themselves to be in the minority. They therefore go along with sexist and violent attitudes and behaviours, believing mistakenly that they are in the minority in opposing them. In the second, men who use violent and violence-supportive behaviours continue to do so because they believe falsely that they are in the majority. They incorrectly interpret other men's silence as approval, thus feeling emboldened to express and act violently towards women (Berkowitz, 2002). In fact, this false consensus is strongest among those who engage in the behaviour themselves (Berkowitz, 2011).

A key strategy therefore for undermining the Man Box is a 'social norms' approach, closing the gap between men's perceptions of other men's agreement with sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement (Flood, 2018a). The evidence is that such efforts can correct men's misperceptions, producing positive changes in men's attitudes and behaviours (Berkowitz, 2011).

'Telling men the truth about each other' is an important step (Berkowitz, 2011). At the same time, telling men how other men think and feel is not enough by itself, particularly as this survey shows that troublingly large proportions of young men endorse some of the most problematic elements of the Man Box, including men's control or domination of women. We must also work to shift many men's own ideals and practices of gender.

Turn up the volume on diversity and change among men

The second way to weaken the grip of the Man Box is to turn up the volume on the facts of diversity and change in manhood. We must highlight the reality that there is real diversity among boys and men in their practices and ideals of gender, as the *Man Box* survey has documented. And more than this, we must affirm and celebrate diverse forms of manhood, identity, and gender.

The quantitative data in the *Man Box* survey tells us that young men vary greatly in their attitudes to manhood. Qualitative data confirms and extends this, telling richer stories of men's diverse relations to traditional masculinity. Among heterosexual men for example, some live in ways which disrupt traditional, heteronormative constructions of manhood (Flood, 2008; Heasley, 2005). Some boys and men simply cannot 'do' traditional masculinity: they are poor at the behaviours which are widely regarded as markers of manhood, such as sport or heterosexual sexual conquest. Some boys and men live in the shadows of traditional masculinity: they do enough straight masculinity to pass or get by, they dwell in spaces free of the bluntest forms of masculinity, and they have a sense of being 'different', although they do not publicly question manhood. Some men 'break the rules' of manhood by publicly questioning its sexist and homophobic norms and advocating for feminism and gay and lesbian rights. Some heterosexual men 'flirt' with dress, friendships, scenes, or other behaviours associated with being gay. Some, indeed, blur the boundaries between straight and gay, male and female (Heasley, 2005).

In short, there is a diversity, a spectrum, of performances of gender among boys and men. We should turn up the volume on this (Bem, 1995), working towards what one could call 'gender multiculturalism', a healthy diversity of ways of being male. We should note those aspects of men's experiences which do not fit dominant narratives of masculinity and highlight 'counter stories' of men's lives and experiences which have been disregarded or marginalised (McGann, 2014).

We must also turn up the volume on change, on the fact of progressive shifts in boys' and men's attitudes and behaviours. This is not a rose-coloured story of uniform and inevitable progress towards gender equality. But highlighting the fact of men's growing support for gender equity and egalitarian manhood will give men hope. It tells men that they are on the right side of history.

Engage men and boys in critical conversations about manhood

Change in norms of manhood will not take place unless boys and men themselves start to question them. We must involve boys and men in discussion of and critical reflection on the Man Box – through structured, facilitated sessions as part of gender diversity and violence prevention education in schools, campuses, and workplaces; via social marketing campaigns on men and gender; in everyday conversations between fathers and sons; and in a host of other ways. Let us invite men and boys to embrace identities of their own making, rather than comforming to singular and constraining masculine scripts. And we can draw here on a wealth of insight on how effectively to engage boys and men (Flood, 2018a).

There is a growing consensus in the 'engaging men' field that work with men must be gender-transformative – it must seek to end gender inequalities and create more gender-equitable relations. A series of reviews document that gender-transformative approaches are more likely to make change, including in outcomes such as HIV and STI transmission, violence perpetration, sexual risk behaviour, and gendered norms and attitudes (Barker, Ricardo, & Nascimento, 2007; Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, & Lippman, 2013; Fleming, Lee, & Dworkin, 2014). A gender-transformative approach is defined by an explicit focus at least in part on a critical examination of gender-related norms and expectations – particularly those related to masculinity – and on increasing gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours, although the term's use is uneven (Dworkin et al., 2013).

Challenge the sources of the Man Box

The fourth strategy for weakening the cultural grip of the Man Box is bolder: challenge it at its source. Dominant ideals of masculinity do not materialise out of thin air, but are produced and reproduced, by people, institutions, policies, and other social forces. There are places in Australia where efforts to promote or defend traditional, patriarchal ideals of masculinity seem particularly energetic: some sporting codes and clubs, some parts of the military, some university residences, some faith institutions, some forms of media, some parts of political parties, and so on. I couch this cautiously, saying 'seem' and 'some', as there is little by way of hard data. Nevertheless, to undermine traditional norms of masculinity, we must work with, and sometimes against the view of, those groups and institutions which propagate them.

It may be particularly important to have men speak out against the Man Box. Men's conformity to traditional masculinity is policed and enforced more by other men than by women. For example, a recent study among US young men aged 11-24 found that it was men more than women who relayed the message "Man up" or "Be a man" to young men. More widely, many of these young men saw it as acceptable to mirror their fathers' and male relatives' treatment of women (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2018). In addition, men's endorsement of masculine norms is influenced far more by their perceptions of other men's beliefs than of women's beliefs, as studies among male university students find (Berkowitz, 2011). Finally, there are signs that when being given education about violence and sexism, men listen more readily to men than women and judge men as less

biased and more competent than women (Flood, 2018a). While these patterns are rooted in sexism, they raise questions about how best to reach and engage men.

At the same time, women's voices and experiences can be powerful and inspiring influences on men. Various studies find that many men's initial sensitisation to the issue of violence against women, for example, was fostered in particular by listening *to women* and women's experience (Casey & Smith, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012). There is great value in men listening to women, and centering women's voices and leadership holds this work accountable.

3. Promote alternatives to the Man Box among boys and men

The final task is to offer boys and men alternatives to the Man Box. If the Man Box is sexist, toxic, ugly, and dangerous, then what should take its place?

Whatever terms we use for desirable alternatives to the Man Box, we must offer some kind of alternative. Boys and men cannot be what they cannot see. Young men who work to end sexism and violence typically can easily identify themselves in terms of what they do *not* want to be (misogynists, rapists, and so on), but they may be less practised at imagining what they *do* what to be (Martin, 2009). We need visible, public models of the forms of masculinities or selfhoods we desire.

It is not hard to identify the values and traits which represent a progressive alternative to the Man Box: gender equality, non-violence, respect, empathy, nurturance, and so on. But how should we describe these? One term visible in work with men is 'healthy masculinity' (Abebe et al., 2018; Petronzio, 2015). Framing the goal as 'healthy masculinity' is accessible, palatable, and allows recognition of harm to the bearers of unhealthy masculinity *and* the people around them. It connects to, and may gain traction from, established public health and health promotion approaches. Yet the term has risks. It may focus only on the impacts of masculinity on men's own health and neglect its embeddedness in wider gender inequalities. Other terms I have seen, therefore, include feminist masculinity, democratic manhood, and 'just men'.

More fundamentally, why talk about healthy *masculinity* at all? Part of the problem of the Man Box is the binary system of gender categories itself. Part of the problem is men's investments in male identity *per se* and the pressure men feel to prove themselves *as men*. If we frame desirable ways of being only in terms of 'masculinity', we leave these untouched or even intensify them. We also risk the essentialist assumption that certain qualities are available only to men and not also to women. An alternative is the promotion of (feminist) androgyny, combining virtues and desirable traits traditionally associated with women with virtues and desirable traits traditionally associated with men. An 'androgyny' strategy involves dissolving the Man Box, such that men are free to choose from among a variety of desirable traits and behaviours, including ones which were stereotypically feminine *or* masculine (Almassi, 2015). Part of our work should be breaking down gender boundaries and hierarchies, lessening the significance of biological sex differences in social life, and encouraging men and boys to disinvest in masculinity – to care less about whether they are perceived as male or masculine.

There is still a case, however, for using notions of masculinity (whether gender-equitable, positive, healthy, feminist, or other) in our work with men and boys, at least as a stage or mid-point. This may give men and boys more space to move away from stereotypical masculinity and closer to qualities socially coded as feminine. Using such notions, rather than generic, ethical selfhood, may help men adopting gender-equitable lives to feel connected to other men, to feel a sense of community or solidarity in their efforts at change.

Whatever vision we have for what men and boys should do and be, first, it must be *feminist*. It must be clearly critical of patriarchal and unjust practices, and based on alternate norms and practices compatible with feminist values and commitments (Almassi, 2015). Second, it must be *diverse and multiple*: able to accommodate and celebrate diverse, positive ways of being and acting. We do not need a new 'man box', a new but narrowly prescriptive vision of manhood. Third, if we frame the desirable goal for men and boys in terms of 'masculinity', it must be *non-essentialist*: avoiding the assumption that particular qualities are available only to men and boys.

We must start with men and boys wherever they are (Crooks, Goodall, Hughes, Jaffe, & Baker, 2007). We must start with men's existing understandings of gender and manhood and their existing commitments to healthy and ethical ways of being, as weak or ambivalent or non-existent as these may be. We must speak to men's experiences and address their concerns (Casey, 2010).

While meeting men where they are, we cannot leave them there. We must invite men into processes of personal and collective change. The *Man Box* survey shows that large numbers of young men support gender equality, at least in some domains, and this provides invaluable leverage for building gender justice. Let us build on these strengths, on the positives already visible in many men's lives. And, let us combine this with a robust critique of the Man Box, of the limitations it places on men and boys and the systemic gender inequalities it sustains.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

The social pressures around what it means to be a 'real man' are strong in Australia, and they impact on the lives of most young men from a very young age. The findings in this research correspond with those from the US, UK and Mexico. The pressures relating to what it means to be a man are everywhere in society and are reinforced and influenced by the closest relationships of young men – families, partners and friends.

Responses to the Man Box survey and focus groups show that perceptions of these social pressures differ across the community and that they may be changing over time. That said, social pressures around being strong, being the income earner, and hypersexuality appear to remain.

It is clear that there is a difference between how young men perceive these pressures and their personal agreement with them. Young men held more progressive views on what it is to be a 'real man' than what they believe society is telling them. Looking at the personal views of young men there is a strong rejection, among the majority, of hypersexuality and the use of violence.

However, there is a substantial minority average of around 30 per cent of young men who endorse most of the Man Box rules. Of particular concern are the high levels of personal endorsement of rules that indicate gender inequitable views, and control of women. It is important to note the possibility that greater numbers of young men may comply with these norms in their everyday lives than they let on in the survey when asked of their personal views.

Consistent with the Man Box Study in the US, UK and Mexico, we find that those inside the Man Box fare more poorly on a range of indicators of mental health and wellbeing, negative feelings, risk-taking, including drinking and traffic accidents, and are more likely to be the victim or perpetrator of violence, and the perpetrator of sexual harassment of women.

The more closely young men adhere to the norms of the Man Box, the more likely they are to experience these negative feelings and behaviours. In a finding that differs from the US and UK, there is no statistically significant difference in levels of life satisfaction and positive affect among those inside and outside the Man Box.

There is a diversity of experiences and views among young men when it comes to norms on being a 'real man', with some evidence that those most outside the Man Box may experience poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes. But it is clear that those who most strongly endorse the Man Box rules report the poorest outcomes on mental health, experiencing/perpetrating bullying violence, perpetrating sexual harassment, drinking, and car accidents.

A call to action

These findings should prompt efforts to support young men to understand, critique and negotiate the norms of the Man Box. If successful, these efforts have the potential to deliver benefits to society, as well as young men themselves in terms of health, wellbeing and safety.

Across all levels of society there must be a focus on building awareness of the Man Box norms and their harmful impacts, weakening their cultural grip, and promoting positive alternatives. In Chapter VI, Associate Professor Michael Flood outlines in detail a framework for social change to achieve this.

At the individual level, everyone (both men and women) can take action by talking about the pressures of the Man Box with the boys and men in their lives, and by modelling positive alternatives to the Man Box norms in front of boys and young men.

The following recommendations are informed by this research and the analysis of Associate Professor Dr Michael Flood, including the framework for action that he identified in order to break down the man box norms. The recommendations contain actions that, if implemented, will begin to unpack the Man Box norms at the societal, community and individual level.
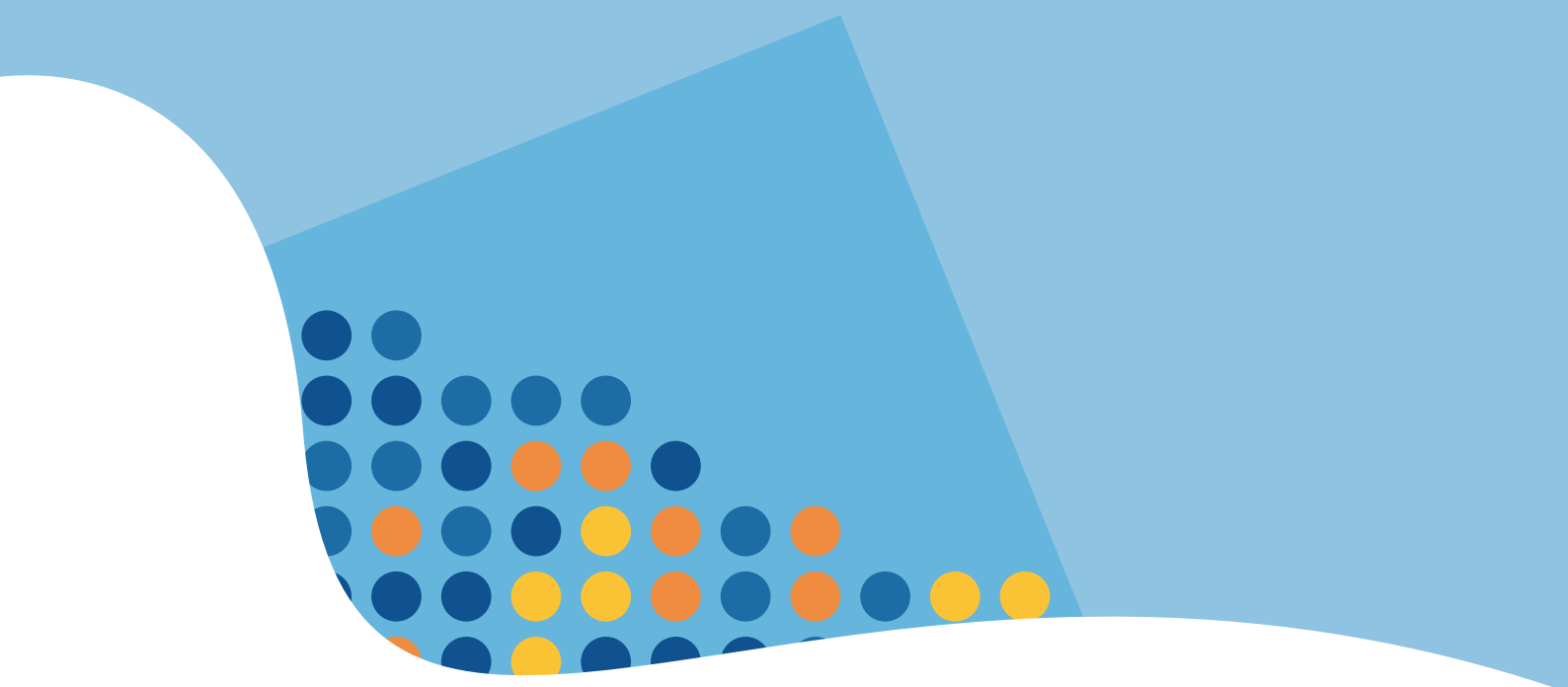
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Table of Contents