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Intersectionality and social justice in programs for boys and men

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ABSTRACT

Increased public attention to issues of gender injustice has led to a proliferation of community-based programs for boys and men designed to educate for gender respect and gender justice. An intersectional approach to this work is now seen as imperative. In practice, however, this approach is far from simple or straightforward. This paper presents data from a broader study of community-based programs in Victoria, Australia designed to support men and boys to adopt more inclusive and respectful masculinities. Drawing on Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional framework of social justice, we foreground the economic, cultural and political justice concerns expressed by program leaders as impacting on boys and men. We argue that considering these forms of injustice within the context of programs for boys and men is important but potentially fraught in pursuing the goals of gender transformation and gender justice.

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Introduction

Increased public attention to issues of gender injustice, and especially sexual harassment and violence, has generated renewed scrutiny on the social construction of masculinity. Such scrutiny has led to a proliferation of community-based programs for boys and men designed to educate for gender respect and gender justice. There is a growing expectation that such programs should be 'intersectional', that is, that they should address the intersecting forms of disadvantage and privilege that structure boys' and men's lives. This paper draws attention to some of these disadvantages from the perspective of leaders of programs for boys and young men in Victoria, Australia.

Educational initiatives aimed at boys and men and espousing progressive gender-related goals – to foster healthy masculinities, promote gender equality, or prevent domestic or sexual violence for example – have burgeoned in countries such as Australia in the past decade. 'Gender transformative' programs aim to challenge restrictive and harmful gender norms and binaries and seek to transform gender inequalities and generate more gender-equitable relations (Keddie, 2020). They are part of a broader field of work with boys and men, including programs and initiatives with diverse roots and

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agendas. Some, for example, have foundations in criminal justice and social work, seeking to divert boys and young men from anti-social and criminal behavior, others are grounded in health promotion and focused on boys' and young men's own health needs (Harland & McCready, 2007, p. 655), and others are feminist informed and activist focused (Promundo-US and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, 2018). Still others come from grassroots 'men's movement' work, including from the 'mythopoetic' strand of the men's movement (Messner, 1997). Some of these are rites of passage or sports-centered programs where the focus is on reconnecting men and boys to a lost essentialised (i.e. strong, protective, paternal) masculinity (as distinct from the dependence and softness of essentialised femininity). Initiatives address a wide variety of outcomes: academic achievement, delinquency, behavioral problems, mental health, physical health, sexual and reproductive health, substance use, masculine identity, father-son relations, and violence (Bandy, 2012).

In the field of masculinities studies in Australia, there is a strong tradition of research and scholarship that has, in different ways, embedded intersectional theory with other gender and cultural theories to illuminate the complexity, contingency, fluidity and nuance of male identities – from Raewyn Connell's *Masculinities* (1995) and *The Men and the Boys* (2000), Jane Kenway et al's *Masculinities: Beyond the Metropolis* (2006) to more recent work such as Andrea Waling's (2019a) *White Masculinity in Contemporary Australia* and Garth Stahl's (2021) *Working-Class Masculinities in Higher Education*.

There is a growing consensus, particularly among more feminist and social justice-oriented programs, that this work must be intersectional. Intersectionality is an approach based on the fundamental recognition that there are intersections among multiple forms of social difference (class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and so on), tied to structures and processes of power and inequality. Intersectional approaches seek to simultaneously consider and address the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage (Cole, 2009, p. 170).

Emphases on an intersectional approach in work with men and boys are informed by wider shifts in fields such as public health, social work and education and developments in feminist scholarship and advocacy. For example, in the early 2000s in the fields of women's health, men's health, and gender there was a rapid growth in applications of intersectional theory and practice (Hankivsky, 2012). In the field of violence prevention, intersectional approaches have been advocated in earnest since the mid-1990s, although their contemporary application e.g. in UK policy (Strid, Walby, & Armstrong, 2013) and USA programming (Armstrong, Gleckman-Krut, & Johnson, 2018) is uneven. In the field of education and gender equality, intersectional approaches to boys' education became a polarizing issue in contexts such as Australia and England in the mid 1990s with a 'what about the boys?' backlash against what many boys' and men's rights advocates claimed were excessive feminist gains in education (see Mills, 2003 for an in-depth analysis of these debates). In response to this backlash, feminists called for an intersectional, which boys?/which girls? approach to assessing the nexus between gender and under-achievement which highlighted that Indigeneity/Race and poverty, not gender, are the most accurate predictors of educational disadvantage (see Collins, Kenway, & McLeod, 2000)

An emerging consensus on the need for an intersectional approach in work with men and boys is visible from studies among advocates and educators and in the principles

articulated for this work. First, advocates and educators in the field often emphasize the need for work with men and boys to address the intersecting forms of social inequality that structure men's and boys' lives. This was the finding, for example, of an international survey among representatives of organizations that engage men and boys in violence prevention (Casey et al., 2013), although there was less certainty over how to do this. Second, accounts of the principles that should guide work with men and boys for gender equality consistently include an emphasis on an intersectional approach. This is visible in general guides to work with men and boys in such areas as health and psychology (American Psychological Association, 2018; Oliffe et al., 2020), international networks' strategic plans (MenEngage Alliance, 2017), other guides on engaging men and boys in building gender equality and preventing violence (European Commission, 2012; Flood, 2019; ICRW, 2018, p. 21; SDC, 2019), and explicit statements of the principles of best practice (Wells, Flood, Boutilier, Goulet, & Dozois, 2020). In addition, a small literature applies an intersectional lens to understanding men's pathways into anti-violence work (Alcalde, 2014; Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015; Peretz, 2017).

There are many frameworks in the PVAW (preventing violence against women) sphere that provide guidance about what such principles might look like in practice. Consistent with feminist pedagogies, many advocate for an inclusive, respectful, collaborative, participant-centered, dialogic and culturally relevant approach where boys and men meaningfully connect with their personal experiences and the needs of their local communities to address particular gender issues (Keddie, 2020; Enns & Sinacore, 2005; OurWatch, 2019). This is an approach that can be mindful of intersectionality in terms of working from where boys and men are at – i.e. examining issues that connect with how they are experiencing privilege and power, that are of interest to them personally and that they are ready to take action on (Flood, 2019; OurWatch, 2019). Such inclusive and connected pedagogies are central to creating safe, open and trusting spaces where participants feel comfortable to share their personal stories but also where they can be receptive to critically reflecting on difficult and discomforting issues and experiences. Gender transformative work with men and boys can be confronting; it necessarily involves challenging masculine privilege and men's complicity in gender injustice and thus can lead to resistance and defensiveness (Flood, 2019). Moving beyond this resistance, requires boys and men to be vulnerable – to relinquish the desire for control and certainty associated with stoic or dominant masculinities and embrace the uncertainty and inter-relations of inclusive and respectful masculinities (see Pease, 2020).

This paper presents data from a broader study of community-based programs designed to support men and boys to adopt more inclusive and respectful masculinities. It draws on interviews with nine program leaders to foreground key justice concerns seen as impacting on boys and men. Before saying more about the data, however, what does it mean to adopt an intersectional approach?

Intersectionality in theory and practice

Although there are heterogenous definitions and uses of intersectionality (Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2), four elements are typical. First, intersectionality emphasizes the lived experiences and struggles of oppressed groups and previously excluded communities as a starting point for the development of theory and knowledge (Dill & Zambrana,

2009, pp. 5–6). Second, all people are seen as characterized simultaneously by their membership to multiple social categories, and these categories are seen as interconnected (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016, p. 156). Third, dimensions of power and inequality are seen to be embedded within each of these social categories. Fourth, the categories are seen as both properties of the individual (to do with their identities) and characteristics of the social order (to do with social structures, institutions, and interpersonal interactions) (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016, p. 157). As Ferree (2010) summarizes, an approach or perspective can be labeled intersectional 'if it takes multiple relations of inequality as the norm, sees them as processes that shape each other, and considers how they interactively define the identities and experiences – and thus analytic standpoints – of individuals and groups' (Ferree, 2010, p. 428).

Intersectionality is tied fundamentally to social justice. As a theoretical or conceptual approach, intersectionality is best understood as a critical theory. It seeks to empower or liberate individuals and groups from socially organized inequalities. It assumes that power relations are involved in the construction of thought, knowledge, and experience. It has a practical and political orientation, emphasizing the goal of social justice and advocating for the oppressed and disadvantaged (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016, p. 158). As Patricia Hill Collins notes, intersectionality is 'a critical analytic lens that serves social justice' (Collins, 2009, p. vii).

In some quarters of intersectional scholarship there was a drift in the 1990s away from the social structural analysis of social problems and from an emphasis on institutional responses to social inequalities, towards a focus on personal identity narratives. But there have also been calls to turn attention back to the social structural processes by which inequality is organized and the mechanisms that can be used to transform these structures (Collins, 2009, pp. ix–x). Intersectional analysis ideally operates at both the individual level and the societal or structural level, examining 'the ways systems of power are implicated in the development, organization, and maintenance of inequalities and social injustice' (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 4). This includes attention to the ideological, symbolic, or ideological processes that sustain and normalize injustice.

Intersectional approaches often focus on matters of disadvantage rather than privilege. Yet any system of social inequality by definition will involve both. Privilege refers to systematically conferred and unearned advantages individuals receive because of their membership to dominant groups (Bailey, 1998). Peggy McIntosh famously wrote in 1989 of the invisible 'knapsack' of unearned assets that members of privileged groups can count on and yet to which they remain oblivious (McIntosh, 1989). Despite such recognitions, much intersectional scholarship has centered on the particular positions of multiply marginalized subjects, omitting an explicit examination of identities that are privileged along multiple axes of difference (Nash, 2008). Still, social science research on privilege has grown in the past three decades, and as McIntosh (2012) herself noted more recently, the study of power, discrimination, and inequality is inaccurate if it leaves out privilege.

An intersectionality approach to the study of masculine privilege is thus crucial (see Dharani, Vergo, & April, 2021; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Thomas, 2017). However, drawing on theories of intersectionality to make sense of the injustices experienced by boys and men may be seen as problematic given this approach has tended to focus on matters of disadvantage. Researchers using this theory must be mindful then, of not

appropriating this feminist concept in questionable ways. As Henry (2017) points out, this means acknowledging the black feminist history of the concept and ensuring that relations of masculine privilege are revealed and challenged. Mindful of these issues, we draw on this concept in this paper with caution – as the previous and forthcoming paragraphs illustrate, we recognize and respect the politics of the origin of this term as one of black feminist theorizing and activism. In our focus on boys and men, we also draw on this concept (in relation to social justice, as explained in the next sections) in feminist ways that recognize and problematize masculine privilege but also the multiple forms of oppression that some boys and men experience within the context of broader economic, cultural and political injustices (Henry, 2017).

Given the attention to social injustice in intersectional approaches, it is unsurprising that they include theorisations of the dimensions of this injustice. Early intersectional feminist writing included accounts of the key features of social injustice, overlapping here with other feminist and progressive efforts to document, theorize, and challenge social injustice. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), for example, distinguished between three processes involved in intersecting oppressions: structural, political, and representational. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) wrote that inequalities are organized and maintained through four interrelated domains: structural (society's institutional structures), disciplinary (bureaucratic practices), hegemonic (cultural ideologies, images, and representations), and interpersonal (patterns of interaction between individuals and groups).

More recently, Nancy Fraser (2009a) defined injustice as occurring on three dimensions: economic, cultural and political. Economic injustice arises when the structures of society generate maldistribution or class inequality for particular social groups. Cultural injustices arise when institutionalized or hierarchical patterns of cultural value generate misrecognition or status inequality for particular social groups. Political injustices arise when some individuals or groups are not accorded equal voice in decision making about justice claims. According to Fraser, justice requires 'parity of participation', a condition where social arrangements are such that all individuals are able to 'participate as peers in social life'. For this to occur, obstacles of economic, cultural and political injustice need to be overcome. Towards participatory parity Fraser argues that justice for all is possible when the structures of the economy reflect an equitable distribution of material resources, when the status order reflects equitable patterns of cultural recognition, and when the constitution of political space ensures equitable representation (Fraser, 2009a).

In this paper, we draw on Fraser's work to consider areas of injustice confronting boys and men.

Research context and processes

The paper presents data from a broader study of community-based programs designed to support men and boys to adopt more inclusive and respectful masculinities. A central focus of this study is to ascertain the extent to which these programs might reflect and promote social justice. We explored, in particular, how these programs understand masculinity and inclusion in their work with boys and men and how these understandings support the goals of social justice. Relevant ethical approval for this study was gained through the lead author's university.

The study involved a stocktake of programs (within one state in Australia), interviews with program leaders, and follow up case studies. We identified over 40 programs for potential participation on the basis of the criteria that: (1) they seek in some way to improve men's lives; (2) they have an explicit and self-conscious focus on masculinities; (3) they are predominantly community based; and (4) they include young men (15–35 years). The program types ranged from those designed around rites of passage or sport to those that supported disadvantaged youth. All were focused on violence prevention, although some were more explicit about this focus with some of these activist oriented. All of the programs involved young men, but some also included young women. The participants of the programs were from a range of class and ethnic backgrounds.

Eighteen program leaders agreed to participate in an interview. The program leaders were generally young men from a range of cultural backgrounds. In this paper we present interview data from program leaders of nine programs. They were selected because their views and comments foreground the significance of adopting an intersectional and social justice approach to working with boys and men in gender transformative ways. There were five broad types of program, with programs given the following pseudonyms:

- Rites of passage programs: Passage 1, Passage 2
- Violence prevention programs: Prevention 1, Prevention 2
- Sports-focused programs: Sports 1, Sports 3
- Programs for supporting disadvantaged young men: Support 1, Support 2
- Activist focused program: Activism 3

The data presented are not intended to be representative of all programs in the study, nor of masculinities programs more broadly. Thus, there are no claims to generalisability – rather, we present the data and analysis as points of resonance and provocation for those working in this space.

The interviews were conducted by a member of the research team via Zoom. Interviews lasted between 20 and 60 min (the average interview time was about 45 min) and focused on gathering data on (a) educators and facilitators (their role and experience); (b) program information (the purpose/aims, curriculum, duration, benefit, challenges); (c) program funding and accountability; (d) program design and participants; (e) program facilitation; and (f) program support for gender/social justice.

The data were qualitatively analyzed to foreground the justice concerns of the program leaders. To this end, we organize these concerns conceptually around Fraser's three dimensions of injustice – economic, cultural, and political (2009a) as these were recurring themes that arose from several readings and re-readings of the interview data. The following sections highlight these concerns.

Attention to social injustice among boys' programs

Economic injustice

The structures of the economy tend to reflect an inequitable distribution of material resources in ways that disadvantage women as a group. Economic justice involves re-

allocating resources on the basis of this material disadvantage (Fraser, 2009a). Some ostensibly gender-blind economic measures and policies adopted by governments have gendered consequences, such as support for male-dominated primary and secondary industries (extraction and manufacturing). Feminist economics notes that macroeconomic policies often sustain gender inequalities in the relations of work and care (Berik & Kongar, 2021). Work in the gender justice space has tended to focus on redistributive justice for girls and women as they tend to be in need of this form of justice (e.g. women tend to be the focus of tertiary support such as the state resourcing of women's refuges and domestic violence support). However, gender-conscious work with men and boys shows growing attention to economic relations, in several ways. First, there is growing recognition in general of diversities in boys' and men's experiences of power and privilege, including of the economic disadvantages men face (ICRW, 2018, p. 20). Second, particularly in work and research among men in countries in the Global South, there is a growing emphasis on economic relations as sustaining gender inequalities and violence against women (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Kelbert & Hossain, 2014). Third, there are examinations, for example, of how economic marginalization and shifting patterns of male economic authority and decision-making may contribute to men's intimate partner violence (ICRW, 2018, p. 57; Stern, Heise, & McLean, 2018). This third point is consistent with key research that continues to associate violence with low social status and low income (see Holter, Svare, & Egeland, 2009). Fourth, in response to concerns about boys' poor educational performance and the fear that this might lead to future economic and social disadvantage (Keddie, 2012), education initiatives for boys in the areas of literacy and behavior have proliferated, especially since the mid 1990s (Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

Program leaders' attention to economic injustice centered on two themes: the challenges of working with economically disadvantaged boys and men, and the lack of funding and support for the programs themselves. Some of the programs were explicitly designed to support economically disadvantaged boys and men. The impacts of poverty on these boys and men were of grave concern, as the leader of the Support 2 program stated:

> We recognised that when young people come here, they have got a whole life history that isn't very positive. So, we are not going to change that overnight; but we can start actively addressing it.

This leader further stated that a 'scary thing' about his work is that the young people 'can't afford to dream' because their 'poverty is so intense.' He described 'common behaviours' arising from this poverty and its intersection with issues of masculinity as 'really bad communication skills, short fuses, challenging behaviours; all that kind of stereotypical stuff; but most of it is based on the fact, "They don't know how else to revolt".' Other program leaders mentioned the negative impacts of trauma and neglect also associated with poverty. For the leader of Prevention 2, such circumstances led to 'beautiful kids … doing bad things.' Other leaders spoke of the impact on young men of suicide in their communities. For a few of the programs, suicide and its associated mental health and social issues were the impetus to create programs of support for young men. The leader of Passage 1 explained, for example, our 'principal purpose is to promote and

assist with the prevention of suicide, self-harm, substance abuse [and] particularly depression and under-achievement'.

Redistributive justice for men and boys in ways that might redress broader issues of poverty and their impacts is important for gender transformative programs. Poverty and its impacts on masculinity are crucial to consider in how enactments of harmful masculinity might be compounded (Connell, 2000).

Also important is adequate resourcing to ensure programs achieve their aims. A key theme raised by many of the leaders in the study related to this issue of resourcing – especially, the precarity and lack of funding to effectively implement their programs. As the leader of the Sports 3 program remarked: 'keeping the price affordable for a club means that we have to get external funders. We spend an awful lot of time trying to impress potential funders to support us.' The leader of Prevention 1 stated, 'the real problem … is … sustainab[ility] so, my biggest question is: 'how do you sustainably fund this stuff?' While he noted the recent increase in government support for masculinities work, he also expressed a concern that this work was 'taking money away from domestic violence' work led by women, as women's organizations themselves have expressed (Flood, 2019). The broader reality is that there is a lack of funding in this area for women especially in relation to supporting victims and survivors of domestic and family violence (Fitz-Gibbon, 2020).

Also consistent with concerns expressed by women's organizations, the leader of Prevention 1 remarked that the grant space was competitive where organizations were 'chasing up small amounts of money' and that he didn't want to be part of that. Others raised concern about the limited resources within programs in relation to the number of sessions and time allocated to sessions as inadequate for building the relations of trust and to cover the content of the program necessary for quality learning. The leader of Prevention 1 explained:

> [our program and curriculum are] designed for seven sessions and that's following … best practice [for this particular model of curriculum]; and recognising that it is a journey. Like, you are not going to change people in one session; you need more sessions with those boys to keep going deeper, keep stripping it away … to be honest, I wish I could do it for a year. Seven sessions is not enough …

As is well recognized, it is simplistic to align economic disadvantage with restrictive or harmful masculinities and it is important that redistributive justice in relation to gender is focused primarily on supporting women and girls. However, it is also important to understand the disenfranchisement that arises through poverty and its negative impacts on men and boys. In order to make substantial and lasting change, gender transformative programs for boys and men also require sustainable and sufficient resourcing, while this should not take away from resourcing for women's rights efforts among women and girls (ICRW, 2018, p. 6, 43–44).

Cultural injustice

The status order in Australia reflects inequitable patterns of cultural recognition with the exclusion and/or maligning of particular groups. In relation to gender, it is women and girls who tend to be trivialized on the basis of their culture – i.e. traits associated with traditional or essentialised femininity have tended to be trivialized in descendent opposition

to traits associated with traditional or dominant masculinities (Fraser, 2009b). Cultural justice involves recognizing and valuing the culture of these groups. Although men's rights groups might have us believe that men are culturally maligned (see Bates, 2020; Kimmel, 2013), it is generally agreed that men are rarely undermined or trivialized on the basis of being a man (although they may indeed be trivialized for not being 'man enough'). Men are more likely to be subject to cultural misrecognition on the basis of other identity relations such as race, ethnicity, sexuality and ability, as Connell's (1995) hierarchies of masculinity outlined decades ago. Practices of cultural misrecognition (e.g. in the form of racial essentialism or homophobia) continue to offend and shame when directed to boys and men who do not fit with normalized or idealized versions of (read, white, middle class, able-bodied) masculinity (Allan, 2018; Kimmel, 2013). Program leaders' attention to cultural injustice centered on these forms of misrecognition.

Leaders for some of the programs emphasized questions of culture as significant in their work with men. At Support 1, for example, a program designed to support African youth, the leader noted the difficulty of being asked to 'engage' (African men) in the community … because they are from different countries [and different] cultural backgrounds'. He noted, in particular, the different issues these young men experienced in relation to their migrant and refugee status and the significance of not essentialising this group and their needs, as he explained:

> There are those who migrate to Australia as skilled migrants … and those who migrate as refugees to Australia … their needs are very different … the assumption [is] because [they're] African, that [they have] had the same struggles [but] as a refugee [it's] very different … [they come] from a background of trauma, violence and [a lack of] basic education.

Another program leader mentioned contentions of culture associated with the LGBTQI+ community. The leader of Prevention 2 spoke of learning an important lesson from one of his male participants following a session he conducted with a group of men during which he stated:

> "Men really don't understand what it's like, you know, when women have that fear [of gendered violence]; men will never understand that." I saw this guy had waited until everyone had gone; and we had a chat. He said, "You can't say that. I am a gay man and I have fear." I carried that with me ever since; and I thank him for it.

These comments highlight the complex ways in which privilege and oppression intersect in relation to cultural recognition. Culture as a human practice of representation and organization is complex, relational, contextual and shifting and formed through dialogues with other cultures (Benhabib, 2002). The example at Support 1 highlights the dangers of cultural reductionism in subsuming these complexities and thus misrecognizing important issues of difference within cultural groups that are crucial to consider in working with boys and men (e.g. the different needs and experiences of migrants and refugees). There are also risks for culturally marginalized men (as with all men) – men who align themselves with gender equality and women may be subject to 'othering' practices (e.g. being seen by other men as traitors to their gender and less 'masculine') (Dworkin, Fleming, & Colvin, 2015). The Prevention 2 example highlights the dangers of cultural reductionism in presuming a gender binarism and heterosexuality in speaking about gendered violence that misrecognizes hierarchies of masculinity and the exclusion

of homosexuality (Connell, 2000). Such reductionism does not acknowledge how privilege and oppression are experienced by men and boys differently in relation to culture.

Political injustice

The constitution of political space in Australia is inequitable in terms of who is represented (e.g. through political governance) with some groups excluded or not well represented (on the basis of gender but also sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion and ability). Political justice is a democratic principle that involves efforts to accord all a voice (Fraser, 2009a). White men in general tend to benefit from this constitution of political space, for example through over-representation in positions of power in politics, business and the judiciary. However, many men do not feel well represented and many feel powerless despite this broader reality (Messerschmidt, 2018). Such feelings are certainly warranted for men and boys who, for instance, are marginalized on the basis of race. In relation to gender reform, what is becoming particularly problematic is how this sense of powerlessness is being articulated by men and boys generally. Program leaders' attention to political injustice tended to focus on men's misplaced sense of exclusion or marginalization. However, there was also a concern expressed about the need to acknowledge men's voices in terms of their trauma and vulnerabilities, while not excusing engagement in harmful masculinities.

Boys and men may feel silenced or blamed by efforts to address gender equality and by the contemporary climate of attention to gender equality, as some of the program leaders made clear. Some leaders referred to boys' and young men's resistance and alienation as produced through feeling blamed for gender inequality and gendered violence – even the idea of 'healthy' masculinities was, for one leader, difficult to raise with some groups because of the fear of 'push back' (Prevention 2). Such resistance has been documented in various violence prevention and gender equality initiatives (Flood, 2019). More widely, large proportions of men in Australia feel that gender equality measures are unfair. In a 2018 survey, 42% agreed that 'Men and boys are increasingly excluded from measures to improve gender equality' and 41% agreed that 'Political correctness gives women an advantage in the workplace' (Evans, Haussegger, Halupka, & Rowe, 2018). Levels of agreement with such statements were at similar levels even among the youngest cohorts of males in this national survey, males who are similar in age to the typical participants in the programs. In working with boys and young men, it is vital to acknowledge, work with, and challenge such perceptions.

Countering ideas that gender equality measures are unfair for males does not mean silencing boys' and men's experiences of hurt and trauma. It is important to acknowledge the genuine trauma some boys and men have experienced or are experiencing (Atkinson, 2002), as the leader of Support 1 noted:

> I just found that most people have … gone through trauma; and it is really easy for that to be triggered because they have gone through a lot, some of them and people have to understand that … it takes time for them to heal and just understanding that part … not for me to push them. Take [it] at their own pace … [when they are] ready to open up in their own time.

Many of the program leaders emphasized the need to acknowledge and work with trauma given its significance and prevalence in the young men's lives. Consistent with some of the examples presented earlier, the leaders of Prevention 1 and Sports 3 described the

sorts of trauma that some of the young men were dealing with such as the suicide of friends, their own and others' violence and self-harm and drug and alcohol abuse. The view expressed by these leaders was that acknowledging this trauma was important in supporting the young men's well-being and mental health:

> [we] have had so many conversations about suicide with young men; thinking about emotional/mental health; thinking about relationships with women; thinking about violence towards each other (Prevention 1).

> … in the well-being and mental health, we talk about "why statistics are so skewed towards men and suicide"; and we will talk about it then, some of the pressures of masculinity (Sports 3).

In gendered violence research and practice, much has been written about the significance of recognizing the traumatic impacts of domestic and family violence on women and children and the significance of a trauma-informed approach – that is sensitive to such impacts and supports physical, psychological and emotional safety for everyone (Cutuli, Alderfer, & Marsac, 2019; Hopper, Bassuk, & and Olivet, 2010). Gender transformative programs that aim to challenge patriarchal practices and systems of gender inequality may not prioritize a focus on boys' and men's trauma. At the same time, there is growing attention in the 'engaging men' field to men's and boys' experiences of trauma in response to sexual violence victimization e.g. in conflict settings, in relation to incarceration, and more broadly in the course of the policing of masculinity. As some of the program leaders in this paper articulate, trauma (especially in relation to shame) is an issue that is experienced by many boys and men in relation to their experiences of masculinity (and its intersection with other identities, conditions and relations) and thus should be a key focus within these programs.

A central concern here as much research has articulated (see Keddie, 2020) is acknowledging and expressing empathy in relation to boys' and men's trauma while also holding them responsible and accountable for their take up or complicity in harmful understandings and enactments of masculinity. Narratives of men as victims are often offered within anti-feminist agendas. Expressing the existence of men's vulnerabilities may be heard in these terms. This seemed to be the case for the program leader of Prevention 2 who described how, in discussing gendered violence, he was 'shouted down' by a group of women when he suggested that 'men are dealing with their own issues [of] grief and trauma; and they are feeling vulnerable themselves.'

An approach to gender transformation that gives voice to boys' and men's feelings of vulnerability and experiences of trauma does not mean excusing them for their engagement in harmful versions of masculinity. It means acknowledging these feelings and experiences, while continuing to promote equitable behaviors and relations. As the leader of Passage 3 stated, 'we certainly don't want to shame the boys. We want to encourage honesty in the way the boys talk freely' but we also do not want to accept or condone certain behavior.

Concluding discussion: a social justice approach to engaging boys and young men

This paper has highlighted the ongoing importance of a social justice/intersectional approach to working with boys and men within the context of gender transformative

programs. Organizing the program leader data within Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional model drew attention to some of the economic, cultural and political injustices that impact on the lives of boys and men and that complicate gender transformative work. Program leaders referred to the challenges of working with boys and men who suffer economic disadvantage, and a lack of funding and support for the programs themselves (economic injustice); they spoke of the challenges of working with boys and men who are subject to cultural misrecognition on the basis of race and sexuality (cultural injustice); and they noted (while some of it was misplaced), boys' and men's sense of exclusion or marginalization and the need to acknowledge their voices in terms of their trauma and vulnerabilities. Consistent with intersectional theory (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016), this analysis indicates the importance program leaders placed on understanding and attempting to remedy the struggles and oppressions that the men and boys in their care experience based on multiple and interconnected social categories and structural conditions.

Such remedies are important but there is a danger here that a focus on boys' and men's disadvantage may detract from a focus on challenging harmful masculinities. While many men and boys experience intersecting economic, cultural, and political disadvantage, all men benefit in some way from the patriarchal gender order – an order that contributes to gender injustice. In working with boys and men, it is crucial for intersectional and social justice approaches to recognize and challenge the gender privilege men and boys accrue from this order.

The concerns raised in this paper draw attention to a key dilemma – how to pursue a gender transformative approach that is critical of boys' and men's perpetuation of and complicity in gender inequality at the same time as appreciating the intersections of disadvantage and injustice in their lives. An empathetic focus on intersectionality and its impacts on men may detract from a problematizing of masculinity and patriarchy as the key factors perpetuating gender inequality; while a primary focus on problematizing masculinity may incite alienation and resistance through men and boys feeling blamed and shamed (Keddie & Bartel, 2021; Flood, 2019).

Programs for boys and men that seek to navigate this dilemma will acknowledge the discomfort inherent in gender transformative work (see Keddie, 2020; Zembylas, 2013). As noted earlier, they will understand that problematizing masculinity and patriarchy with boys and men will be discomforting because it will likely involve 'challenging and unsettling taken-for-granted and deeply embedded ways of feeling, knowing and being' a boy/man (Keddie, 2020, p. 99). It is well recognized that such gender transformative work with boys and men is best facilitated through processes of critical self-reflection on 'the very terms by which [men/boys] give an account of [themselves] and others, by which [they] make [themselves] and others intelligible and recognizable'' (Keddie, 2020, p. 3-4; see Butler, 2005; Hemmings, 2012). Self-reflective exercises (around the social construction of masculinity) have been an important part of gender transformative work in programs for boys and men for decades (see Keddie & Mills, 2007; OurWatch, 2019; Promundo-US & Plan International Canada, 2020). This involves boys and men reflecting on their 'doing' of masculinity across time and place; how they understand such doing in relation to their own values, and norms; and how it relates to issues of privilege and broader societal values and norms (Holmes, 2010; Waling, 2019b). Central to

this work are boys' and men's reflexive engagements with the emotional complexity and depth of their gendering experiences (Connell, 2000; de Boise & Hearn, 2017). This is 'an emotional, embodied and cognitive process' through which boys and men can better understand their lives (Waling, 2019b, p. 140; see also Holmes, 2010). It is a process that requires vulnerability and struggle in delving critically into the how and why we become 'committed to a practice or role' (Waling, 2019b, p. 102).

Researchers in this space have offered frameworks for how such engagements might be scaffolded in ways that recognize and navigate the emotional intensities of this work. One such framework is critical affective literacy (Anwaruddin, 2016) that is organized around the following questions (Keddie & Bartel, 2021):

> 1) Why do we feel what we feel? What do emotions do? 2) How can we stand in the shoes of others? 3) How do particular emotions become attached to particular people, objects and ideas through everyday politics? and 4) How can what we say and feel become what we do?

Keddie and Bartel (2021) detail how these sorts of questions might be useful for gender transformative work with boys and men. Critically examining emotions and feelings is central here because, as Pease (2012, p. 138) has argued:

> When men are emotionally engaged in the injustices experienced by women, they are more likely to interrogate their own complicity in women's oppression and to recognise their responsibility to challenge their unearned advantages.

Feminist researchers have argued for some time that emotions and feelings are socially transformative and requisite for sustainable social transformation – supporting boys' and men's critical understanding of their feelings and emotions in relation to matters of gender justice may support them to feel differently and thus know differently (Keddie, 2020; Boler, 1997; Hemmings, 2012; Kukar, 2016).

As the data presented in this paper bring to light, it is imperative that gender transformative work with boys and men recognizes how dimensions of economic, cultural and political injustice impact on them. However, it is also imperative to understand these injustices within the broader context of gendered violence where males are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence against women, children, and other adult males. It is therefore crucial that any recognition of the injustices confronting boys and men does not absolve them of their responsibility and complicity in perpetuating gender inequality. These dilemmas are not new but, as the program leaders in this paper attest, they are ongoing problems that need ongoing consideration and theorizing. It is hoped that this paper has in some way contributed to this consideration and theorizing.

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