

Men in focus

Unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women



Evidence review



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Executive summary

Background

This research project has been commissioned and supported by the Victorian Government as part of its commitment to help further develop effective strategies for preventing violence against women in Australia as articulated in *Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*.¹

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women. Men are a significant part of the problem, that is, it is primarily men who perpetrate violence against women. Efforts to prevent this violence must include both a specific conceptual focus on men and masculinities as well as a practical focus on engaging men. This evidence review seeks to build on existing primary prevention knowledge and work by developing a deeper understanding of the links between masculinities and violence against women and ways to engage men and boys in prevention efforts.

International and national research shows that dominant forms and patterns of masculinity and, in particular, men's rigid attachments to these forms, help to drive violence against women. These dominant forms include the particular attitudes, norms, roles, practices and structures that men are expected to conform to, display and participate in. This review provides an overview and critical discussion of the scholarship on masculinities in order to understand the dynamics of contemporary masculinities. Further, it reviews the international and Australian research on men, masculinities and violence against women to help understand the links between dominant forms and patterns of masculinity and violence against women. It draws out the implications of the literature for prevention work by suggesting how challenges to harmful forms of masculinity and the engaging of men in prevention efforts can help reduce and prevent violence against women.

Key findings and conclusions

In line with existing research on the prevention of violence against women, this review found there are differences in how men and women perpetrate and/or experience violence, with the majority of violent acts – including physical, sexual, financial, emotional and cultural forms of violence – overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. Women who experience structural inequality and other forms of discrimination, such as racism, classism, ableism, homophobia and colonialism, are most likely to experience violence at the hands of men and suffer severe impacts due to this violence. These findings highlight the importance of further developing and implementing work that focuses on men and masculinities in efforts to prevent violence against women.

The review found that rather than focusing only at the individual level, or seeking single-factor explanations, prevention efforts require a comprehensive focus on how masculinities and gender inequality operate at all different levels of society. It concludes that prevention efforts should aim to be gender transformative. That is, to actively challenge dominant forms and patterns of masculinity that operate at and across structural, systemic, organisational, community, interpersonal and individual levels of society.

A deeper conceptual understanding of masculinities and how they work is therefore integral to prevention work. The research shows masculinity to be a social construction, one that shifts and changes over time and place. Scholars describe masculinity as multiple and situational. The majority of men do not conform to one single model of masculinity, nor do they perform masculinity in the same way across different contexts. Further, masculinity intersects with other axes of identity and social location, such as race, class, sexuality, religion, ability and age, to produce multiple masculinities and different experiences of being a man. This means that dominant forms of masculinity intersect with gender inequality and other structural inequalities and forms of disadvantage to help shape men's violence against women.

This points to a need for prevention work to employ frameworks that emphasise masculinity as being multiple and situational and that capture these complexities. In particular, a focus on intersectionality and on structural-based approaches is important for understanding differences among men and how these differences shape men's violence against women. Further, this emphasis highlights the limitations of approaches that are essentialist and binary-driven – approaches that rely on, uphold and naturalise the gender binary. Such approaches can impede prevention efforts that seek to challenge gender norms, structures and practices, and can also exclude and negatively impact trans, gender diverse and intersex people.

Although masculinity is described as plural and situational, research shows there are *dominant forms and patterns of masculinity* that men are expected, and sometimes pressured, to adhere to and support. These work to maintain an overall system of gender inequality – that is, the power men as a group have over women as a group – and they also help to drive violence against women. Men who form rigid attachments to the norms and expectations of masculinity are more likely to demonstrate sexist attitudes and behaviours and to perpetrate violence against women – especially when their masculinity is challenged or when they find it difficult to live up to these standards. Men who experience social discrimination and disadvantage may also rely on dominant forms of masculinity, including expressions of aggression and violence, to assert some measure of control or power in their lives.

These norms and behaviours of masculinity are central to male peer relationships and can provide ways for men to relate to each other and demonstrate or 'prove' their manhood. They are often promoted and maintained in a range of sites and settings. This includes settings in which large groups of men engage, such as male-dominated workplaces or settings where violence and aggression are commonly supported, legitimised and explicitly associated with masculinity – the military or high-contact sports, for example. It is therefore necessary to unpack and challenge these dominant forms of masculinity in order to help prevent violence against women.

The research points to and outlines a number of promising approaches, both for the broader prevention work that aims to address masculinities and for initiatives that seek to directly engage men and boys. The review provides an overview of key programs and initiatives as highlighted in the literature and examines the specific strategies and approaches commonly employed by policy makers and practitioners. Many of these are education-based, and are delivered through direct participation programs and curriculums and through media campaigns and initiatives. These aim to increase men's awareness, encourage reflection, and build their knowledge of and capacity to actively challenge dominant forms of masculinity to help prevent violence against women.

The review suggests that well-designed programs and initiatives that effectively engage men and boys to reflect on and challenge dominant forms of masculinity can contribute to the reduction and prevention of violence against women. It notes the limitations of a 'one size fits all' approach, and advocates for the use of multiple strategies across all different levels of society. It also recommends a range of different and tailored strategies be used to engage different groups of men in ways that are meaningful and relevant to those audiences. Further, it highlights a number of key settings and contexts that offer opportunities to engage men or boys in different ways – for example, in education, in sports settings, in workplaces, or in men's roles as fathers. For men who experience structural/social discrimination and disadvantage, strategies should be community-driven, culturally relevant and should avoid alienating these men and/or reinforcing the structures and discourses of discrimination that impact them.

The review notes that to date, few initiatives have been comprehensively evaluated. There is a lack of up-to-date data that measures the effectiveness of initiatives which seek to engage men and boys in prevention efforts, particularly in an Australian context. An increased focus on evaluation to measure and monitor the impact of this work is critical.

The work of engaging men and boys in gender equality and primary prevention is met with a number of salient challenges that need to be carefully managed. This review provides an outline and analysis of the most pressing challenges that emerge in this work. In particular, it discusses a number of key obstacles that can prevent men from engaging. These include the need to effectively address men's complicity in and support for a system of gender inequality that negatively impacts women (and those who are sexually and gender diverse) while simultaneously conferring benefits to men. Initiatives and efforts that challenge this system are often met with resistance, and in some cases aggressive backlash from men. Therefore, addressing men's complicity in maintaining gender inequality, and dealing with and responding to the resistance and backlash this work sometimes provokes remain significant challenges.

Further, the research shows that the manner in which some prevention strategies are framed can be counterproductive or may even perpetuate gender inequality. For example, strategies that rely on stereotypes of masculinity to engage men can reinforce and inadvertently promote dominant forms of masculinity and gender inequality. Similarly, a disproportionate focus on how addressing masculinity can benefit men risks sidelining women and can distract from the core focus of work to prevent violence against women.

Dominant patterns of masculinity have been found to produce:

- negative health and wellbeing outcomes for men, including suicide and depression
- the development of poor coping mechanisms and help-seeking behaviours
- more frequent involvement in incidents of violence and bullying

Men who are negatively impacted by other systems and structures of discrimination and disadvantage suffer disproportionate negative impacts to their health and wellbeing compared to other men. Building men's awareness of the negative impacts of masculinity and promoting to them the benefits of challenging dominant forms of masculinity provides an effective avenue for engaging men in the prevention of violence against women. Used carefully, this strategy can produce positive outcomes. However, it is important that this approach does not make men the focus of the issue nor marginalise women's voices and concerns. Maintaining accountability to women remains key.

In line with other work being developed in the sector, this review confirms that unpacking masculinities and effectively engaging men and boys is an important part of the strategy for preventing violence against women. This work is challenging but increasingly necessary given the widely acknowledged need to transform the current gender system in order to prevent men's violence against women.

Implications

A number of considerations for policy makers and practitioners that emerge from this review are described in detail in Section 6.1. These include the need to:

- incorporate work that unpacks and addresses masculinities into prevention efforts generally
- specifically engage men and boys in prevention efforts
- implement this work across all societal levels, to address not only individual men's attitudes and behaviours, but also social norms, structures and practices
- apply an intersectional approach to ensure consideration of the different dynamics of masculinity for different groups of men, and to engage the full diversity of men and boys in prevention
- build the evidence base
- build partnerships and collaborations

Introduction

The problem of men's violence against women has been well-documented within academic, social policy and public health contexts in Australia, and is increasingly entering the public discourse. While the women's movement, governments, police and justice systems, communities, organisations and individuals have been *responding* to this problem for decades, recently there has been an increased understanding of the need for response activities to be combined with primary prevention strategies. Most recently, there is growing attention to the need for prevention efforts to include a conceptual focus on masculinities and a practical focus on engaging men in order for prevention to be effective.

This paper is a review and analysis of the existing research and evidence. It seeks to understand the links between dominant forms and patterns of masculinity and violence against women. It considers how prevention efforts can best address and challenge these dominant forms. This includes consideration of how to effectively engage men and boys in prevention work. The prevention of violence against women is a long-term task that requires large-scale social and structural change. Men as a group hold the majority of power in our political, economic and social structures and institutions. Therefore, the effective engagement of men is vital for realising change. Men and masculinities are a significant part of the problem, but they can also be a part of the solution.

Much of the research that focuses on masculinity and its links to violence against women has been produced within an academic context, with limited efforts thus far to apply this knowledge to policy and practice settings.² At the same time, the academic research on masculinities is not at odds with the feminist frameworks already widely used in policy and practice and which have been vital for the field. The national prevention framework *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, which draws extensively on this existing evidence base, clearly demonstrates the alignment of these two sets of knowledge. It points to the role of gender inequality generally in setting the underlying conditions for violence against women, and outlines a number of specific gendered drivers of this violence. Two of these are 'rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity' and 'male peer relationships that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.'³ A more specific focus on masculinities research and particularly on the links between masculinities and violence against women, can help complement and extend the conceptual analysis already developed in this work. In addition, a specific focus on how to best engage men and boys can contribute to improving the effectiveness of prevention strategies.

Scope and methodology

The primary objective of this paper is to synthesise, review and analyse existing research on masculinities and violence against women, and the engaging of men in the prevention of violence against women. It aims to deepen and extend existing understandings of what underpins and drives gender inequality and violence against women, and what is required to prevent this violence.

This evidence review includes peer-reviewed literature comprising theoretical scholarship, as well as empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, such as case studies, observational studies, meta-analyses, evaluations and systematic reviews. For the most part, this literature was sourced from public health, legal and social science databases. In addition, the review draws on a range of grey literature (literature produced by organisations and government bodies that is often outside of the traditional commercial or academic publishing and distribution channels) on primary prevention and violence against women, with a particular focus on sources pertaining to masculinities and ways to engage men. The grey literature reviewed includes numerous reports, surveys, evaluations, frameworks and programs produced by:

- governments
- public health and human rights organisations

- non-government organisations (NGOs)
- research and statistical bodies
- other organisations and advocates in the prevention sector.

Our Watch recognises the unique situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the Australian context, and the responsibility of researchers to incorporate available Indigenous knowledge wherever possible. For this reason, the review deliberately sought to identify relevant documents authored or produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. It also drew on the significant previous research and consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertaken to inform Our Watch’s previous publication, *Changing the picture*.ⁱ Key findings and insights from this existing body of knowledge have been integrated throughout, as a critical component of the intersectional approach taken to this work.

This paper examines dominant forms of masculinity and violence against women in Australia. Thus, priority was given to scholarship, evidence and data relevant to an Australian context. In saying this, the review found there is a relative lack of available Australian evidence and data that specifically assesses the links between masculinities and violence against women. *The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia*, published in 2018 by the Men’s Project, starts to fill this gap but further studies are needed.⁴ The search for grey literature sources was more fruitful and found a range of programs, curriculums and reports produced within Australia for an Australian audience. Nevertheless, the review also draws significantly on international academic research and grey literature, particularly from contexts with similar socio-political climates to Australia, such as New Zealand, Canada, North America and the UK, but also from other international jurisdictions, such as South America and various African countries. The international literature includes a range of highly significant studies, frameworks and programs in relation to masculinities and the links to violence against women, and how engaging men and boys can help prevent this violence.

The research topic draws on a number of themes and fields of study that often overlap, including scholarship on masculinities, feminist scholarship, scholarship on violence against women, the engagement of men in primary prevention and public health, and studies of violence more broadly. A broad search strategy was devised to capture this range and build connections between them. The initial search strategy included the following terms: masculinity/ies, men, women, gender, gender inequality, violence against women, domestic violence, family violence, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, sexual violence, primary prevention, engaging men. Subsequent searches were required to capture some of the specific concepts and themes that emerged in the broader search. These terms were added to the broader search and included: hegemonic masculinity, intersectionality, discrimination, structural inequality, homosociality, male bonding, gender role stress, toxic masculinity, man box, empathy, emotion, complicity, privilege, essentialism, binary, stereotypes, norms, attitudes, behaviours, gender transformative. Further to this, there were a number of searches required to delve deeper into the research on the links between dominant norms and practices of masculinity and violence against women, which included terms such as: autonomy, risk-taking, aggression, dominance, control, hypersexuality, homophobia, sport, workplace, pornography, backlash and resistance.

The academic and grey literature was sourced from available databases where the full-text versions were available, from government and organisation websites, and more broadly from Google Scholar and Google. This review draws on a broad range of scholarship and on a number of key concepts, such as intersectionality, hegemonic masculinity and homosociality, that were introduced and developed more than 20 years ago but which continue to be important analytical tools across a number of fields. Therefore, the literature search was not limited to any specific date range, although current research was prioritised, particularly if empirically and data driven. The review also draws on literature that can be found on the website XY (<https://xyonline.net>). This specialised database

i Our Watch (2018) *Changing the picture Background paper: Understanding violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children*, and *Changing the picture: a national resource to support the prevention violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children Melbourne: Our Watch*.

on violence against women houses a range of relevant academic studies, research, commentaries, evaluations and grey literature, and is regularly managed and updated. Finally, some of the literature examined for this review was drawn from the researcher's own knowledge of relevant concepts and scholarship.

A draft of this review was generously reviewed by 9 voluntary peer reviewers, who included academics, researchers, policy advisers and practitioners based in Victoria and Queensland. In addition, a number of initial meetings were conducted with a small number of researchers and practitioners in Victoria and New South Wales, which helped scope the paper, and locate gaps in the research and in current understandings of men, masculinities and preventing violence against women.

Caveats

The aim of this review is to synthesise and distil a broad range of literature in order to highlight and assess key findings and developments in prevention efforts that address masculinities and ways to engage men. Additionally, it aims to locate gaps in and suggest future directions for this work. As a result, there was little scope to produce an in-depth analysis of each idea and theme that emerged in the literature. Rather, the review provides an initial account of the ideas and concepts seen to be most useful for guiding prevention work on masculinities and ways to engage men, and identifies a number of priority research areas that are outlined in Section 6.2.

While this review focuses on the links between dominant forms of masculinity and violence against women and how the challenging of these forms is important for preventing this violence, there is some reference throughout the paper to the promotion of other forms of masculinity that are more positive and respectful. The question of what these other forms should entail is part of a larger and emerging discussion. This discussion questions whether the task is to define and promote more positive or healthier forms of masculinity, or whether it is to encourage men to demonstrate characteristics, traits and behaviours that are commonly understood to be 'feminine' or to support them to display the full range of human behaviour (which is often not encouraged or easily available to them). The forthcoming work on 'healthier masculinities' by VicHealth will provide an invaluable resource to further develop thinking around the role that positive conceptions of masculinity/ies can play in promoting gender equality. It will also help to inform future research, programs and initiatives for engaging men and boys in primary prevention.⁵

This paper examines a large range of concepts and ideas and attempts to explain these in ways that are understandable and accessible. There are times where it abbreviates particular phrases in the interest of concision and flow. For example, it does not always refer to the 'prevention of violence against women' in full, but uses shorter versions such as 'prevention efforts,' 'prevention work' or simply 'prevention.' Generally, the use of the phrase 'engaging men' refers to men at all the different life stages, including adult men, young men and boys, while specific references to only men or only boys is indicated as such.

The use of the phrase 'dominant forms and patterns of masculinity' is an attempt to capture the ways in which masculinity works in a social sense. That is, the forms of masculinity that are socially sanctioned, promoted and reproduced as 'normal' and that are embedded in norms, structures and practices across the different levels of society. When addressing particular aspects of these forms and patterns, for example 'dominant norms' of masculinity, this will be made clear.

A glossary of key terms has been included in this review. See page 101.

Part 1: Outlining the problem

This section discusses the prevalence of violence against women both in an international and Australian context. In particular it highlights the gendered patterns of this violence and points to various frameworks that address violence against women through a primary prevention framework. It then offers a broad conceptualisation of the emerging work on addressing masculinities and engaging men in prevention efforts, and how challenging dominant forms and patterns of masculinity and engaging men in ways that are gender transformative can help prevent violence against women.

A review of the research shows that:

- There are differences in how men and women perpetrate and/or experience violence, and that violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men.
- Violence against women encompasses a range of violence and abuse, including physical, sexual, financial, emotional and cultural forms of violence and abuse, and these forms of violence can overlap or interact.
- Gender inequality underpins violence against women. Thus, primary prevention efforts aim to address the gendered drivers of violence against women, including the structures, norms and practices that maintain a gender unequal society.
- Structural inequality and social discrimination that stem from racism, classism, ableism, homophobia and colonisation often intersect with gender inequality and gendered drivers to help shape particular patterns of violence against women.
- Work that challenges dominant forms and patterns of masculinity and that seeks to engage men in prevention is a critical aspect of existing prevention efforts.
- Prevention efforts that address masculinities and engage men should avoid focusing only on single factors or individual causes of violence against women, and instead consider how masculinities and gender inequality operate at all different levels of society and in multiple social systems and structures.
- Prevention efforts with a focus on addressing masculinities and engaging men should aim to be gender transformative and actively challenge dominant forms of masculinity rather than reinforcing and maintaining them.

1.1 Violence against women

The problem of men's violence against women has been extensively researched and documented within academic and public health contexts. For the most part, this research has focused on both the scale of the problem and on its far-reaching social, economic and health impacts on societies and, in particular, on women. It is well known that violence against women does not simply occur in one particular part of the world, nor is it unique to a specific culture or group of people. The international evidence reveals that it is a worldwide problem that occurs across all economic, political and cultural contexts.⁶ It is estimated that throughout the world, 1 in 3 women on average have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner, and that women who experience violence report significant impacts to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.⁷ The prevalence and severity of this violence is higher for women who suffer other forms of discrimination – for example, women who experience racism. The evidence consistently shows that women of colour are more likely to be the victim of violence perpetrated by men than are white women.⁸

In Australia, the prevalence of violence against women and the impacts of this violence, reflect similar patterns. For women over the age of 15, 1 in 3 has experienced physical violence; 1 in 5 women has experienced sexual violence; and at least 1 woman per week is killed by her current or former partner.⁹ The patterns of this violence are more severe for Australian women who experience other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. For example, violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women occurs at more than 3 times the rate of non-Indigenous women, and the rates of death or hospitalisation as a result of violence is much higher for this group of women.¹⁰

These findings, both in Australia and internationally, are not new. Rather, they have remained consistent over the past decade or more. The World Health Organization describes violence against women as a 'fundamental violation of women's human rights ... a global public health problem of epidemic proportions'.¹¹

Importantly, there are gendered patterns to this violence. The evidence reveals that men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence experienced by both women and men. In Australia, approximately 95% of all male victims of violence and 94% of female victims of violence report a male perpetrator.¹² Similarly, in the US, the data confirms it is largely men who perpetrate violence, and men in particular are more likely to perpetrate extreme forms of violence that result in serious injury or death.¹³ Further, women are more likely than men to be the victim of violence by a man they know, often in the home, rather than a stranger or person unknown to them. Men are more likely than women to experience violence from other men in public places rather than in more intimate settings.¹⁴ ii

Although the evidence both in Australia and internationally points to differences in the way men and women perpetrate and experience violence, there is a body of scholarship that adheres to gender-symmetrical explanations of violence. This scholarship suggests there is little difference between the genders in the ways in which violence is perpetrated and experienced, particularly within the domestic setting. This has been an ongoing debate. Michael Flood, a key scholar in the field, goes so far as to suggest there is a 'fundamental disagreement' in the scholarship regarding the gendered nature of domestic violence. In his recent book he provides a useful outline of this debate.¹⁵ In particular, he highlights the limitations of methodologies that commonly find gender-symmetries in the perpetration of domestic violence. The specific ways in which the data is gathered, tends to ignore the different impacts experienced by men and women, and the different meanings of these violent acts, such as whether these acts are controlling and aggressive in nature or whether they are defensive.¹⁶ Moreover, these measures tend to focus on physical violence that occurs within

ii This data is based on violence experienced and perpetrated by (cis) heterosexual men and women. This reflects the often-heteronormative framing of violence, especially violence that occurs in intimate relationships. However, men do experience violence in same-sex relationships at alarming rates. The available evidence suggests this violence is still underpinned by unequal power structures in these relationships, in which gender roles and masculinity are key factors. See Our Watch (2017), note 14.

the family context, with little attention to other contexts and other forms of violence, such as sexual assault and harassment. Other, more comprehensive measurements and analyses find that there are gendered patterns to this violence. In fact, the bulk of scholarship points to a distinct difference in terms of how men and women perpetrate and/or experience violence, particularly in relation to intimate partner violence and sexual harassment/assault.¹⁷

Despite the overwhelming evidence which underlines that patterns of domestic violence are gendered, there has been a steady decline in the understanding of this among the general population in Australia. In the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), it was found that 64% of all respondents agreed that domestic violence is perpetrated mainly by men, and 81% agreed that the physical harms are much greater for women than for men.¹⁸ These figures were lower than the 2013 survey, where 71% of all respondents agreed that domestic violence is perpetrated largely by men and 86% understood that the impacts were greater for women. This suggests that prevention efforts must continue to align with the evidence base and highlight gender as key to understanding and addressing this violence.

Scholars and advocates have also reached a deeper understanding of the range of violence that is directed towards women and the different ways in which abuse can occur. Violence against women, as outlined in the *Change the story* framework, encompasses physical, sexual, emotional, cultural and financial forms of violence and abuse.¹⁹ Importantly, this broad definition of violence describes physical violence as well as other forms of abuse and coercive behaviour that can result in non-physical suffering – for instance, psychological harm – although these different forms often overlap and are interrelated. As Flood explains, violence must be conceived of as a continuum that includes physical and sexual violence as well as other forms of abusive and controlling behaviour that women find harmful or threatening.²⁰ This continuum highlights the range of ways in which women experience violence by men. This broader definition of violence is important since some of these forms are less visible, or may even be accepted and normalised practice within a majority of cultures. These less visible forms of violence nevertheless negatively impact women and they underpin other more extreme forms, such as physical and sexual violence.

1.2 Gender inequality and primary prevention

There is much research to suggest that gender relations are key to understanding the problem of violence against women. Scholars suggest that the gendered patterns of violence are a reflection and symptom of the unequal power relations between men (specifically heterosexual and cisgendered men) and women. Thus, researchers have isolated gender inequality as an overarching driver of violence against women.²¹ As Flood notes, for decades feminists have emphasised how violence reflects and maintains a system of gender inequality: ‘the most well-documented determinants of men’s violence against women can be found in gender ... and above all in gender inequalities’.²²

Change the story defines gender inequality as ‘a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them’.²³ This gender hierarchy, what has often been called ‘patriarchy’, is common across most societies.²⁴ Thus, the framing of violence as being underpinned by gender inequality has been important for understanding and addressing violence against women.

It has also cast a light onto the importance of primary prevention work that seeks to address the prevailing social conditions which produce and maintain gender inequality and help drive violence against women. Building on earlier feminist scholarship, Flood writes: ‘gender inequality is the problem, and gender equality is the solution’.²⁵ Over the past decade a number of key frameworks have been developed that articulate how to undertake this prevention work. In its 2007 framework, VicHealth suggests that addressing social norms and attitudes regarding gender and violence, is key to promoting a more gender-equal society.²⁶ Its 2012 research report on bystander action and the prevention of violence reveals that violence against women is ‘more prevalent in societies where there is gender inequality and where there are strict gender codes and expectations’.²⁷ This suggests that a focus on addressing gender norms is important and should be central to prevention work.

The *Change the story* framework has been crucial for conveying the complex and layered patterns of gender inequality, and the ways in which gender inequality is produced, maintained and reinforced through our social structures, norms and practices, as reflected in our institutions, systems, community practices and so forth. As this framework makes clear, there are a number of gendered drivers of violence against women. These are:

- rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- condoning of violence against women
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

The framework also outlines the reinforcing factors that can interact with these gendered drivers to increase the frequency and severity of this violence.²⁸ Further, it acknowledges other forms of social, political and economic discrimination and disadvantage that intersect with gender inequality to help drive violence against women.²⁹ This suggests that prevention efforts must not only address gender inequality but also other systems of discrimination, such as racism, classism, ableism and homophobia, in order to help prevent violence against women.

As previously noted, some scholars and researchers challenge this approach, adhere to gender-neutral arguments and do not include an analysis of gender in their accounts of violence against women. However, there is a well-established and growing critique of these accounts that stems from a significant body of research and confirms the centrality of addressing gender inequality to address the problem of violence against women.³⁰ Additionally, some research suggests there are significant risks in failing to adopt a gender lens or framing violence in a gender-neutral way.³¹ Stephen Burrell notes that the gender-neutral framing of violence has sometimes led to the closure or replacement of specialist women's organisations that are sorely needed to address the problem of violence against women.³²

1.3 Men, masculinities and the prevention of violence against women

The current focus on gender inequality necessarily raises questions regarding men and masculinities. If the patterns of violence against women are gendered as the data suggests and men and boys are perpetrating the majority of this violence, then an account of men and masculinities is fundamentally important to the work of preventing violence against women.

Researcher and long-time advocate for preventing violence against women Bob Pease, writes: 'a gendered approach to men's violence must involve an interrogation of men and masculinities'.³³ In recent years there has been a significant pivot towards engaging men and masculinities in the prevention of violence against women.³⁴ The research (largely academic) that informs these efforts has been critical in establishing the links between masculinities and the violence that men direct towards women. In its rationale for engaging men and boys in violence prevention, a co-authored report published by the University of Western Sydney explicitly states: 'social constructions of masculinities are at the root of violence against women'.³⁵ Thus, it is important to understand exactly how constructions of masculinity are linked to violence against women. This requires an interrogation of dominant forms and patterns of masculinity that men are expected to adhere to and participate in. Further, we must use this knowledge to challenge and address these patterns in an effective manner, in order to help prevent violence against women.

1.3.1 Attitudes and norms of masculinity

Much of the prevention work to date, has focused on addressing the attitudes men hold in relation to gender and violence, and the ways in which these attitudes are informed and shaped by dominant social norms and expectations of masculinity – that is, the collective beliefs and standards for how men should act, think and feel. This approach to prevention has emerged on the back of increasing evidence and quantitative data that shows a significant number of men hold gender inequitable attitudes which often implicitly (or explicitly) support violence against women.³⁶ Masculinity has

been shown to be a central factor here. A growing body of research demonstrates that men and boys who hold, and adhere to, more traditional attitudes regarding masculinity are also more likely to hold attitudes that are gender inequitable and violence-supportive, all of which can lead to violence against women.³⁷

Similarly, studies have found that a stronger attachment to masculine norms by men results in lower bystander intervention, or reluctance to intervene when other men are displaying sexist or violent behaviour.³⁸ Male perpetrators attempting to reform their violent behaviours might also struggle to challenge or change these behaviours if they hold rigid ideas about how men should be.³⁹ These findings suggest explicit links exist between dominant norms of masculinity and violence against women, and that a rigid attachment to these norms increases the likelihood that men will hold sexist attitudes and be prone to perpetrating or excusing violence against women. Thus, prevention efforts involving men are increasingly focused on challenging and shifting dominant norms of masculinity and the attitudes men hold and adhere to.⁴⁰

Less research has been conducted into the ways in which masculinities are embedded in social structures and institutions, and the ways in which social structures support and reinforce social norms and individual attitudes. There is a call in the literature for further exploration of the ways in which the norms, attitudes and practices that underpin violence against women, are also promoted and supported in our structures and institutions.⁴¹ These patterns are particularly apparent in institutions that are male-dominated or where men exercise significant power, such as male-dominated workplaces, sports settings and military contexts.⁴² Within such institutions, structural processes exist that often reinforce, support or excuse attitudes and patterns of behaviour that are sexist and/or supportive of violence against women.⁴³

1.3.2 Men's health and wellbeing

There is an ongoing focus on men's health and wellbeing within gender equality work. This focus seeks to engage men and boys and specifically address the impacts of dominant forms of masculinity on men.⁴⁴ Further, it demonstrates that addressing gender inequality by challenging the dominant forms and patterns of masculinity can deliver benefits for men, as well as women. It is also significant that the American Psychological Association (APA) has recently introduced guidelines that specifically address men and boys.⁴⁵ Citing decades of research and studies, these guidelines confirm the negative health and social outcomes for men that are produced by rigid attachment to dominant forms of masculinity. While the focus in the APA guidelines is on the health and wellbeing impacts on boys and men, there is also a clear acknowledgement of the ways in which traditional masculinity is linked to increased aggression and violence, both towards the self and others. Given that psychological models have often explained violence and negative health outcomes through a focus on individual factors rather than by addressing broader social forces, this marks a significant shift.

1.3.3 Masculinity and individual risk factors for men's violence

Despite a wave of evidence that supports links between masculinity and violence against women, other research continues to emphasise individual risk factors as key drivers of men's violence. This is particularly apparent in the example of alcohol consumption, which is often posited as a key risk factor for the perpetration of violence against women.⁴⁶ This research finds that higher rates of alcohol use correlate with higher rates of violence, particularly intimate partner violence, and that interventions which successfully reduce alcohol use can deliver a reduction in the perpetration of this violence. While studies do show that alcohol use can be correlated with higher and more severe incidence of violence against women, there is significant research to suggest that alcohol does not in itself drive violence against women. The *Change the story* framework observes, 'not all people who drink are violent, and many people who do not drink are violent'.⁴⁷

In fact, the evidence suggests that alcohol-related factors often *interact* with gender to produce a higher likelihood of violence. *Change the story* acknowledges that while harmful use of alcohol can increase the frequency and severity of violence, it does not in itself drive violence. There is often

an interaction 'between social norms relating to alcohol, and social norms relating to gender'.⁴⁸ In other words, the ways in which alcohol is consumed is directly linked to gendered patterns and expectations. For example, men commonly consume alcohol with other men in male-dominated spaces and settings that emphasise male aggression, such as sport settings.⁴⁹ A study of university sports students found that dominant forms of masculinity interact with high alcohol use to produce increased aggression and anti-social behaviour.⁵⁰ In another study, researchers found that drinking exacerbates the pathway towards intimate partner violence, especially for men who adhere to specific forms of masculinity, such as aggression and toughness.⁵¹ Moore et al. highlight that, in Australia, research on the links between alcohol use and violence often erases the key contribution of gender, and in particular masculinity, even though the data 'often suggests (and in some cases explicitly accepts) that violence involving alcohol is heavily gendered'.⁵² Further, the expectation that men have to be stoic and emotionally tough means that they might consume alcohol as a coping mechanism or as a way to self-medicate rather than seeking help in healthier ways.⁵³

There is significant research to suggest that even where risk factors such as alcohol are at play, gender is a common factor that interacts with these factors to help influence the patterns of men's violence against women. Prevention efforts have been shown to be most effective when they adopt a gendered approach that includes a focus on addressing men and masculinities. Thus, there is a need to further develop this research into the interactions between gender and individual risk factors, and to extend our understanding of the links between dominant forms of masculinities and violence against women in order to develop our capacity to prevent violence against women.

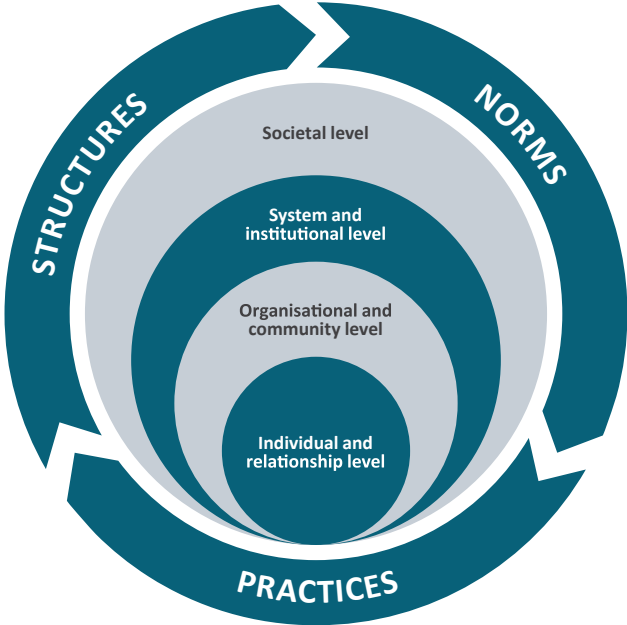
1.4 Gender transformative work

1.4.1 The social-ecological model

The majority of prevention work adheres to the social-ecological model, which moves the focus away from single-factor or individual causes of violence against women. It considers the ways in which multiple factors operate at different levels of society, including the individual, organisational, community, systemic and social levels (see Figure 1). This model helps facilitate an understanding of how gender inequality and violence against women operate across these multiple levels, and of the need for interventions to be delivered at all of these levels. It also acknowledges the dynamic interaction that occurs between these multiple levels. For example, changing social norms in a community can influence how individuals in those communities behave and relate to each other. Similarly, government policy and legislation might influence how women are treated or protected in the workplace and other institutions.

Despite widespread uptake of the social-ecological model in prevention work, there are a number of key challenges in its application. Prevention efforts to address men and masculinities have tended to focus on some levels of the ecology more than others. As various commentators have noted, the structural and systemic components of men's violence against women often fall out of the frame.⁵⁴ Thus, prevention efforts must attempt to address all of the different levels. Further to this, it is important not to lose the focus on gender inequality in this broad model that attempts to address all the different levels. There is a risk that gender inequality can become just one of many determinants operating at these various levels, despite the research showing that addressing gender inequality is central to prevention work.⁵⁵

Figure 1: Socio-ecological model of violence prevention



Current prevention frameworks that employ the social-ecological model are increasingly adhering to a ‘gender transformative’ approach in addressing the problem of gender inequality and violence against women. This approach aims to address dominant gender norms, structures and practices that maintain gender inequality and help drive violence against women in order to actively challenge and transform this system and lessen its impacts on women.⁵⁶ In relation to men and masculinities, transformative approaches involve an explicit challenging and questioning of the dominant forms and patterns of masculinity, and they seek to engage men and boys to challenge these patterns and promote broader social change.

1.4.2 Gupta’s continuum of approaches

A continuum first developed by Geeta Gupta provides a useful model for understanding the extent to which particular prevention efforts engage with gender. Within Gupta’s model, gender transformative approaches can be located at one end of a continuum of approaches that ranges from those that are sensitive to or explicitly focused on gender, to others that are more neutral or even gender exploitative and reinforcing.⁵⁷

Gender exploitative approaches actively employ and exploit dominant gender norms and stereotypes, and gender inequalities, to pursue health and human rights goals. This may involve an appeal to dominant norms and stereotypes in order to achieve program goals. Programs that appeal to men to ‘man up’ or to protect women from violence are an example of this. Gender exploitative approaches often reinforce the exact norms and systems of power that underpin violence against women and that need to be challenged.

Gender blind (neutral) approaches do not employ a gender lens to understand and address the problem of violence against women. Instead, they ignore gender and proceed with no acknowledgement of how men and women are situated and differently impacted. Violence against women has been shown to be a gendered problem; thus, approaches that do not take into consideration the different social and lived realities for men and women, are unlikely to make any impact. These approaches may even risk reinforcing and perpetuating the gendered drivers of violence against women.

Gender sensitive approaches recognise the social construction of gender and the different needs and impacts on men and women when seeking to understand the problem of violence against women. This can be a useful starting point; however, such approaches often do not seek to explicitly transform or challenge these social constructions of gender and their impacts.

Gender transformative approaches seek to actively challenge and transform the current gender system through critical reflection of the attitudes, norms, structures and practices of gender that underpin this system of inequality and help drive violence against women. This involves actively challenging dominant and rigid forms of masculinity and promoting alternative models that are more positive and respectful.

1.4.3 Current limitations of gender transformative approaches

There is some research to suggest further clarification and development of Gupta's continuum model is needed. While it provides a useful overview of different strategies to prevent violence, we need to develop greater nuance and expanded definitions and descriptions of what each approach includes and can achieve. While the gender transformative ideal has emerged as a key framework for working with men and boys, some scholars suggest that this approach remains both underdefined and underdeveloped in its aims.⁵⁸ It is also unclear whether and/or how a gender transformative approach as outlined in Section 1.4.2, differs from dominant feminist frameworks that have long sought to challenge gender inequality and transform patriarchal norms and structures.⁵⁹

Further, Gupta notes that the different approaches should not be seen as mutually exclusive.⁶⁰ Efforts to prevent violence against women and to transform gender structures and norms can draw on multiple approaches, and often do. At times this may even be necessary to account for the many differences among men. Moreover, we may need to take smaller steps with men in our efforts to transform the current gender system. As Flood explains, the process of reaching and engaging men and boys to be a part of this transformation and change is complicated. It requires many different strategies that take into account the key barriers to men's engagement while also working to transform gendered systems and structures.⁶¹ Employing a gender transformative model that is too rigid may not always result in best practice, and this needs to be acknowledged.

Additionally, it is important to note that the engagement and framing of men and masculinities in prevention efforts remains hetero-normative and cis-normative. Prevention work tends to speak to and capture the population that is heterosexual and cisgender (people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth).⁶² This limits the potential of these interventions to properly challenge and disrupt our ideas of what men and women are and how they should relate to each other, and therefore to be truly transformative. Moreover, because gender interacts with other structures and systems of inequality, both intersectional and gender transformative approaches are needed to ensure the effectiveness of prevention efforts.

Despite the limitations and challenges to gender transformative approaches, research suggests they are key to effective prevention efforts that focus on masculinities and seek to engage men.⁶³ There is a growing evidence base that documents the importance of engaging with and encouraging men and boys to reflect on gender inequality and to interrogate their attitudes, norms and behaviours regarding violence against women.⁶⁴ Brazilian-founded Promundo, a global organisation focused on engaging men and boys in gender equality and the prevention of violence against women, describes its current Manhood 2.0 training module as a 'gender transformative curriculum'.⁶⁵

It is clear that gender transformative work has its challenges. Dominant patterns of gender operate at all levels of society to maintain an unequal system of power. This is not an easy system to change. However, changing the patterns of gender is essential in order to help realise gender equality and prevent violence against women.

1.4.4 Examples of gender transformative initiatives

Stepping Stones

The *Stepping Stones* program focuses on improving sexual health and wellbeing by encouraging more gender-equitable relationships. Developed primarily in Uganda between 1993 and 1995, *Stepping Stones* has since been widely used and adapted globally. The more recent development of *Stepping Stones with Children* expands the demographic of the program beyond adolescents and adults. *Stepping Stones* takes a strong gender transformative approach to preventing HIV transmission and building stronger gender-equitable relationships. This approach gives consideration to broader societal norms, including gender norms, as well as acknowledging men's social and structural power over women's sexual decision-making. Evidence shows that *Stepping Stones* is effective. An impact evaluation in South Africa has shown a reduction in young men's risky sexual behaviour and perpetration of violence against women, as well as improved communication between intimate partners.⁶⁶ A further evaluation in South Africa found that the incidence of self-reported perpetration of physical and sexual intimate partner violence by men was significantly lower than in control villages two years after the implementation of the program.⁶⁷

SASA!

SASA! is a violence prevention program that acknowledges gender inequality as the core driver of violence against women. It aims to prevent this violence by addressing traditional community norms and gender roles that portray men as strong and dominant and women as weak and submissive, that support men's power over women, and that create silence and tolerance regarding violence against women. *SASA!* aims to be gender transformative through seeking to challenge gender norms that underpin violence and, more broadly, giving consideration to how gender inequality is embedded in social structures and systems. In this way, it is designed around the social-ecological model that addresses all the different societal levels.⁶⁸ Evaluations suggest the program has been effective at reducing social acceptance of intimate partner violence among both men and women, and that it helped to reduce levels of physical and sexual intimate partner violence experienced by women.⁶⁹ Importantly, these changes were evident at the broader community level.⁷⁰ Developed in Uganda, *SASA!*'s positive impact has led to the program being used in more than 20 countries and 60 organisations worldwide.

Part 2: Defining masculinities

Much of the scholarship on men and masculinities emphasises the social construction of masculinity and problematises a purely essentialist understanding of men's characteristics and behaviours as being innate and inevitable. This section examines these ideas of masculinity as being either natural or constructed, and the implications of these ideas for prevention work. Further, it highlights how masculinity is multiple and situational, and discusses the importance of applying frameworks that can capture these complexities. In particular, it emphasises the importance of intersectionality and structural-based approaches for understanding differences among men and how these differences shape patterns of men's violence against women.

A review of the scholarship and research demonstrates that:

- Masculinity is not innate or fixed. It is a dynamic construction that shifts and changes over time and place.
- Masculinity is a set of expectations for how men should act and behave, but which many men are unable to meet most of the time.
- Masculinity is multiple and situational. Men do not conform to one single model of masculinity, and masculinity is performed differently in different contexts.
- Dominant forms and patterns of masculinity help maintain gender inequality, which is the privilege and power that men as a group hold over women as a group.
- Many people believe that masculinity is innate and natural, and this viewpoint can impede gender equality and prevention efforts.
- Prevention work that adheres to a binary understanding of sex and gender can reproduce essentialist ideas that masculinity is innate in men; this can reinforce and justify the display of dominant forms of masculinity by men and also has negative implications for people who are trans, gender diverse and intersex.
- Masculinity intersects with other aspects of identity and social location such as race, class, sexuality, religion, ability and age to produce multiple masculinities and different experiences of being a man.
- Dominant forms of masculinity intersect with gender inequality and other structural inequalities and social disadvantages, and also with men's power and privilege, to help shape men's violence against women.
- Masculinities are embedded in multiple social systems and structures as well as in norms, attitudes and individual practices; prevention efforts should avoid focusing only on single factors or individual causes of violence against women.

2.1 Masculinity as a social construction

Gender has been described as integral to human life. It is seen to be complex, multi-faceted, and dynamic, changing across time and place. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines gender as:

the socially constructed roles, traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, responsibilities, relative power, status and influence ascribed to male and female humans on a differential basis. Gender identity (masculinity/femininity) is not biological, but learned. It is changeable over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender refers not simply to women and/or men, but to the relationships between and among them. Gender identities condition the way human beings are perceived, and how they are expected to think and act.ⁱⁱⁱ

This particular reading of gender is fundamental to primary prevention work aiming to help prevent violence against women by challenging and disrupting gender inequality. The exposing of gender as a social construction, which is not natural or inevitable but malleable, reveals the ways in which power works through gender. It prompts us to question: Why is gender configured in a particular way, in a specific time and place? What are the effects of these configurations? Whose interests do they serve? These questions about gender are not questions about biology. Nor do they seek to uncover the essence of men and women. Rather, they are social and political questions.

2.1.1 Masculinity as a construction

For the most part, the scholarship on men and masculinities adheres to the understanding of gender as a social construction. Studies have been undertaken by a large group of scholars who approach and interrogate masculinities through a social constructionist framework, which focuses on social structures, institutions and norms that provide a context for men's attitudes and behaviours. Within key feminist, sociological and psychological texts, masculinity is commonly described as a social phenomenon or construction.⁷¹

Current studies of masculinities have been significantly influenced and shaped by feminist scholarship and politics. Indeed, it is largely due to feminism that studies of masculinities have been able to surface at all. Early men's studies emerged out of the 'second wave' feminist movement that had its beginnings in the late 1960s. Within these studies a feminist lens was employed to scrutinise masculinity and the traditional male role, with a new emphasis placed on the social and political construction of masculinity and the limitations and impacts of this on both men and women.⁷² These studies were less tied to earlier psychological frameworks of sex role theory and more focused on addressing relations of power. While early men's studies began as a number of organised groups and events, the movement soon entered the academy, resulting in an explosion of formal studies. This legacy is important to acknowledge given that the bulk of current scholarship addressing masculinities and violence against women, adopts feminist frameworks and aligns with feminist aims and modes of analysis.

The scholarship on masculinities starts by rejecting essentialist accounts of men and masculinity. Rather, it emphasises the social processes at work – the ways in which men and manhood are socially organised and scripted. While there has been a tendency to focus on norms of masculinity as the key to understanding and challenging these social processes, norms are not the entire sum of masculinity. A comprehensive account of masculinity considers how it is embedded in our societal structures, institutions and systems; how it functions within social norms, roles and expectations; and how it shapes the practices and subjectivities of individual men and boys. Scholar Janell Watson writes, 'Masculinity cannot be reduced to the biological body, the psyche, culture, or institutions; it involves all of these, and more.'⁷³ This acknowledgement of the complex layers and aspects of masculinity helps us understand why masculinity remains so difficult to challenge and address.

iii See the WHO website for this definition of gender (<https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>)

2.1.2 Hegemonic masculinity

Raewyn Connell has laid much of the groundwork for studies of masculinities. Her concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been employed extensively throughout the scholarship.⁷⁴ This concept has long been the primary tool for theorising masculinities and for facilitating an in-depth analysis and understanding of gender relations and the dynamics of masculinity. It remains vastly influential within the social sciences and as a framework for the analysis of empirical work specific to masculinities.

Hegemonic masculinity is derived from Antonio Gramsci's term 'hegemony', which is used to describe power relations relating to class and specifically, how a ruling class establishes and maintains its power within social and economic life. Gramsci suggests that this power is not exercised simply through 'top down' domination but also through a more invisible hegemonic culture.⁷⁵ This culture is underpinned by particular ideologies and values that are seen by the majority as common-sense values worth aspiring to. They may even be seen as natural and inevitable. Thus, these ideals are promoted and upheld. Importantly, however, this value-system benefits only a small group of people who advance their own interests, not purely through overt force and domination but also through a more nuanced network of power: that of social norms and values. As Connell notes, hegemony therefore 'extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes'.⁷⁶ A particular value system or set of norms might be policed in forceful ways, through a state's systems and structures, and/or be upheld through other means such as through a series of culturally mandated ideals and exclusions.

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the set of ideals and practices that denote the most prized ways of being a man in any given context. Power relations are central to this gender pattern which, Connell argues, is primarily concerned with legitimising patriarchy and maintaining male power and privilege over women.⁷⁷ Importantly, Connell intended this concept to be dynamic: hegemonic masculinity describes the 'currently accepted' or dominant ways of being a man. In any given time or place, there is a dominant pattern of masculinity that is promoted, supported and upheld, through particular exemplars and representations, and within structures and institutions. Thus, it is expected that the hegemonic pattern will change according to historical and cultural context. These patterns are not always upheld by force. In fact, hegemonic masculinity is deeply ideological, achieved and maintained through other persuasive, less forceful means. Notably, it is a strategy that continues to privilege particular groups of men over others.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity remains an integral part of studies of masculinities, and is an important tool for addressing a range of concerns, in particular the effects of masculinity in its hegemonic, or dominant, form. Mike Donaldson writes that hegemonic masculinity 'constructs the most dangerous things we live with'.⁷⁸ It is intimately linked to gender relations and power, and is therefore central to producing and maintaining institutions of male dominance and gender hierarchies. This scholarship has occurred precisely because such dangers and challenges have been acknowledged.

Although Connell's concept addresses men and masculinities, it is still deeply feminist. She lays a strident critique on the overarching patriarchal system that informs and shapes the constructions of masculinity. In other words, her concept helps describe the persistent dominance that men have over women, which is accomplished particularly through social structures and institutional settings, and via social norms. Thus, while Connell takes a largely structuralist approach, and is concerned with how economic, political and social institutions privilege men over women, her concept of hegemonic masculinity describes the range of discourses, ideals and practices of masculinity that promote and maintain this dominance. This definition of masculinity is highly relevant to prevention work that addresses men and masculinities since it attempts to hold norms, structures and practices together. This is discussed further in Section 2.4.1.

2.1.3 Masculinity as fragile

The concept of hegemonic masculinity also reveals the fragile relationship between men and masculinity, where masculinity must always be performed and demonstrated in specific ways.⁷⁹ Hegemonic masculinity produces a set of ideals and practices that most men cannot live up to, nor attain all of the time. Connell emphasises that hegemony is about ‘relations of cultural domination, not of head-counts’.⁸⁰ Hegemonic masculinity is associated with a set of ideals or norms that are distinct from the realities of what men might feel or practice in their own lives. Nevertheless, these ideals are a reference point for all men; their gender is lived in relation to them. The relationship between men and masculinity is therefore inherently fragile and unstable.

This reading of masculinity is confirmed in the broader literature. Prominent anthropologist David Gilmore argues that the path to manhood is not automatic, nor is it a natural transition that ‘comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds’.⁸¹ Manhood is not conferred through biological forces; it must be earned. Importantly, once earned it has to be maintained, since it is easily lost through any number of transgressions or divergences from what is considered masculine and/or ‘normal’ behaviour for men.⁸² Dahl et al. write, ‘masculinity is precarious and easily lost if not consistently enacted through public demonstrations of the core characteristics of masculinity’.⁸³

Manhood requires constant affirmation, which prompts us to think about the impacts of this. Which behaviours do men use to prove their manhood? Some empirical research suggests that manhood is more precarious than womanhood, and that masculinity is more tenuous and easier to undermine and threaten than femininity. In a survey of numerous studies, Vandello et al. found that men feel compelled to validate and prove their manhood much more than women do their womanhood.⁸⁴ Some men go to great lengths to prove their manhood with excessive demonstrations of masculinity, theorised by some researchers as the ‘masculine overcompensation thesis’.⁸⁵ In their attempts to prove their masculinity and stabilise it, men might even display a range of behaviours that are destructive or harmful.⁸⁶ This is a key question for researchers of men’s violence.

The attempts that men make to prove their masculinity exposes it as a construction, and shows that it is not automatic or inevitable, but is in fact learned. If masculinity or manhood (being and behaving like a man) were fixed and inherent, then it would not be necessary to offer endless proof of it, nor police it so thoroughly. Further, the fact there is significant backlash and resistance around issues of masculinity, especially when it is perceived to come under threat, demonstrates its fragility.

2.1.4 Rejection of essentialist accounts

In the sociological frameworks described above there is a clear rejection of essentialist accounts of masculinity, and a conscious effort to demonstrate the ways in which masculinity works as a construction, and as an instrument of power. This critique of biological essentialism is also a feature of more recent sociological accounts of masculinity and maleness.⁸⁷ Even in the biological and psychological sciences, which have tended to be the primary route for establishing essentialist accounts of masculinity as being something natural, tied to biology and the body, there are accounts that offer a formal rejection of gender essentialism.⁸⁸ The reliance solely on biological factors to help explain masculinity as lived, is being challenged increasingly across multiple scientific disciplines and has been shown to be misguided.

In Australia, psychologist and researcher Cordelia Fine is a key figure in this debate. Fine’s work aligns with the work of other scholars, such as Anne Fausto-Sterling, and is part of a much longer feminist tradition that critiques biological essentialism regarding sex, gender and bodies.^{iv} Fine’s work offers a recent and influential critique of this essentialism. In 2010 Fine challenged the science that seeks to prove men and women are biologically different through a meta-analysis of studies on brain and hormonal function. In 2017 she extended this critique with a specific focus on sex difference and

iv See the website XY (<https://xyonline.net/books/bibliography/21-mens-bodies-and-biology/ii-general-works-gender-bodies-and-biology-0>) for a list of this feminist work.

the science on testosterone.⁸⁹ In both she presents a comprehensive and compelling analysis of the scientific study of sex difference to show that what we see to be sex differences (leading to gender differences) are not inevitable or fixed. Fine writes, ‘we certainly often behave and talk as if the sexes are categorically different: men like this, women like that ... when we think of men and women ... it’s intuitive to look for a single, powerful cause that creates this divide between the sexes.’⁹⁰ Fine suggests that the science has often conducted its research on gender in precisely this way, looking for differences between the sexes rather than similarities. This is what she famously terms ‘neurosexism’. She argues, however, that ‘while the genetic and hormonal components of sex certainly influence brain development and function — we are not asexual blank slates — sex is just one of many interacting factors.’⁹¹ This does not mean we should completely abandon biology as a factor, but rather that we acknowledge there is an interaction between the social and the biological. Willer et al. state: ‘Viewing biological and social factors as necessarily separate and competing to explain zero-sum variance in human behaviours reinforces a false and antiquated dichotomy. Social and biological processes are deeply entwined.’⁹² This points to a growing trend in science to acknowledge the social components of sex and gender.

Regarding masculinities, this question of nature versus nurture is reflected in the debate on testosterone, which Fine notes has ‘featured prominently in explanations of differences between the sexes, and continues to do so’.⁹³ Testosterone is commonly linked to maleness in popular and essentialist understandings of sex and gender, and is seen to be responsible for what many argue to be traits specific to men, such as aggression and having a high sex drive. Fine argues bluntly that this biological explanation is misguided: ‘Testosterone rex is extinct. It misrepresents our past, present and future; it misdirects scientific research; and it reinforces an unequal status quo. It’s time to say good-bye, and move on.’⁹⁴

2.1.5 The social construction of masculinity and its relevance for the prevention of violence against women

How does all of this relate to violence and in particular, violence against women? And why does it matter whether masculinity is seen to be innate and natural, or seen as something that is primarily socially constructed?

First, as Iris Marion Young notes, for centuries women have been excluded from important human activities and theoretical reflection ‘on the grounds that women’s essential natures are different from men’s’.⁹⁵ In other words, gender essentialism is a key factor underpinning gender inequality. It promotes it, legitimises it and secures it.

Regarding violence specifically, some biological and evolutionary accounts see violence and aggression as natural behaviours for men and consider them an integral part of men’s biological make-up.⁹⁶ However, these explanations for men’s greater display of aggression and use of violence, are fundamentally wrong. The testosterone debate helps to illustrate this. Recent studies suggest that serotonin and cortisol, both hormones that are not directly linked to sex difference, might be a more important factor than testosterone for explaining the perpetration of violence. The *APA handbook of men and masculinities* highlights: ‘these variables [serotonin and cortisol] are seldom socially constructed as masculine in the same way as testosterone’.⁹⁷ In fact, there is little longitudinal data to conclude that the changing variations in levels of testosterone in men correlate with changes to mood and behaviour in these men.⁹⁸ Further, a reliance on testosterone to help understand increased aggression and risk-taking in men might mean that other more important factors are ignored and left unexamined.⁹⁹

Some studies have found structural/functional brain differences between violent and non-violent people. However, these differences are strongly related to social factors. For example, there is evidence that high levels of alcohol use and the viewing of violent media or playing of violent video games can all cause functional changes in the brain that are associated with increased aggression and violence.¹⁰⁰ However, these activities are also often highly gendered. Different norms and

expectations for men and women influence how, when and why alcohol (or violent media) is consumed. For example, many men feel pressure to remain stoic and not seek help for problems, which means they may externalise these problems through alcohol abuse or other outlets that involve aggression.¹⁰¹ Importantly, gender (masculinity) is key to these patterns of behaviour, and these patterns then affect brain function rather than the male brain automatically functioning in ways that are violent and aggressive.

The majority of research on masculinities and violence against women suggests that violence and other dominant, aggressive behaviours are not a reflection or expression of some fundamental nature to men. Rather, they form a part of the social expectations for how men should act. While masculinity (manhood) is linked with violence, the links cannot be explained by biology but by a complex range of factors and interactions between biology, social and structural factors, gender norms and attitudes, and lived experience.¹⁰² If men's violence against women does not stem from a male biological instinct to be aggressive or violent, an emphasis must be placed on the ways in which boys and men are socialised. Framing the problem in this way highlights the structural and cultural conditions that help drive violence against women. It also shows that these behaviours (and the problem of violence against women) are not inevitable but social, and that they can be changed.

Despite this trend in the current research, there remains a strong belief among the general population that expressions of aggression and violence are natural and inevitable for men. This has been the case for some time. A large 2009 study representative of university students in Victoria found that although most participants recognised gendered behaviours can be socially informed, overall, the participants (particularly the male participants) believed the characteristics of men and women to be inherent.¹⁰³ In particular, high sex drive and a greater propensity for dominant and aggressive behaviour were seen to be natural and 'hard-wired' in men.

These beliefs are reflected in more recent studies. The current National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey indicates many Australians believe sexual aggression can be partly attributed to the male 'sex drive'.¹⁰⁴ The idea that men naturally have a higher sex drive than women, and that their desire for lots of sex is innate, is what researchers have called the 'sexual drive discourse'. Importantly, this discourse is often employed to explain or justify the sexual violence and harassment that men direct at women. The report found that more than 1 in 4 men (28%) agree that 'when a man is sexually aroused, he may not even realise that the woman doesn't want to have sex', and a third (33%) think that 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex'.¹⁰⁵ In a similar survey in New Zealand, 24% of participants agreed that 'rape happens when a man's sex drive is out of control'.¹⁰⁶

Research shows that essentialist viewpoints of masculinity, which define it as fixed and biologically determined, remain 'a key obstacle to transforming gender relations'.¹⁰⁷ Masculine behaviours are seen to be beyond the control of the individual, and this can help 'produce and legitimate an aggressive and violent subjectivity'.¹⁰⁸ As outlined in *Change the story*, a belief that men cannot help being aggressive, sexual or violent is a factor in the condoning of men's violence against women, and helps justify or excuse this violence.¹⁰⁹

An ethnographic study in Australian primary schools found that an adherence to discourses of biological determinism could influence how the students understood the behaviours of male students. Behaviours considered violent and aggressive were often seen to be natural behaviour for boys, and therefore beyond their control.¹¹⁰ This study also found that a feedback loop could occur between what was believed to be natural and therefore what behaviours the boys felt they should adopt. In other words, believing that particular behaviours are natural and proper can equate to a greater investment (and adoption of) those traits and behaviours.

It is important to note that essentialist beliefs regarding violence are held by women as well as men. A study in the US found that 1 in 5 women who had experienced unwanted sexual assault or coercion excused the perpetrator or justified the assault based on an essentialist understanding of male sexual aggression as being natural and/or normal behaviour in dating contexts.¹¹¹

Further, biological explanations of men's violence cannot account for the variability of men's use of violence. We know that many men do not use violence, and there are men who use some forms of violence and not others. Moreover, the patterns of men's violence differ across time and place, in different contexts or even within the same context. This suggests that the causes of men's violence are social rather than essential to their nature as men.

Additionally, if men and boys are seen to be naturally violent, then men and boys are inherently the problem. This assumes that the problem of men's violence against women cannot be addressed or prevented, and that we simply need to accept that it is a natural and inevitable part of life. But we know this is not the case. Men's violence against women is preventable not inevitable, and the research shows that this violence is underpinned by the social problem of gender inequality. Dominant social constructions of masculinity are an integral aspect of this inequality.

The research suggests we must continue to emphasise and draw attention to the social construction of masculinity and the ways in which violence is also part of this construction. Doing so lays the foundations for the kind of change that prevention work aims to create. There is a significant body of research both within the sciences and social sciences that demonstrates the link between masculinity and violence is not fixed or inevitable. Rather, it is learned behaviour that is shaped and reinforced by social forces.

2.1.6 Challenging binary logic in prevention efforts

It is paramount that essentialist accounts of gender are challenged in efforts to address and prevent violence against women. This remains an ongoing issue for those working in primary prevention. There is evidence that some prevention efforts rely on a binary logic, which may reinforce and justify the same norms, systems and structures that these efforts are seeking to challenge and shift. Binary logic constructs 'man' and 'woman' as two different categories, and automatically associates masculinity with men and femininity with women. Importantly, the relationship between these two gender categories is hierarchical and oppositional. Men and women are considered to be the opposite of each other, and therefore in conflict with each other.¹¹² Men are seen to be rational while women are emotional. Men are valued for their minds, while women are often reduced to their appearance and their bodies, and so forth. These differences are essentialised: rationality is seen to be innate in men and the expression of emotion is considered natural in women.

In relation to men and masculinity, prevention efforts that rely on a 'real man' discourse can inadvertently reinforce and valorise particular masculine behaviours, and posit these as 'natural' behaviour for men. This can be counterproductive. Strategies that emphasise the need to 'man up', be 'real men' and stand up to violence against women evoke and appeal to a particular notion of masculinity that is often tough, even aggressive, and these qualities are attributed to men as being male qualities.¹¹³ Yet it is just such ideas of masculinity — and the automatic links that are made between these behaviours and what men are 'supposed' to be — that need to be challenged in efforts to prevent violence against women. Similarly, prevention efforts often rely on 'good men' and 'good models of masculinity', in other words, men who perform masculinity well and in a way we easily recognise, such as sports stars. However, these models too subscribe to narrow ideas of manhood, and rely on a binary between masculinity and femininity. Flood suggests that we should also affirm those men who 'don't fit dominant codes of masculinity', since 'part of our work should be to break down narrow constructions of manhood and powerful gender binaries'.¹¹⁴

Further to this, some research draws attention to the binary logic inherent in our definitions of the male sex and male bodies, which suggests that a further step is necessary. Both sex and gender are constructed as a binary. Biological categories of male and female are commonly based on having a particular body. Thus, it is thought that one is born either male or female. For men, an automatic link is drawn between masculinity and 'male' bodies. There are of course, a number of problems with this logic.

First, this categorisation fails both at the level of identity, by failing to account for trans and gender diverse people, and at the level of biology, by failing to account for people who are intersex.¹¹⁵ In other words, there are bodies and subjectivities that cannot be captured by these categories. Ken Corbett, a scholar and psychoanalyst, writes:

Yes, the social order of the binary rules; it is the law that ticks loudest. But modern considerations and shifting social forces have ticked in return. Gender is being rethought, and *newly lived*. And binary schematics are insufficient to account for this new life.¹¹⁶

Second, this binary logic has a range of negative implications for people who are trans, gender diverse and intersex. Levitt and Ippolito note that ‘those who challenge gender norms challenge one of the most fundamental bases of power in Western society’. This, they argue, helps account for the exclusions and punishments to which intersex, trans and gender diverse people are often subjected.¹¹⁷

For the most part, prevention work relies on a fixed category of sex and proceeds with a particular biological definition of what is male and what is female. The 2017 research report *Primary prevention of family violence against people from LGBTI communities* highlights that binary constructions of sex and gender have underpinned dominant understandings of family violence and violence against women.¹¹⁸ As the report explains, prevention efforts have focused on the cisgender (and heterosexual) population. This has meant that those who are intersex, trans and gender diverse have often been ignored or rendered invisible in this work.

Prevention work that engages men and masculinities tends to adhere to the same binary thinking. The male subject that is addressed or engaged is assumed to be cis, and most likely heterosexual. This oversimplifies the lived realities of gender and sexuality. The current framing that focuses on cis men does capture the majority of men. However, it is important to acknowledge the exclusion, and lack of understanding, of the lives of many trans and intersex men, and other gender diverse people in prevention efforts. It is also important to acknowledge and attempt to incorporate work that specifically addresses violence within and against these diverse groups of the population.^v

Further to this, acknowledging and challenging the cis-normative framing that dominates the majority of prevention work will increase the effectiveness of this work. Research states that an adherence to the binary sex categories ‘encourages the endorsement of gender stereotypes, sexist attitudes, and the acceptance of gender inequalities as “natural”’.¹¹⁹ This suggests that by challenging or redefining these categories in our prevention work, we can help to disrupt and address the very drivers of gender inequality and violence against women.

Primary prevention work that focuses on men and masculinities must draw on this sociological scholarship and its key concepts, and emphasise the construction of masculinity and its links to power. It must also pay attention to contemporary scientific accounts that increasingly challenge a purely essentialist position. Moreover, in order for prevention to be truly transformative, there must be an interrogation of the ways in which prevention efforts reproduce essentialist ideas of how men should perform their masculinity — or go further and challenge how we define males and male bodies.

v This can be challenging for organisations that are mandated to focus on men’s violence against women. Many of these organisations are well aware that binary categories are constructed and problematic but are given the responsibility to work within these categories in addressing those captured by them. Nevertheless, there is a responsibility for such organisations to keep developing their thinking on this issue, to acknowledge the limitations of this approach and to identify opportunities to do work that crosses and disrupts these boundaries.

2.2 From masculinity to masculinities

2.2.1 Masculinity as multiple

Formal studies of masculinities have moved from the use of the term ‘masculinity’ (singular) to ‘masculinities’ (plural) in acknowledgement that there is no single or universal model of masculinity. Masculinity is seen as dynamic and multiple rather than static and unitary. In other words, it is a complex and ever-shifting entity that changes over time, and between place and person. Todd Reeser notes that ‘even within a single cultural and temporal context ideas of masculinity are far from stable and fixed’.¹²⁰ This framing of masculinity as dynamic and multiple has dominated the literature on masculinities over the past 30 years or more.¹²¹ As is evident in the research and in a range of recent studies, there are many different ways of performing and experiencing masculinity, which do not conform to one single model.¹²²

Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity also theorises masculinity as a multiplicity, and moves away from a static, universal understanding of masculinity. As outlined in Section 2.1.2, hegemonic masculinity describes a dominant form or pattern of masculinity, a configuration of practice that is most highly valued but which most men struggle to attain all of the time. This means there are different ways men live their lives that might diverge from, only partly conform to, or even actively resist the dominant form. The APA handbook on masculinities notes that scholars of masculinities ‘generally position their findings within a multiple masculinities model that acknowledges a range of masculinities, from alternative and subordinated to hegemonic versions’.¹²³

There is research to suggest that masculinities are lived in contradictory ways that do not always conform to the dominant social norms and expectations of masculinity. Wardman’s ethnographic study of Australian primary schools revealed that while some boys conform to dominant expectations of masculinity, others actively resist them and forge different ways of being boys.¹²⁴ The Man Box study conducted by Promundo in 2017 found that some masculine norms are adhered to and others are routinely transgressed or seen as less important. For example, some young men felt free to cry in front of their male friends or spend time on indulgent grooming.¹²⁵ The 2018 Man Box study conducted in Australia showed a gap between social norms and the participants’ personal endorsement of these norms. In his analysis of the study, Flood highlights that there is a ‘consistent gap between perceived social norms of manhood and men’s own attitudes about being a man’.¹²⁶

These studies demonstrate that while men are acutely aware of the dominant norms and expectations for how they should act and behave, not all men adopt or practice them. This echoes Connell’s description of hegemonic masculinity as being the dominant form and reference point for all men, but one that does not necessarily translate into practice by all men, or by some men all of the time. Men’s practices demonstrate that masculinity is multiple even if it is often thought of as a single, universal form or as a discrete set of norms. Ken Corbett argues that we often fail to fully acknowledge the existence of much variance beyond what is considered normative. He writes: ‘norms capture what is most conspicuous about human development (how we are all similar), they do not capture what is perhaps most interesting about human development: the variance that is necessary for norms to exist, the fact that repetition of patterns or averages is never exact’.¹²⁷

2.2.2 Masculinity as situational

Research shows that a single man enacts multiple forms of masculinity. Michael Kimmel writes that masculinity is ‘plural and relational, it is also situational’.¹²⁸ Masculinity is situational because men perform different masculinities in different contexts. An ethnographic study on a young working-class man found that he adapted to and performed various types of masculinity in different situations and contexts. His ‘multiple performances of the self’ included the academic achiever, the athlete and the party boy, depending on whether he was at school, playing sport or socialising with his peers.¹²⁹ Each of these contexts required a different performance of masculinity.

Moreover, men may break traditional norms of masculinity in particular contexts. A recent study in Belgium found men's enactment of traditional norms of masculinity to be context-specific. It revealed that in family and intimate relationship settings men tended to break expectations to be agentic and independent, and were found to be more communal and emotionally responsive in these settings.¹³⁰ Similarly, it can be acceptable for men to cry and display emotion in some contexts and not others.¹³¹ This is particularly evident in sporting contexts, where a display of emotion and intimacy on the sporting field has become commonplace. This display is seen as legitimate and acceptable because it occurs in the context of playing sport. Leigh Boucher draws attention to this paradox in his examination of increasing media representations of the crying male Australian Football League (AFL) player.¹³² The footballer's tears — in injury, triumph or loss — seem to undermine the neat alignment between the footballer and hegemonic masculinity or ideals of Australian manhood. And yet, these tears are deemed to be acceptable, by supporters and in public media discourses. These displays of emotion are acceptable due to the meanings of masculinity that are explicitly tied to football. The crying footballer may even be a heroic figure, since his tears could be seen as the overflow of an affective attachment to football above all, and football is what 'real' men do.¹³³

While the research shows that men may perform their masculinity in multiple ways depending on context, this does not mean that men are fully agentic and able to choose how to think and act at any given time or place. Dominant forms of masculinity exist that constrain and influence how men are expected to act in any given situation. As such, men's choices are shaped by social and structural constraints, as well as other internalised processes. This is important to acknowledge. A range of displays of masculinity may be performed in different contexts, but performances are nevertheless constrained by what are deemed acceptable types of masculinity, and these different contexts allow for different types of performances.¹³⁴

Thus, masculinity is shown to be a complex social construction in which the body, the psyche and the social context interact. It is a dynamic construction that can look different in different contexts and situations. Studies of men and masculinities must account for the dynamic nature of masculinities and the ways in which norms and expectations can differ in various contexts. Moreover, masculinity must be seen as multiple. Men perform their masculinity in intelligible or recognisable ways but also in ways that break dominant norms and expectations. This is an important consideration when addressing and engaging men and masculinities in prevention work.

2.2.3 Emerging theories of contemporary masculinities

These observations of masculinity as multiple and situational have led some scholars to find new ways of theorising contemporary masculinities in order to account for the apparent contradictions and discrepancies in the lived realities of some men's lives. It is thought that men today are seen to be less tied to traditional forms of masculinity, and that this requires new ways of theorising masculinities. Some scholars argue that concepts such as hegemonic masculinity are too rigid and cannot account for hybrid forms of masculinity that blur traditional forms. For example, the subordination of homosexuality is considered a key tenet of hegemonic masculinity. Yet, as Eric Anderson suggests, this idea has become more complex as gay men are increasingly accepted into the dominant institutions and enjoy greater and more positive representation in the media and popular culture.¹³⁵ Anderson suggests that hegemonic masculinity, coined in the 1980s, struggles to account for the contemporary patterns of men's lives.

There have been a number of significant contributions to this growing dialogue. The concept of 'metrosexual masculinities' is one of the earliest attempts to describe a new type of masculinity embodied by heterosexual men, which diverges from traditional forms.¹³⁶ More recently, scholars have extended this and sought to conceptualise and describe some of the broader shifting patterns of masculine norms and practices, with the introduction of 'inclusive masculinity' theory.¹³⁷ This concept attempts to account for masculinities that are seemingly not predicated on hegemonic forms of masculinity, which involve the rejection of women and the feminine, or on homophobic gestures. Bridges and Pascoe directly employ the term 'hybrid masculinities' to describe a blurring of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities and to account for where traditional masculine values

and practices mix with more subordinate or feminine types.¹³⁸ Others have developed the concept of ‘caring masculinities’ in order to describe men who are increasingly rejecting traits associated with independence and dominance in favour of other values such as interdependence, relationality and care.¹³⁹

Importantly, this has sparked significant debate regarding the structure of contemporary masculinity, and whether these shifts mark any real change or disruption to current power structures and gender relations. Some researchers are sceptical of these supposed shifts. Specifically, these accounts of contemporary masculinities are seen to be too optimistic, or are seen to describe a symbolic shift that doesn’t signal any real change to the current power structures and gender hierarchies.¹⁴⁰ For some, this optimism that men have changed, or are changing, may even distract from the fact that men as a group still dominate all of our political, economic and social structures and institutions.¹⁴¹ That some men appear to be less invested in dominant norms and in sexist and homophobic behaviours may simply be a sign of the flexibility of patriarchy.

Furthermore, some scholars highlight that these hybrid masculinities often involve a strategic borrowing of alternative or marginalised masculinities. Thus, these accounts lack an intersectional analysis of how privileged men are most able to ‘play with’ variance, with little threat to their socio-economic and white privileges.¹⁴² This may even perpetuate a good men/bad men narrative which demonises those men without the resources and privilege to embody more ‘progressive’ types of masculinity. A study of young men (aged 20 to 29) in Australia found that there is indeed a range of ways in which men negotiate their masculinity and straddle different types of masculinities, with some embodying a more traditional model and others taking on softer, more hybrid models.¹⁴³ The author notes that while some of these shifts are encouraging, it is important to pay attention to the workings of privilege here, and the ways in which privilege influences and enables particular expressions of masculinity that are less available to some men.

Hence, while there is an acknowledgement that contemporary masculinities are in flux and there is an emergence of more hybrid forms that appear at odds with traditional models of masculinity, we shouldn’t assume that this necessarily reflects a significant disruption to current power structures and gender hierarchies. While there appears to be a shift in some discourses and representations of masculinity, this doesn’t automatically signal that gender equality has been reached and that all men have changed.

2.3 Intersectionality

2.3.1 Intersectionality and masculinities

Work with men must consider how masculinity intersects with other axes of identity and social location, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, ability, age and so forth, to produce multiple masculinities and different experiences of being a man. Applying an intersectional analysis to masculinities and the lived realities of men is a vital part of this work and is important for engaging men and masculinities in the prevention of violence against women.

In the late 1980s, Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionality’, a concept developed to further understand and analyse the ways in which gender and race interact and shape the specific experiences of oppression that Black women face.¹⁴⁴ Here, Crenshaw draws on and extends the work of earlier feminists and other women of colour.¹⁴⁵ In these two essays Crenshaw describes the oppression and discrimination experienced by Black women due to their race (being black) and their gender (being women). Crenshaw is careful here to describe the ways in which this oppression occurs — structurally (through systems and institutions), politically (through the exclusion of Black women from the women’s movement) and representationally (through cultural norms and stereotypes). Despite her focus on gender and race, Crenshaw also acknowledges the range of other intersections at play, that there is a ‘need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the

social world is constructed'.¹⁴⁶ Thus, someone's gender can interact with other axes of identity and systems of power based on class, sexuality, ability, age and so forth to produce a particular experience in the world.

Through Crenshaw and other scholars, intersectionality has provided an important lens for examining intersecting systems of power, and for understanding how the discrimination and violence that women experience within a patriarchal system, is experienced in multiple ways and has different impacts. A system of gender inequality interacts with various structural inequalities to produce for many women a more precarious and oppressive context in which to act.

Further, Crenshaw argues that while intersectionality unveils the structural, political and representational processes of subordination, and the ways in which those processes are experienced, it is a model that also allows us to analyse privilege and gain a better understanding of how these processes benefit some people.¹⁴⁷ For example, while women as a group face disadvantage and discrimination due to their gender, some women experience greater privilege and benefits than other women (and some men) on the basis of race (being white) or class (being educated and wealthy). This suggests that the interaction between gender and other social structures results in multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and privilege that shape the lives of all people.

Scholars of masculinities who emphasise the multiple, constructed nature of masculinities have made various attempts to include intersectionality in their analyses of men. The *APA handbook of men and masculinities* states: 'Drawing insight from feminist analyses of gender, constructionist perspectives also increasingly emphasize intersectionality in the study of gender; the construction of gender can rarely be separated from the social meanings of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability.'¹⁴⁸ Connell's hegemonic masculinity remains one of the first significant attempts to incorporate an intersectional analysis into studies of men and masculinities. While hegemonic masculinity describes the power relations between men as a group and women as a group, it also draws attention to the hierarchy of masculinities and the differences of power among men. Connell writes that hegemonic masculinity is always constructed 'in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women'.¹⁴⁹ In this way, it follows broader feminist paradigms which view the social world as 'molded by power relations that create unevenly structured opportunities and access to resources'.¹⁵⁰

The dominant discourses of masculinity in Western culture define masculinity first and foremost as heterosexual. This is a key point for Connell. Gay men are the most obvious example of a 'subordinated' masculinity — one that suffers political, economic and social discrimination within the media, the law and other institutions. Heterosexual men may also be subordinated and 'expelled from the circle of legitimacy', either because they display 'feminine' characteristics or actively shun the current hegemonic patterns.¹⁵¹ Connell stresses that this subordination is underpinned by a patriarchal framework because it is concerned with the domination and exclusion of women and the feminine. Hegemonic masculinity is part of the strategy for reproducing this framework, with the gay man most easily connected to effeminacy and therefore not hegemonic. This direct opposition to what is considered hegemonic, is encapsulated with Connell's use of the term 'subordinated'.

Connell also addresses the intersections between hegemonic masculinity and other axes of class, race and ethnicity, to introduce what she refers to as 'marginalised' masculinities. Connell notes that 'marginalised' masculinities would likely include black or working-class masculinities since historically (and presently) these men do not enjoy the same economic, political or social privileges that other men, such as white, middle-class men, do. It is true that these men may appear hegemonic or may even become exemplars of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, Black athletes and actors might be wealthy, successful and publicly celebrated. However, Connell emphasises that these are isolated examples and do not bring about a greater social or economic authority for the broader group (black men) in general. Connell writes: 'In the United States, particular Black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does

not yield social authority to Black men in general.¹⁵² Connell's structuralist approach is apparent here. The achievements of a few do not challenge or rupture in any way the larger political, social and economic structures that are already in place, and that, in this example, all Black men automatically inhabit.

While different masculinities are apparent, some are exemplary and hegemonic, and all men engage with these at some level. This division between dominant forms of masculinity and other subordinated types ensures that there is a hierarchy among men, and that only a particular group of men receive the full benefits of hegemonic masculinity and its strategies. As Kimmel explains, the white, wealthy, heterosexual man is 'a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power'.¹⁵³ Although men as a group are conferred greater power and privilege over women as a group, different men have different levels of access to this power.

Connell's conceptualisation of masculinity demonstrates a more capacious understanding (than evidenced in earlier studies) of the ways in which masculinities are produced, shaped and maintained. Within her concept, Connell collates some of the concerns of earlier men's studies, bringing together the different aspects of gender, class, race and sexuality. Indeed, it has become a key concept for thinking critically about power relations between men and women, but also relations among men and the hierarchical ordering of masculinities.

This reading of masculinity as not only multiple but also hierarchical is reiterated in the larger body of work on masculinities. Pease argues that we cannot speak of men as universal or singular because men are not a homogenous group.¹⁵⁴ Men's lives, like women's, are structured by other axes of identity and difference, with some men that are dominant over other men. Kimmel writes: 'manhood is equated with power — over women, over other men'.¹⁵⁵

2.3.2 Dominant discourses of masculinity and difference

Much of what is described in Section 2.3.1 refers to the ways in which marginalisation and discrimination are experienced in a structural sense, within our social, political and economic structures and institutions such as the law, the education system and the labour market. Importantly, both Crenshaw and Connell also draw attention to the cultural (what Crenshaw terms 'representational') aspects of discrimination and marginalisation. In relation to men and masculinities, cultural intersectionality considers the ways in which different men are depicted and stereotyped within our cultural discourses and representations. Of course, the structural and the cultural are interlinked. In her analysis of Black masculinities, bell hooks highlights that Black masculinities are often set up in opposition to white men's, and represented as brutish, savage and lacking thought or feeling. This influences the ways in which Black men encounter and experience structural inequalities and also shapes how they are treated within institutional settings.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are typically represented as being primitive, savage and more violent than white men, and this shapes the ways in which they are seen and treated within political, economic and social institutions in Australia.¹⁵⁷

Importantly, these discourses are distinctly gendered — they often position these men as either feminine or too masculine. In fact, this is a key part of the strategy that creates and maintains a hierarchy of men. This point is made repeatedly throughout the literature.

Some groups of men are consistently feminised, with perhaps the most obvious example being gay men. Connell writes, 'From the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity'.¹⁵⁸ Some scholars have also drawn attention to the ways in which men with disability are often feminised and/or de-sexualised (which also feminises them), through depictions of them as helpless and dependent rather than powerful and autonomous.¹⁵⁹ In this way, disability and masculinity are seen to be in conflict with each other. In relation to race, some Asian masculinities are represented as being subservient and passive. Alsop et al. highlight that within dominant Western discourses 'Asian men ... are often feminised, seen as manipulative, untrustworthy and wily'.¹⁶⁰

Conversely, black and working-class masculinities are commonly represented as sexist and aggressive, and their bodies are seen as powerful. Importantly, these bodies are positioned as excessive, as embodying an excessive or 'out of control' masculinity, and this is translated into a lack. Todd Reeser describes this strategy:

If the effeminate Asian man and the hypervirile black man are taken together not as two separate constructs but as part of a larger system of race-gender codings, the white man may be privileged as the man in the middle, neither too masculine nor too unmasculine ... the man with the right or perfect amount of masculinity.¹⁶¹

In their report on migrant and refugee men in Australia, Murdolo and Quiazon point to the variation in the ways these men are represented, from the hyper-masculine Lebanese and black masculinities to the more compliant, passive Chinese masculinity.¹⁶² The authors note that these constructions work at maintaining the white man as hegemonic and desirable while masking the diverse lives of migrant and refugee men, and making invisible the contradictions in the way these men perform their masculinities. They write that 'migrant men from working-class backgrounds may be depicted in popular media as aggressive and domineering ... but in their personal lives, maintain egalitarian personal and domestic relationships'.¹⁶³

Thus, the patterns and processes that produce and maintain a hierarchy of men also help to maintain the current patriarchal system that privileges a particular group of men, not only over women, but also over other men. Despite the fact they lead to an outcome of hierarchies between men, these processes nevertheless involve relationships of gender and power because 'subordinated' and 'marginalised' masculinities are gendered in specific ways — as being either feminine or too masculine.

2.3.3 Intersectionality in conceptions of men's violence

We know that women experience significant violence at the hands of men, and that women who are impacted by other structures of discrimination and disadvantage are more likely to experience higher rates of violence and more severe impacts from this violence, than other women. In her 1991 essay on intersectionality, Crenshaw outlines the ways in which the structural, political and representational (cultural) marginalisation of Black women shapes their particular experience of domestic and sexual violence, and constrains their ability to access help and support.¹⁶⁴ In their edited volume on eliminating gender-based violence, Ann Taket and Beth Crisp argue that an intersectional analysis helps deepen our understanding of violence against women, and is essential for developing tools to prevent this violence.¹⁶⁵ In 2018, *Changing the picture* was developed to further understand the specific dynamics of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia, and to support the prevention of violence against these women.¹⁶⁶

Thus, there has been an increasing effort to adopt an intersectional lens through which to understand and address the particular dynamics of violence against different groups of women. A consideration of the ways in which gender inequality interacts with other structural inequalities has been central to this analysis. In fact, violence against women cannot be properly addressed without centring an intersectional analysis. As Rus Funk explains, 'gender-based violence is not only used as a weapon of sexism, it is also a weapon of racism, homophobia and heterosexism, classism, and other forms of oppression. As such, gender-based violence itself lies at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression and privilege'.¹⁶⁷

However, a more comprehensive understanding is needed of exactly how men and masculinities are implicated and how an intersectional analysis can help identify the ways in which masculinity intersects with other aspects of identity to produce different patterns in men's perpetration of violence against women. Therefore, intersectionality is crucial for a better understanding not only of the experience of violence, but also its perpetration. As Flood notes, the intersection of gender with other forms of social difference and social inequality helps shape women's experience of men's violence, men's perpetration of this violence, the institutional and community responses to this violence, and also how the media represents it.¹⁶⁸

2.3.4 Intersections of masculinity, socio-structural inequality and violence against women

In recent work addressing men and masculinities in the prevention of violence against women, there has been a resounding call for a greater focus on and more effective application of intersectionality. This call has been made in response to frameworks that have often approached prevention work with little consideration or acknowledgement of how structural inequalities interact with masculinity to produce different patterns of violence.

Jewkes et al. argue that the likelihood of men using violence is often shaped by other factors such as poverty and social marginalisation.¹⁶⁹ Promundo's extensive report on masculinity and violence finds that as well as influencing women's ability or willingness to seek assistance or support in the event of violence, various forms of oppression and hardship also influence men's perpetration of violence.¹⁷⁰ Research has found that masculinity intersects with other aspects of men's identity and experience to help shape men's attitudes and practices relating to women and violence.¹⁷¹ Murdolo and Quiazon explain that men's violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours are definitely shaped by gender, but gender also intersects and interacts with other forms of structural inequality based on class, race and ethnicity.¹⁷²

Importantly, the literature is careful to avoid implicating these intersecting cultures and identities as 'the problem'. Murdolo and Quiazon highlight that accounts of violence against women in immigrant and refugee communities are often seen through a lens of culture rather than gender.¹⁷³ In other words, culture is seen as the primary driver of this violence. However, this wrongly diverts attention away from the key role of gender. This focus on the 'culture' of these communities also makes invisible the violence that emerges from dominant 'culture', which is violence perpetrated by white, wealthy men, and ignores the ways in which structures of power, which marginalise some men, also drive this violence.

In relation to immigrant and refugee men, racism and other forms of discrimination that are embedded in structures and institutions help to shape their masculinities and, hence, their attitudes and practices towards women. Further to this, research has noted that experiences of resettlement can contribute to the perpetration of violence by refugee men against their female partners, due to increased social isolation, trauma and feelings of cultural alienation.¹⁷⁴ Thus, gender intersects with the specific oppressions and hardships that refugee communities face, and helps shape the perpetration of violence against women by these men.¹⁷⁵

Some studies suggest there are higher violence-supportive attitudes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (and particularly among the most disadvantaged of these men) compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and non-Indigenous men.¹⁷⁶ Importantly, this greater acceptance of violence is often underpinned by the social and structural disadvantage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men face, and a history of racism and colonisation which has influenced men's attitudes and practices regarding violence. *Changing the picture* notes that the racist and colonial violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can mean that some people within these communities are more likely to view violence as a normal and expected part of life. As the resource states, this does not automatically 'imply an acceptance of violence nor an inability to see violence as wrong or harmful, but rather shows the collective impact of these experiences on contemporary views and attitudes'.¹⁷⁷

In making these links between structural inequalities and violence against women, it is important to keep masculinity and gender inequality at the centre. Women experience marginalisation and disadvantage based on race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, age, ability and so forth as men do, and yet they do not react with violence to the same extent or with the same prevalence as men. This means that the problem of violence against women is not simply due to structural inequalities but is also deeply gendered. The research consistently demonstrates that it is the specific intersection of gender with other forms of structural inequality and privilege that help drive and produce contemporary patterns of violence. The most recent NCAS report, found that the best predictor of a person's attitudes towards violence against women is their level of support for gender inequality, rather than the influence of demographic factors.¹⁷⁸

In a study of men's violence, Peter Jansson found that men who both experience other structural disadvantage and who hold the most patriarchal views are more likely to perpetrate violence against women than men who experience other discrimination but hold pro-feminist or more egalitarian views on gender.¹⁷⁹ This suggests that men's experience of marginalisation should not be considered an automatic risk factor for the perpetration of violence. Rather, a man's attitudes towards women and gender equality are the strongest predictor of his use of aggressive and violent behaviour towards women. Similarly, a study in Brazil found strong links between traditional notions of manhood and the perpetration of violence against women, and that this was the immediate and strongest link to violence rather than a man's socio-economic disadvantage.¹⁸⁰ Thus, while taking an intersectional approach is critical, addressing gender inequalities and dominant forms of masculinity remains central to reducing and preventing violence against women.

So, how exactly does structural disadvantage/marginalisation intersect with masculinity? A significant body of work has found that men who face discrimination and disadvantage may adhere to dominant forms of masculinity as a means of asserting or reclaiming a sense of power. In other words, men who experience discrimination may rely on traditional models of masculinity to gain the authority and status that has not been afforded to them.¹⁸¹ Men who are historically disadvantaged and oppressed may adopt a culture of masculinity where violence is 'a resource for proving one's masculinity'.¹⁸² This means the enactment of masculinity varies depending on the economic and social possibilities available. Alsop et al. write, 'The pursuit of the "masculine ideal" is articulated in different ways according to the resources available to individual and groups of men.'¹⁸³ Western ideals of masculinity include being white, wealthy and successful in work. Men who cannot attain this may seek alternative ways to be 'successful' men, which may include displays of physical prowess, aggression and/or violence.

Through a series of interviews with perpetrators, a US study found that for some of the African American men who had perpetrated violence against women, this violence provided an avenue to reassert their masculinity and maintain a sense of power in their intimate relationships, in the face of the racism they experienced in the broader world.¹⁸⁴ A more recent study found that men of colour negotiate their masculinity against the normative form constructed for white, heterosexual and middle-class men. Forming an attachment to traditional forms of masculinity — being tough, aggressive, physically strong and ready to fight — could be part of a strategy for cultivating a 'strong disposition' to cope with racism and other experiences of disadvantage, although the patterns and levels of attachment varied across different racial and ethnic groups.¹⁸⁵

In Australia, colonisation and its ongoing impacts continue to negatively affect and disempower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. Research has found that the ongoing structural violence experienced by these men, and the destruction of their kinship structures and cultural practices, underpin the negative behaviours and harms that some of these men do to themselves and others through violence.¹⁸⁶ In the *Changing the picture* report, some participants explain that violence in these communities is often learned behaviour from the processes of colonisation, rather than a part of the traditional culture of masculinity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This reference to the violence of colonisation and its ongoing legacies and impacts is echoed in other work. Fatima Measham draws links between contemporary Australian masculinity and its colonial origins — what she calls 'a masculinity of the frontier', which is aggressive, territorial and entitled.¹⁸⁷

A research report by the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia found that for Aboriginal men, strength was defined in terms of having a good knowledge of culture and identity, and having the ability to share this knowledge with their family and community.¹⁸⁸ The disconnection and alienation felt by these men, as a result of colonisation which has erased these channels of learning and knowledge, had direct impacts on their sense of strength and masculinity. Many of these men are unable to embody the manhood of their traditional culture nor meet the colonially imposed standards of manhood. Thus, Aboriginal men may use violence to reassert a sense of power and strength lost due to colonisation and its racist structures, which have denied these men their traditional role, identity and status, both in their own communities and more broadly.¹⁸⁹

Similarly, there is a relationship between masculinity, violence and economic disadvantage.

Research shows different patterns of domestic violence occur when economic and social disadvantage are also present. These particular patterns stem from such disadvantages and their specific intersection with gender inequality and masculinity. Men who experience poverty or lower socio-economic status, experience higher levels of stress and conflict, and have less access to support services, all of which can influence men's perpetration of violence against women, particularly their intimate partners.¹⁹⁰ Further, Jansson explains that for some men experiencing economic disadvantage, violence is a defence of their masculinity, both against women and against other men. He writes that 'marginalised men without a normal advantage over women as breadwinner become more patriarchal and stereotypical in their attitudes, with little space to express weakness and femininity'.¹⁹¹ Ethnographic studies have found that men experiencing economic disadvantage and hardship, were more likely to hold attitudes that were more supportive of violence in general.¹⁹² For some men, displaying courage, aggression and toughness — what was called 'a code of the streets' — was seen as important for dealing with adverse socio-economic conditions and for acquiring respect and self-worth.¹⁹³ In another study, interviews with young, white working-class men in the UK revealed that experiences of inequality and disadvantage could be turned into resentment, anger and violence, directed towards women and also minority groups, in this case Muslim men.¹⁹⁴

On the other hand, some research complicates this picture and points to a shift in some of these patterns. Studies on violence in rural communities have found that violence is a common element of rural masculinities, and that the form this violence takes often varies across different rural contexts.¹⁹⁵ However, other research suggests these patterns in rural settings are less clear, with many men reconstructing their masculinities in ways that are not supportive of gender inequality or violence against women.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, Steven Roberts points to evidence of shifting masculinities among young working-class men in the UK, where some of these men have been found to actively resist more traditional, hegemonic forms.¹⁹⁷

2.3.5 Impacts of stigma and stereotypes

This research highlights the ways in which men break dominant forms of masculinity. This focus is important since men who experience discrimination are often represented in specific ways that perpetuate ongoing stigma and 'stereotype' their masculinities. These negative discourses then shape the responses to the violence perpetrated by these men. Flood notes how race and ethnicity shape the way men of colour are represented and treated when they perpetuate violence against women. These men are more likely to be held accountable and treated in a harsher manner by the state than white men.¹⁹⁸ In the media and in popular culture, Black masculinities are hyper-sexualised and constructed as being threatening, sexually dangerous and violent.¹⁹⁹ Migrant men are also often represented in ways that do not align with their realities. Immigrant men on temporary visas are represented as passive and compliant, even if some are authoritarian in their family life. Working-class migrant men are often depicted as aggressive and dominant, even though many are egalitarian in their relationships.²⁰⁰ Further to this, against the backdrop of Australia, which is seen to be 'rightly white', migrant men in general are often constructed as being an economic threat to the nation and a sexual threat to white Australian women.²⁰¹ Taken all together, men who are subject to such stereotypes and stigma are often treated more harshly in our legal and punitive systems.

Gay and bisexual men also experience higher rates of violence against them, both by the state and by other men. Research has found that the specific harassment and violence experienced by these men is underpinned by a dominant masculinity that is simultaneously sexist and homophobic.²⁰² This has led some researchers to extend the definition of gender-based violence to include the violence experienced by sexually diverse men.²⁰³ The majority of this violence comes at the hands of other men, often as a mechanism for policing masculinity. In this way, it is seen to be gendered.

While it is important to gain a better understanding of these patterns and think through the ways in which some men face social and structural marginalisation and disadvantage, we must not lose sight

of the fact it is women who experience the greatest impacts as a result of intersections between gender inequality, masculinity and social and structural disadvantage. An intersectional approach to addressing masculinities in prevention work helps us to further understand what drives rates of violence against women, and against some men. This suggests that in order to address violence against women more effectively we must challenge structural inequalities that marginalise particular groups of men, as well as challenge gender inequality and dominant forms of masculinity. Men as a group continue to hold greater power than women as a group. The hierarchy of men serves to maintain the status quo and to continue to privilege men as a group over women as group, while also conferring greater amounts of power and status to particular groups of men.

2.3.6 Intersectionality and privilege

While intersectional frameworks are often employed to better understand and examine experiences of discrimination and disadvantage, they also enable an analysis of privilege. This other analytical function is often neglected in this debate, but it remains crucial for an analysis of masculinities and understanding the patterns of men's violence against women.

In relation to men, intersectionality can uncover the ways in which, for instance, cisgender heterosexual white men, men without disability, generally hold greater power and status than other men. In fact, men's privilege is often held at the expense of other men — for not being white, not being straight, or not being wealthy, and so on. Pease suggests that privileged men must be held accountable to men who experience disadvantage — white men must be accountable to men of colour, and economically privileged men to men who experience poverty and lower socio-economic status.²⁰⁴

Crucially, an analysis of privilege can help to further understand the patterns of men's violence against women and specifically how and why more privileged men form rigid attachments to dominant forms of masculinity, promote a system of gender inequality and perpetrate violence against women. This important point is discussed in Section 5.2.

Additionally, intersectionality has the capacity to consider the privilege that men who occupy a subordinated position in relation to other men, nevertheless hold over women. These men experience marginalisation based on their race, class, and so on, but hold a degree of power based on their gender. In relation to immigrant and refugee men specifically, Murdolo and Quiazon highlight that an intersectional approach is able to locate these men within such relations of power, where they can be both oppressed (due to their race, ethnicity or citizen status) and privileged (as men). They write:

On the one hand, immigrant and refugee men occupy a position of male privilege by belonging to the social group that is protected from gender-based violence, and that inflicts that violence on women and girls. On the other hand, immigrant and refugee men also occupy a subordinated position and share with immigrant women those disadvantages that can stem from their structural locations as migrants.²⁰⁵

Intersectionality is a vital tool that enables us to recognise and understand the different experiences of men, their differential access to power and, importantly, how these differences shape patterns of violence against women. Further to this, intersectionality is integral to understanding how to effectively engage men in prevention work. This is discussed in Section 4.3.

2.4 Masculinity in structures

2.4.1 Social structures and masculinities

Masculinities are embedded in structures, as much as they are in norms and discourses. In studies of masculinities and in the social sciences, there is often a focus on the dominant norms and practices of masculinity, and the ways in which these are promoted through our institutions, and through our cultural discourses. However, our social, political and economic structures are also hugely

significant where gender is concerned. The ways in which our institutions and systems are themselves structured, greatly impacts how gender is seen and performed. Feminists have long argued that our institutions and systems are structured in ways that privilege men over women. In our legal system, our political system, in the workplace and in the family, in sports organisations and community groups, men continue to hold the majority of power and influence. Conversely, women often face marginalisation within these social structures. Our laws have commonly policed and regulated women's bodies; in the workplace there is unequal pay; and in the family unit a division of labour persists where men occupy the public realm while women are expected to take on the domestic and reproductive labour.

Importantly, structures, norms and practices are interwoven, and always interacting and reinforcing each other. Women receive lower pay, rarely hold the highest positions in our political and economic institutions, and their bodies are policed by our legal systems. In this way, structures oppress women in a real material sense. That is, the structure of these institutions and systems produces material effects and impacts for women. But importantly, these structures also promote particular gender ideologies, a set of norms and practices that we associate with gender and believe to be natural and proper. Women are seen as caring, as domestic, as emotional and passive. These norms work to legitimise and justify the gender hierarchies within our social structures. Further, these social structures that position women to receive lower employment status and lower pay than men mean that it is then seen as logical and normative for women to take time out of their careers to raise children and do the bulk of domestic labour. As a society, we are invested in these gender ideologies. In this way, structures, norms and practices cannot be disentangled from each other. In fact, they are deeply interwoven, always influencing and determining each other. As a result, we cannot hope to shift or change gender norms and practices in isolation since they are inextricably linked to broader policy and systemic processes in our social, political and economic structures.²⁰⁶ We must therefore also use policy and institutional, legal and systemic approaches to shift social structures.

Similarly, dominant masculine norms help maintain the political, economic and social power that men in general hold within our social institutions and structures. Norms that describe men as strong, rational and autonomous work to legitimise the position men occupy in our social structures. It is thought that men must hold this power because they have these qualities. We ascribe value to these norms and encourage their practice in our institutions. Further, our institutions and systems help promote and maintain these dominant norms and practices of masculinity. Thus, masculinity is both cultural and structural, promoted and supported through particular norms and discourses, and within our systems and institutions.²⁰⁷

Connell stresses that the ideals associated with hegemonic (dominant) masculinity are produced, promoted and, importantly, practiced through institutions and other formal settings, such as the workplace and school, and also within key sites, such as sport.²⁰⁸ Connell carefully describes hegemonic masculinity as being the 'currently accepted' practice or way of being a man, one in which we are invested and see to be proper or natural. Importantly, hegemonic masculinity is key to maintaining an overall gender system that privileges men over women. This means that hegemonic masculinity is also a dynamic construct. The dominant forms and patterns of masculinity in any given society might shift or be replaced in order to secure this gender hierarchy and maintain men's structural power and privilege. This suggests it is important to challenge the structures themselves, and also challenge the norms and practices that uphold and legitimise these structures.

There is a neat alignment here between this conceptual account of masculinity and the social-ecological model employed within public health frameworks and in prevention work addressing violence against women (see Section 1.4.1). The ecological model acknowledges the complex interactions that occur between the individual, community, organisational, systemic and societal levels, and that the norms, structures and practices occurring at these different levels all help to produce and maintain an overall system of gender inequality.²⁰⁹ In seeking to address the violence that men perpetrate against women, it is important to understand the world in which these men act,

which involves understanding how the combination and interaction of our social structures, norms and practices produce a gender hierarchy in which men and women have different access to power, opportunity and resources.

As *Change the story* and other frameworks have outlined, gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women, and this inequality manifests across the different levels of society — not only at the level of social/cultural norms and expectations, but also within our economic, political and social structures and institutions. The scholarship on masculinities and violence against women consistently draws links between gender inequality as it manifests within norms, structures and practices and the perpetration of violence against women.²¹⁰

Despite this, the literature identifies a common pitfall in prevention work: the failure to effectively address the structural and material forces that help drive violence against women. Prevention work has often focused on individual attitudes and behaviours, and ignored the structural and institutional forces that are crucial to shaping men's violence against women. In Australia, prevention efforts that address masculinity have tended to focus on the norms and practices of masculinity, with little analysis of how these interact in complex ways with societal structures. Michael Salter argues that these efforts must include an equal emphasis on structural forces (political, economic and social) that also underpin gender inequality and violence against women.²¹¹

To date, the majority of prevention work that centres men and masculinities has tended to focus on psychological models, which emphasise the individual actor of violence, and how an individual's experiences and development shape their attitudes and behaviours. Flood observes that there is an individualist bias in popular explanations of men's violence against women.²¹² While addressing individual men and their behaviour is important, a more comprehensive analysis is required — one which also addresses the societal norms and structures that provide a social context that enables or constrains individual behaviours and practices. One of the key problems with an individualist approach is that it places an enormous emphasis on individual agency. In other words, such approaches proceed under the assumption that the individual has all the power to change their attitudes and behaviours. This of course ignores the broader cultural and structural factors that help shape these attitudes and behaviours. Jansson writes that 'there are risks in focusing on men's rational choice, because such an approach tends to underestimate interdependency between the individual and society'.²¹³ Further, we will never end violence if we seek only to change one man at a time rather than adopting a whole-of-population approach to changing social structures and norms.

More recently, there has been a resounding call for a greater focus on the structural forces of men's violence against women, and for finding ways of holding the individual, the cultural and the structural elements together. As Flood explains, a 'resurgence of perspectives' have emphasised the key role played by structures in the shaping of gender inequality and violence against women.²¹⁴ History has shown that our political, legal and economic institutions have tended to privilege men over women. This suggests that continuing efforts are needed to interrogate and reform these institutions, and to emphasise their accountability.

In particular, governments are seen to be able to have significant impact. Laws, policies and programs they implement can either help to address the problem of violence against women (and gender inequality generally), or exacerbate and reinforce it.²¹⁵ Advocates for prevention have had varying success at convincing governments to scale up their efforts to prevent violence against women, especially in relation to reforming policy and funding models. In fact, Salter suggests governments and funders are less likely to support work that addresses and reforms our institutions and systems.²¹⁶ Such work is seen to be more difficult to do, and more politicised, than efforts that address norms and practices. This might explain why a proper analysis of the structural elements of gender inequality is often missing in prevention work focused on men and masculinities. Addressing norms and individual practices is easier to do, and also deflects attention away from the structural elements of this inequality and the fact that governments are implicated in those structural elements.

Our social structures help shape how we live, think and feel. However, this does not mean that individual approaches are not important. An account of individual subjectivity and the ways in which an individual's experiences, desires and investments influence their behaviours and practices is also required. Fahlberg et al. write: 'The characteristics and effects of masculinity are rendered material and visible through laws, formal and informal rules and norms, social practices, and the actions and discourses of individuals and groups.'²¹⁷ We must hold the individual, cultural and structural together, to further understand how individual men are constrained or enabled by an overall system of gender that works at multiple levels and in multiple ways. We must also do so to hold individual men who use violence accountable for their actions and not simply 'explain away' or excuse their violence against women. All of this is important to address.

2.4.2 Social structures and intersectionality

An emphasis on structural forces is integral to adopting an intersectional approach in addressing masculinities and violence against women. An intersectional approach to prevention work examines the specific intersections of gender inequality with other structural inequalities. In relation to masculinities, an intersectional analysis reveals that dominant social structures and institutions do not confer power upon all men equally. Men have differential access to power and resources, depending on their race, class, sexuality, ability and so forth.²¹⁸ As outlined in Section 2.3, research shows that these structural inequalities intersect with masculinity to produce particular patterns of violence against women. Social structures are central to this analysis.

To illustrate, a study of young, white working-class men found that these men often turn their experience of socio-economic hardship and disenfranchisement into a particular construction of masculinity that is violent and aggressive.²¹⁹ The anger and powerlessness they felt due to their lower socio-economic situation was expressed in personal and individual ways to gain a sense of power and control. Understanding this violence requires more than an individual-based approach. An understanding of how social structures marginalise these men is crucial. Similarly, a study of African American men who had perpetrated violence found there were multiple factors underlying these violent behaviours, including individual (personal experiences of violence), cultural (constructions of masculinity as aggressive) and structural (structural racism and poverty) factors.²²⁰ An analysis of social structures and in these cases, the structural inequalities experienced by these men is vital in order to properly understand and address the violent behaviours of these men towards women.

An emphasis on social structures is also important for an analysis of male privilege. This too is an important component of intersectionality. Economically privileged white men who perpetrate violence against women might avoid significant sanction compared to other men because they are privileged within the dominant social, political and economic structures. Their violence is more likely to be excused or justified compared to men of colour or men experiencing poverty.²²¹

Further, more privileged men exercise significant power and influence in our political, economic and social institutions, have better access to resources and hold greater decision-making powers. This means these men are in fact well placed to support women and feminist work, and to enact change to help prevent violence against women. Flood writes that 'men can use institutional power to promote change'.²²²

This suggests that governments and other male-dominated institutions with influence and power need to become more involved in primary prevention work. Salter writes, 'there is another group of men — those who dominate the upper echelons of political and economic life — who need to become far more engaged in the VAW [violence against women] primary prevention agenda'.²²³

Unfortunately, a large amount of this responsibility and burden to do this work has been placed on the individual or onto women's organisations. The most disadvantaged groups and individuals are often made to bear the responsibility for the high rates of violence against women, and yet the actions of governments often put women at risk on a much larger scale.²²⁴ Furthermore, governments and other political institutions have the capacity to influence wide spread change that is positive and significant. Governments introduce many policies that affect the lives of women and, importantly, governments and their economic policies are also responsible for the bulk of funding for prevention work.²²⁵ Prevention work addressing masculinities has often focused on individualistic models and frameworks that seek to change individual men and particular cultures of masculinity. The literature suggests that while this is important, such approaches must be supplemented with an equal emphasis on structural forces.

Part 3: Dominant forms and patterns of masculinity

While masculinity is not static or fixed, there are particular social norms, attitudes and practices that men feel pressure to conform to and support. This section provides an overview of dominant forms and patterns of masculinity, how these can create and give legitimacy to an overall system of gender inequality and, at their most harmful, help drive violence against women. In particular, this section examines men's attachment to these patterns, and considers some of the key ways these dominant forms of masculinity are promoted and maintained, through a number of key sites and settings, and through male peer relationships. Further, it addresses the problem of violence more generally and discusses the ways in which men and boys are taught that violence and aggression are masculine behaviours.

The research demonstrates that:

- There are particular norms, attitudes and practices that men feel pressure to conform to and support, including autonomy, dominance and control, aggression and toughness, risk-taking, stoicism and the suppression of emotion, hypersexuality and compulsory heterosexuality.
- It is likely that dominant norms of masculinity overlap, interact and cluster together in particular ways to help drive gender inequality and violence against women.
- Compulsory heterosexuality is central to masculinity. Thus homophobia, biphobia, sexism, and homophobic acts of violence and violence against women, are intimately connected and stem from rigid gender norms and expectations.
- Men who form a rigid attachment to dominant norms of masculinity are more likely than other men to demonstrate sexist attitudes and behaviours, and use violence against women, especially when their masculinity is challenged or when they find it difficult to live up to these norms.
- Men who experience social and structural discrimination and disadvantage may look to dominant norms of masculinity, particularly expressions of aggression and violence, as a way to assert some measure of control or power in their lives.
- Dominant norms of masculinity are often central to male peer relationships and can influence how men relate to each other. This can be seen in the way some men and boys use sexist, homophobic or aggressive behaviours to assert their masculinity and gain approval from male peers.
- Some settings such as sports and male-dominated workplaces can promote dominant forms of masculinity that include sexist and violent attitudes and behaviours.
- Men's learned use of violence resulting from prolonged exposure to or experience of violence is also influenced by existing norms and practices of masculinity.
- Violence and aggression are strongly associated with masculinity, and this link is often supported, justified and legitimised in our societal institutions, norms and practices.

3.1 Dominant norms and expectations

As outlined in Part 2, masculinity is not homogenous and there is not one way to be man. While this is accurate, there are common social norms, expectations and patterns of behaviour that can be understood as constituting 'dominant' forms of masculinity. It is true that some men challenge these norms and expectations, but many accept and support them, or feel pressures to live up to them. Social expectations or 'norms' for how men should be, or which characteristics they should display, include:

- independence and self-reliance
- stoicism and suppression of emotion
- risk-taking
- aggression
- competitiveness
- toughness
- hypersexuality
- rejection of homosexuality and femininity
- dominance and control

The existence of these norms is consistently highlighted by key scholars in the field who note that while there are multiple masculinities, there is a dominant configuration of masculinity that serves to promote and maintain gender inequality and men's power over women. This configuration includes the dominant norms and ideals for how men should be, and what they should practice. Importantly, the research demonstrates how dominant norms of masculinity help create and preserve a gendered system of power and the dominance of men over women.²²⁶

Some of this research suggests direct links exist between these dominant norms and practices and violence against women.²²⁷ This work is both empirical and theoretical. Similarly, studies of male perpetrators of violence increasingly point to the need to address dominant norms as part of efforts to prevent further violence against women.²²⁸ Thus, it is vital to understand what these norms and practices are, and how they work.

3.1.1 Autonomy, dominance and control

The literature consistently posits autonomy as a key aspect of masculinity. Men are expected to be independent and self-sufficient in all aspects of their lives. In particular, research has focused on the expectations for men to be financially independent and to provide for and protect their partners and families.²²⁹ Being the 'breadwinner' has long been considered an integral part of the male role and what men do. In the recent Man Box study conducted in Australia, 56% of the male participants highlighted the societal pressure they felt as men to earn money and provide for their partners and families.²³⁰ Importantly, some studies suggest that this expectation to be the breadwinner sets up an inequitable partnership, where men are in control and take charge and women are expected to take a supportive, passive role.²³¹ More broadly, men are expected to lead and influence rather than follow. As Dahl et al. note, this emphasis on the male role as being an autonomous protector and provider is underpinned by the notion that men are better leaders and should have control and power over their affairs with others, especially women.²³²

The links between these norms and the enactment of violence is not always clear, especially in studies measuring male attitudes. The Man Box study demonstrates that while many of the male participants felt it was wrong to use violence to assert control in their relationships, they expressed a higher level of endorsement of other controlling behaviours, such as that a man should have the final say in his relationship, and should know where his wife or girlfriend is at all times.²³³

Some research has found direct links between these controlling behaviours and violence against women. *Change the story* highlights that violence is more common in heterosexual relationships where the man has more control over decision-making and where women have less financial and social independence than their male partner.²³⁴ A recent review of studies conducted between 2000 and 2015 showed that, overall, masculine norms and behaviours involving dominance and control were associated with higher levels of intimate partner violence.²³⁵ In a study of male perpetrators, it was shown that the expectations and pressures on men to be in control meant that violence was often employed as a means of achieving control in their intimate relationships.²³⁶

Further, some research demonstrates that when men find it difficult to attain ideals of manhood such as being the breadwinner, there is a higher likelihood they may use violence against their partners to reassert their masculinity and dominance.²³⁷ This suggests that adopting an intersectional approach is also necessary, to help further understand how structural inequalities intersect with masculinity and how this can increase the likelihood for some men to use violence against women.

While much of the research focuses on violence within intimate relationships, some studies have found that men are more likely to commit violence (in particular, sexual violence) against women in other settings when they adhere to forms of masculinity that encourage control, dominance and male entitlement.²³⁸ Thus, challenging these norms and patterns is vitally important for creating more equitable relationships and preventing men's violence against their female partners and women more broadly.

3.1.2 Aggression and toughness

It has been well established that men are encouraged and feel pressure to value aggression, to be tough, and to prove they are powerful and strong.²³⁹ Further, the research and data demonstrate that these pressures and expectations are directly linked to violence against women. The APA handbook states that masculinity is collectively defined as being 'naturally' aggressive. Therefore, being male is in itself 'a risk factor for violence'.²⁴⁰ Much of the empirical evidence on men supports this claim. In a large international study that examined risk factors underlying the perpetration of intimate partner violence, the men (31%) who reported they had perpetrated violence against their partners exhibited a strong adherence to masculine norms of aggression and dominance.²⁴¹ Drawing on current research, *Change the story* notes that rigid norms of masculinity and male peer relationships that include and emphasise aggression and dominance are key drivers of violence against women.²⁴²

Research shows that physical toughness and strength are key components of this expectation on men to be aggressive and tough. Both the international and Australian Man Box studies found that men were concerned about their body image and appearance. Their concerns related to body size and muscularity.²⁴³ That is, they felt pressure to be (or to 'grow up' to be) big and strong. In another study with male participants in the US, UK, Australia and Sweden, it was found that pressures to be masculine correlated with a 'drive for muscularity'.²⁴⁴ vi This research suggests that being physically tough and displaying physical prowess are key tenets of masculinity. Some research has found that an expectation on young men to be physically tough correlates with attitudes that condone gender inequality and violence against women.²⁴⁵ Young men are expected to show a high tolerance for pain, engage in fights and compete in sports — all of which endorses a more aggressive subjectivity. Moreover, an emphasis on building and attaining a strong physicality might be seen as a preparation for the use of violence, whether this be to assert or protect one's authority, or to protect others.²⁴⁶ We know that in military and law enforcement settings — and also in some sports — where men are expected to be ready to use violence, the physical training of bodies is central. In this way, the use of violence by men as an acceptable and encouraged form of behaviour is implicit in the expectation that men be muscular and physically strong.

vi The ways in which these men made meaning of their muscularity in relation to their masculinity varied depending on which country they were in. For example, the men in the UK described their desire for muscularity as having a body that was ready for violence. In Australia it meant being able to take risks, and in the US it was linked to competitiveness and success.

3.1.3 Risk-taking

Risk-taking behaviours are also commonly associated with masculinity, and with male attitudes and behaviours. Quantitative and qualitative data shows that men in the UK, US and Mexico who aspire to dominant masculinity (who fit into the Man Box) are more likely to engage in risky behaviours, particularly substance abuse and dangerous driving.²⁴⁷ These behaviours put these men and others at risk. For men in Australia, the rates of binge drinking and involvement in traffic accidents, are even higher.²⁴⁸ As demonstrated in the Man Box studies, higher risk-taking behaviours and practices offer proof that men are tough, strong, daring and brave. In this way, these practices are linked to other desirable aspects of masculinity. Importantly, men who fit into the Man Box — that is, who conform to these dominant norms and expectations — are more likely to perpetrate violence against women (and against other men) or be more supportive of sexist attitudes and behaviours.

3.1.4 Stoicism and suppression of emotion

As noted in Section 2.4.1, studies of men and violence have often employed psychological frameworks that employ an individual-based approach. Within these studies an emphasis is placed on the emotional and psychological development of men, and how this influences and helps shape men's attachment to and enactment of violent behaviours. Central to this analysis is an examination of the pressures on men to be emotionally stoic and to regulate how they express themselves. The broader literature finds emotional stoicism to be a key aspect of masculinity. Men and boys are expected to suppress vulnerability and weakness, to not be irrational, not express their feelings, not be dependent, not be like a girl.²⁴⁹ This suggests an expectation that men *not* be emotional at all. Increasingly, however, researchers have sought to show that men and boys are in fact emotional but that this emotionality is often expressed in particular ways, primarily through anger and rage.²⁵⁰ Society implicitly (and even explicitly) encourages men to channel their emotion in these ways. The Man Box study in Australia found anger and rage to be more acceptable behaviours for men than other outward expressions such as crying.²⁵¹

Unsurprisingly, these patterns of emotion, where men are expected to regulate their emotions in specific ways, have been directly linked to violence against women. A large international study on male perpetrators of intimate partner violence found that men who experienced sadness or depression, would express their feelings through anger, aggression and violence towards their partners rather than expressing them in healthier ways.²⁵² Some researchers and scholars have called this 'the discharge model', described as a 'pressure cooker effect' where men fail to express or discharge a whole range of suppressed emotion in safe and positive ways.²⁵³ In particular, this emotion might be released instead through anger and violence that is directed towards others.

However, some scholars have problematised this model, and suggest it fails to account for or explain why some men direct these repressed emotions inwards rather than in outward expressions of aggression and violence. There is significant research that examines the links between men's emotional suppression and self-harm, suicidal ideation, substance abuse and other negative impacts.²⁵⁴ This is described in further detail in Section 5.3. Further, some researchers caution that the discharge model is too individualistic and doesn't adequately consider the full range of factors that produce stress and anger, especially those that occur at a societal level, for instance, structural inequalities and discrimination, which cause stress and conflict.²⁵⁵ This suggests that these psychological models are best supplemented with other models that more closely consider how structural forces also play an important role.

Men's emotional patterns can also provide an additional barrier for those working with perpetrators of violence. These men often find it difficult to 'open up' and reflect on why they use aggression and violence, because they have learned that as men they should not express their feelings to others.²⁵⁶

Men's lack of empathy has been linked to the perpetration of violence against women.²⁵⁷ The mechanisms of emotional connection, the demonstration of care and support for others, are important in all human relations and especially in intimate relationships where these mechanisms are most needed and should already be in place.²⁵⁸ Men who lack empathy are less likely to be

able to draw on these mechanisms. They are more likely to objectify women and act in antagonistic ways towards them, especially when experiencing stress, conflict and hurt. Thus, initiatives that build men's empathy for women, and around the hurt and violence they experience, are seen to be increasingly important.

3.1.5 Hypersexuality and sexual prowess

There is extensive research on what we consider to be normal sexual behaviour for men. Specifically, men are expected to demonstrate sexual (that is, heterosexual) prowess and exercise control and dominance in their relationships and sexual relations. Such behaviours are often seen to be an innate part of male sexuality and of masculinity. In fact, there is a general acceptance that men have a greater need for sex, will be more sexually active and aggressive, and that this is an essential part of their nature.²⁵⁹ A study in the US highlights the widespread prevalence of 'virgin-shaming' among college men, underlining the expectation that men (especially younger men) must have a high sex drive and be sexually active.²⁶⁰ The Man Box study in Australia found that more than half of the male participants acknowledged the social expectation that men should never say no to sex and should have many sexual partners.²⁶¹

What is interesting is that many men do not personally conform to these norms. The Man Box study found that while half of the participants were aware of what society expects of them, only a quarter personally endorsed these qualities. There was a gap between what was seen as a social expectation and what they personally believed or felt. Similarly, through a series of in-depth interviews with men aged 20 to 59, a study in the US found that while men desired sex, many felt their own sexuality to be incongruent with dominant masculine norms that construct men as always wanting and pursuing sex, and as taking the active sexual role.²⁶² These studies show that dominant norms regarding male sexual behaviour are not inherent, as many men do not conform to these norms, and many men recognise these behaviours as being social expectations rather than natural facts.

It is important to emphasise this evidence in light of research that has found strong links between these dominant norms and violence against women — and, in particular, sexual violence. Sexual violence as a way to establish dominance and power over women more broadly has been well documented.²⁶³ Research shows that this violence is enabled by the general objectification and dehumanisation of women by men, where women are seen as objects rather than thinking, feeling people.²⁶⁴ A study with men in the US found that those men who subscribe to dominant norms of male sexuality and sexual entitlement were more likely to react aggressively when their sexual advances were rejected by women.²⁶⁵ Another study found that sexual entitlement increased the likelihood of rape, and was an important mediator of rape-related attitudes and behaviours.²⁶⁶ A further 7 studies across a range of countries in the Asia-Pacific region found a correlation between male sexual entitlement and intimate partner violence.²⁶⁷ This research suggests that challenging the norms of male sexuality helps to address the multiple forms of violence that women experience at the hands of men, both in their relationships and more broadly.

3.1.6 Compulsory heterosexuality

Extending this further, compulsory heterosexuality is considered a key element of masculinity and male sexuality. In the literature and research, there is little disagreement that for men, heterosexuality is key to being a 'real man', and is a key part of maintaining a hierarchy of men. As Connell notes, gay men are an obvious example of a subordinated masculinity, and consistently face marginalisation within our structures, representations and discourses.²⁶⁸ Thus, homophobia (and biphobia) has been and remains a strategy for proving one's masculinity. Here we see the explicit links between gender and sexuality. In order for a man's heterosexuality to be intelligible (that he be read as straight), he must perform his masculinity well. Various studies have found that men are more likely to resort to sexist and anti-gay jokes when they feel a threat to their masculinity, to prove they are straight, and a 'real man'.²⁶⁹

Moreover, this subordination of homosexuality (and bisexuality) sets up masculinity in opposition to femininity. Gay and bisexual men are subordinated because they challenge the distinction that is made between men and women. Alsop et al. write: 'While the content of hegemonic masculinity is fluid, common to dominant ideals of masculinity in Western society is a rejection of both femininity and homosexuality.'²⁷⁰ Connell extends this: 'From the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity.'²⁷¹ Multiple studies internationally and in Australia demonstrate that the harassment and violence directed towards gay men is often highly gendered, as homosexuality is linked to femininity and therefore at odds with what is considered to be acceptable masculinity.²⁷² Again we notice the intersection between gender and sexuality, where those men with non-heterosexual identities and practices are feminised. This is a key part of the strategy for subordinating and excluding these men. However, it also works to maintain men's dominance over women and over the feminine.

It is no surprise then that the current research consistently finds links between masculinity, compulsory heterosexuality and violence. Heterosexual men's violence against gay and bisexual men is well documented.²⁷³ There is also some research to suggest that men who are most attached to dominant norms of masculinity are more likely to enact violence against these men.²⁷⁴ The Australian Human Rights Commission notes that trans men and other gender-queer people experience even higher rates of physical and non-physical violence than gay and bisexual men.²⁷⁵ vii This is especially true for those who sit outside the gender binary and who fail to pass as what society considers to be a man or a woman.²⁷⁶ The violence experienced by gay and bisexual men can be seen to stem from a dominant masculinity that is constructed in opposition to women, and in opposition to some men. These men are often violently policed, in order to help maintain the privilege and power of a particular group of men.²⁷⁷ Interestingly, research has found that gay men who present as masculine and who pass as 'straight' often experience less discrimination.²⁷⁸ This further underlines the strong link between sexuality and gender. Gay men that are read as 'straight men', are less troubling to the gender binary because their 'gayness' is less visible and intelligible.

Thus, homophobia and sexism are intimately connected, which suggests there are strong links also between homophobic acts of violence and violence against women. Research suggests that the drivers of violence against women and against the LGBTIQ community in general both stem from rigid gender norms and structures.²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Miller argues that homophobic teasing and bullying is a form of gender-based harassment and predictive of general gender inequitable attitudes and sexual violence against women.²⁸⁰

Importantly, some research acknowledges that men who are gay, queer or trans can also be attached to masculine norms. A range of psychological studies demonstrates that some gay, bi and trans men (but especially gay men) value and aspire to dominant masculine norms, and may even express negative attitudes towards men who are considered to be effeminate.²⁸¹ While this complicates the divisions often made between masculinity and men of diverse sexual and gender identities, it also shows masculinity to be desirable, powerful and a 'socially cherished identity'.²⁸² Masculinity in its dominant form remains the reference point for all men as they make sense of and live out their masculinities.

3.1.7 Further considerations

The norms of masculinity, as outlined above, consistently appear in the literature and have been linked to violence against women in various ways. It is likely that particular norms play a larger role than others in driving gender inequality and violence against women. This suggests it might be useful (even necessary) to disaggregate these norms from broader notions of masculinity, and examine the nuances of how they work and how they link specifically to gender inequality and violence against women. Flood makes this important point in his analysis of the Man Box study, where he notes that studies which measure the norms and ideals of masculinity need to assess which specific

vii Trans women, and especially trans women of colour, experience very high rates of violence compared to the rest of the LGBTIQ community.

dimensions (or masculine norms) produce a higher or lower chance of men holding sexist attitudes and perpetrating violence against women.²⁸³ Which norms are most important to which men? And how do these norms cluster together and interact? Further analysis of these norms is necessary, especially given the increasing focus of prevention work on dominant norms and stereotypes of masculinity and their links to violence against women.

3.2 Patterns of attachment to masculinity

3.2.1 Men’s attachment to dominant norms and practices

Particular norms and practices of masculinity are dominant, and men feel pressured to attain and embody these. The research demonstrates strong links between these dominant norms of masculinity and gender inequitable outcomes, including violence against women. However, some research suggests that these norms in themselves are not automatically negative or harmful. In his commentary on the Man Box study conducted in Australia, Flood notes that the individual qualities in the Man Box are not necessarily bad; they may even be important or useful in some contexts.²⁸⁴ For example, being courageous, autonomous, rational or tough might be necessary in certain situations. These traits and qualities become a problem firstly, when we ascribe them only to men rather than all people, and secondly, when men are expected to display only these qualities and not others. The expectation that men should be rigidly attached to these norms and should embody only these all of the time (that is, be in the Man Box) in order to be seen as ‘real men’ and to feel valued, produces a range of negative outcomes.

Research shows that men who conform to these dominant norms most rigidly are more likely to demonstrate sexist attitudes and behaviours, and perpetrate violence against women. Both the international and Australian Man Box studies confirm that young men who strongly endorse the Man Box rules (dominant norms of masculinity) report higher rates of perpetrating bullying, violence and sexual harassment.²⁸⁵

Table: Data from the Man Box study

Responses of young men in Australia to questions on their behaviours	Inside the Man Box	Outside the Man Box
Perpetrated physical bullying in the past month	47%*	7%*
Made sexual comments to women you don’t know in a public place in the past month	46%*	7%*
Went along or didn’t take action when witnessing guys making sexist comments or jokes	57%*	48%*

* represents statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Source: *The Men’s Project & Flood, M, (2018) The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in Australia. Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne*

Multiple factors compel men to conform to norms of masculinity. Identity theorists posit gender as being one of the most important and pervasive social categories, central to how one self-identifies and engages with their social groups.²⁸⁶ Thus, masculinity is considered central to male identity and how men make sense of themselves in the world. Moreover, these norms are seen to be natural and inherent in men. Norms of masculinity are powerful because we are invested in them, and believe them to be proper and innate. They represent a current understanding for what men should do and be. Although many men do not meet these norms, they are nevertheless a reference point against which all men define themselves.

Research suggests that men often approximate dominant norms of masculinity as closely as possible because these are socially valued, both by other men and more broadly in their social worlds. There are tangible benefits, rewards and privileges for men who meet these social expectations.²⁸⁷ On the other hand, there are costs (punishments and exclusions) for men who do not (or cannot) conform to masculine norms.²⁸⁸ Men who do not live up to these social norms and expectations can experience various social sanctions and exclusions. A recent study suggests that gender norms have greater influence on men than women. This may be due to men wanting to avoid being perceived as being feminine, experiencing ridicule or rejection, or not wanting to forgo the privilege and power they receive from their male identity and masculine practices.²⁸⁹ All of this helps us understand why many men are attached to these norms and feel pressure to embody them.

Importantly, men's attachment to masculine attitudes and behaviours is not always a conscious process. Masculinity is seen to be innate and natural in men. This means there is often little awareness of the social processes that continually maintain masculinity, and thus masculinity feels natural and automatic for most men. Further, the formation of men's identities and subjectivities is shaped by many conscious and subconscious processes that occur over long periods of time. These factors help us understand why men's attachments to masculinity and male identity are so strong and difficult to challenge.

3.2.2 Gender role stress

In the literature, in particular within psychological research, the concept of 'gender-role stress' has been employed extensively to further explain the links between rigid attachments to masculinity and increased aggression and violence against women.²⁹⁰ Gender-role stress describes the difficulty of conforming to rigid masculine norms, and the psychological and behavioural effects of this. Alsop et al. explain that there is a permanent insecurity attached to manhood because men need to constantly prove they are masculine, even though these ideals are largely unobtainable.²⁹¹ Men who experience gender role stress are those who are most invested in attaining these ideals of masculinity, and who therefore feel stress or conflict due to not being able to embody these.

Further to this, men may experience gender role stress when they feel their masculinity has been challenged or is under threat. For example, this may occur when men are in a subordinate position to women or to other men whom they perceive to be less masculine.²⁹² There is an increased likelihood that men will display sexist attitudes in order to affirm their masculinity when they experience gender-role stress. For example, a recent study in the US found that men experiencing conflict or threat to their masculinity and male role were more likely to employ or support sexist (and homophobic) jokes.²⁹³ Another study found that when men were outperformed by women in traditionally masculine domains, these men responded with increased anger and were more likely to engage in behaviours that sexually objectified women.²⁹⁴ In other research it was shown that men who perceived a threat to their masculinity were more likely to be more accepting of social inequities that disadvantage and affect women (and gay men).²⁹⁵

Importantly, there is much research to suggest this conflict is linked to increased displays and enactments of aggression and violence against women, including intimate partner violence and the sexual harassment and assault of women.²⁹⁶ As outlined in Section 2.1.3, men might resort to extreme demonstrations of their masculinity (for example, aggression and violence) to prove their manhood or alleviate the threat of emasculation. Willer et al. call this the 'masculine overcompensation thesis'.²⁹⁷ In other scholarship, the term 'reclamation model' is also used.²⁹⁸ These models describe how violent, aggressive behaviours are both an available and predictable response, and are commonly encouraged in men and practiced by them. Gallagher and Parrott note that masculine gender-role stress is a stronger predictor of violence and aggression towards women than the specific norms associated with masculinity.²⁹⁹ In other words, men's rigid attachment to dominant masculine norms and the pressures they experience to attain and uphold these are key to what helps drive violence against women.

Research suggests that men who face structural/social inequalities and disadvantage may seek to claim or reclaim power and status through the enactment of aggression and violence. Michael Kaufman argues that if manhood is equated with power and control, then for men who feel they do not hold any power, violence becomes a way to prove otherwise.³⁰⁰ Men who experience discrimination or disadvantage based on their race, class or sexuality, and therefore excluded from the dominant male power structures, may resort to the most available resources (usually physical) to validate their masculinity, exert some sense of power and earn respect.³⁰¹ Further, this violence and aggression is commonly directed towards others with less power, particularly women.³⁰² For an outline of specific studies, refer to Section 2.3.4.

Researchers have also considered the role of minority stress in relation to violence and the LGBTI community. The *Primary prevention of family violence against people from LGBTI communities* report notes that while the research is largely theoretical, there is evidence to suggest that the discrimination and disadvantage experienced by LGBTI people can cause minority stress and increased perpetration of violence.³⁰³ Minority stress describes an internalisation of society's negative views of LGBTI people, which results in psychological stress and internal conflict. In this case, violence may be a way to regain a sense of power, or it may be a symptom of internal conflict or stress often experienced by minority or victimised groups. This is especially true for those who internalise discrimination such as homophobia or transphobia and who might then direct anger or aggression towards others like them, including their intimate partner.

It is important to note, however, that these pathways to perpetrating violence are the result of an intersection between gender inequality (including dominant forms of masculinity) and other structural and social discrimination and disadvantage. These intersections help to drive this violence and thus, this violence should not be attributed to a particular culture or sexual orientation. As already noted in Section 2.3.4, this is clearly illustrated in the *Changing the picture* report, which shows the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and the racism and exclusion experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men have meant these men have 'been denied both their traditional role, identity and status, and any access to alternative forms of social power and status in contemporary society, suggesting that their use of violence against women may be a means of reasserting a sense of power they feel they have lost.'³⁰⁴ Thus, the automatic association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men with violence is a distortion. One participant in *Changing the picture* notes: 'This kind of violence [seen in Indigenous communities today] is not our way. It's a learnt behaviour.'³⁰⁵

Concepts such as gender-role stress have emerged out of psychological frameworks with an emphasis on an individual's developmental behaviours. These concepts tend to ignore the impacts of broader social structures and, in particular, structural inequality, and so should be approached with caution. The concept of gender-role stress seeks to understand why men who conform to dominant norms of masculinity may resort to violence or other aggressive behaviours when they feel a threat to their masculinity and male identity. However, increasingly this concept has been supplemented with other analyses that place an emphasis on broader societal norms and structures as a way of understanding how structures and systems of power intersect with a gender system to produce particular patterns of violence. Thus, we need to further understand how these structures work and understand how they intersect with dominant norms and expectations of masculinity so that we can help prevent violence against women.

3.3 Male peer relationships

3.3.1 Male bonding

Male peer relationships help shape the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity manifest and are maintained. In the scholarship on masculinities, the concept of 'homosociality' is commonly employed for an analysis of male bonding or male peer relationships. In her landmark book *Between men*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines homosociality as the social bonds and attachments that men form with each other. This relationship is likely to be antagonistic, competitive or protective rather than sexual, however, a sexual force may be present. She writes, 'How far this force is properly sexual

... will be an active question.³⁰⁶ Sedgwick's analysis here reflects the blurriness that can exist in male interactions, and gestures to the homoerotic elements that can be present in group interactions between heterosexual men. Hazing techniques used in college settings, group sex culture among athletes and porn consumption by men in the company of other men are all examples commonly highlighted in the research on male bonding.³⁰⁷

For Sedgwick, male homosocial desire describes the entire continuum, ranging from bonds that are characterised as distinctly heterosexual (often through the deployment of homophobic behaviours and discourses) through to what she calls 'genital homosexual desire'.³⁰⁸ While the practices of past societies (for instance, the ancient Greeks) might sit seamlessly along this entire continuum, Sedgwick argues that such examples stand in stark contrast to contemporary Western societies where the relation between male homosocial and homosexual bonds is far less apparent.

In fact, compulsory heterosexuality has been and remains a constant feature of contemporary male relations. The bonding between men is often replete with anxiety and fear of being perceived as homosexual.³⁰⁹ As noted in Section 3.1.6, the research on men has for some time emphasised the key role of heterosexuality in establishing and securing one's masculinity. Even among younger men, being straight remains central to what it means to be a man. The Promundo Man Box study found that although many young men today may have gay friends, it is still important to them that they themselves be seen as straight:

The Man Box rules are significantly linked with responses about homophobia and friendships with gay men. These links seem to move in opposite directions from one another, however, being in the Man Box in the US and UK is linked with both (a) refraining from doing something so as not to appear 'girly' or gay, and (b) enjoying hanging out socially with an openly gay friend. In other words, adhering to the Man Box means you don't want to be seen as gay, but you may feel comfortable enough with your highly emphasized heterosexual identity to have and hang out with a gay friend.³¹⁰

This 'highly emphasised' heterosexual identity is secured through a demonstration of dominant masculine norms or, as the study explains, adhering to the Man Box rules.

In addition to establishing a distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality, the dominant patterns of male bonding can promote a clear distinction between men and women. Sharon Bird observes that men interact in ways that mark out these differences, commonly through engaging in particular activities and settings that segregate them from women — for instance, sport. Drawing on a combination of interviews and field work, Bird observes 3 key strategies that men employ to maintain their relationships with other men: emotional detachment, competitiveness and the sexual objectification of women.³¹¹ The male participants characterised emotional displays as being a flaw — something that women do, and men do not do. Competition was expressed as a means through which men relate to each other, as apparent in competitive sports, or as a means to compete with each other to win the attention of women. Finally, the study found that men often bond through the sexual objectification of women. This is simultaneously a rejection of the feminine and of homosexuality. In each of these patterns, a clear distinction is marked out between men and women. Further to this, the bonding is often accomplished through the figure of the woman. She is an object in this exchange and a symbolic reassurance of the men's heterosexuality.³¹² Thus, she (her 'difference') is crucial to this interaction.

Masculinity is central to these relations since it becomes the vehicle through which men forge relationships with each other, identify with one another, and prove their manhood. As is emphasised in the scholarship, men seek approval from other men, and thus the embodiment of dominant forms of masculinity, such as aggression, sexual prowess and competitiveness, is a way for men to secure this validation.³¹³ A study conducted with high-school boys in the US found that their peer relationships were heavily mediated by dominant norms of masculinity. These boys felt they needed to display masculine norms to be considered part of the group.³¹⁴ This compelled them to use a range of tactics (such as taunting and mocking) to bolster and police each other's masculinity. Importantly, the study found that for these boys the retainment of their masculinity (and their position among their peers) required ongoing effort and proof.

While male peer relationships provide a source of friendship and support for men, scholars have tended to emphasise the ways in which some relationships between men interact with dominant forms of masculinity to promote and maintain gender inequality and male privilege. This interaction often occurs quite unconsciously, in the everyday activities between men. However, peer relationships are also significant in settings where men consciously and formally gather to protect the privilege they hold over women. The men's rights movement is a key example. An extensive review of online men's rights groups found that these groups rely on a network of male peers to share and reinforce their ideas about gender and masculinity, and to police other men who might challenge these ideas.³¹⁵ Male peer relationships can be central then to maintaining the hegemony (or dominance) of men.

3.3.2 Male peer relationships and violence against women

A significant body of work has drawn attention to the links between male bonding and violence against women. Some research suggests that aggressive and violent behaviour towards women, is a way to regulate relations between men and prove one's manhood.³¹⁶ In other words, women might become the 'collateral damage' that results from men needing to constantly seek approval from other men.³¹⁷ In *Change the story*, male peer relationships that are maintained through aggression and disrespect towards women are posited as a key gendered driver of violence against women.³¹⁸ The ways in which men interact with each other in different social and organisational contexts may be characterised by a culture of masculinity that includes aggression and the objectification of women, and which is often associated with higher probability of violence against women. This suggests that prevention efforts should seek to further understand the ways in which men relate to each other in their social and work contexts, and seek to challenge peer relations that normalise aggression, disrespect and hostility towards women as expressions of masculinity. It might also be worth engaging particular settings where groups of men gather together and interact, such as pubs, sports clubs and male-dominated workplaces. Section 3.4.2 examines male peer relationships in the key setting of sport.

Current research shows that the sexist attitudes and discourses men hold and engage in can influence men's behaviours and translate into practices of direct physical and sexual violence against women, especially if these are mediated through male peer relations. A recent US study on young male perpetrators of sexual violence found that a large proportion of these men felt pressure from their peers to pursue sex with women in coercive and aggressive ways, and to talk about women in a sexually objectifying manner.³¹⁹ Similarly, a study of male undergraduate students in Spain found peer groups that support sexist and hostile attitudes towards women were a key factor in influencing those men to exhibit sexually aggressive behaviours towards women.³²⁰ In the US, research on college men in fraternities consistently finds that these men are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence against women than men who are not in fraternities and that the culture of fraternities — which includes pressures to conform to masculine norms and accept the objectification of women — is a key factor.³²¹

These pressures on men to impress and relate to each other also means they are less likely to intervene when other men exhibit sexist and aggressive attitudes and behaviours. *Change the story* explains that 'men may be reluctant to take a stand against their peers' disrespect of women, or even use of violence itself, because they fear rejection from their peers'.³²² Research suggests men often feel a deep loyalty to other men and also feel pressure to prioritise their relationships with each other over their relationships with women, including their partners.³²³ The act of men challenging other men's violence can be seen to be taking a moral stance that aligns them with women over men.³²⁴ A study undertaken with Australian rules football players found that a number of obstacles prevented these men from feeling they would intervene when witnessing aggressive or disrespectful behaviour to women by their peers. These included concerns about the costs to their relationships if they intervened, and also the costs of breaking a homosocial code of silence.³²⁵ Similarly, in his examination of peer relations in sport, Michael Messner notes that a culture of silence is often encouraged in sport's teams because there are rewards for loyalty and punishments for betraying the group and other teammates.³²⁶

A review by VicHealth found that men who interacted in local sports clubs and workplace settings could be blind to problematic cultures of masculinity. It also found significant differences in how these cultures were perceived by men compared to women, with men far less likely to acknowledge that disrespectful behaviours towards women do occur in these settings.³²⁷ This suggests these men may be less likely to recognise harassing and disrespectful behaviours towards women and are therefore less likely to intervene and call out these behaviours. The report notes that male-dominated organisations and groups often reinforce masculine norms and behaviours which emphasise disrespect and violence against women. However, these organisations also have great power to challenge such patterns. There is much research to suggest that greater bystander action by men, especially in key settings such as community sports clubs and workplaces, produces many positive effects and can help to challenge harmful patterns of behaviour that lead to disrespect and violence against women.³²⁸

3.3.3 Contemporary shifts?

An emerging body of literature suggests the patterns of male bonding are becoming less tied to traditional norms of masculinity.³²⁹ Steven Arxer observes that homosocial patterns are becoming more unconventional and are more likely to involve emotive sharing and cooperation, and not simply competitiveness.³³⁰ Furthermore, he argues that the lines drawn between normative masculinities and more alternative forms are becoming less clear. Similarly, Hammaren and Johansson suggest that more nuance should be added to research that explicitly links hegemonic masculinity and homosociality, since the interactions between men do not always neatly fit within the strict categories presented within models of hegemonic masculinity.³³¹ They suggest that most readings of homosociality link male bonding to conscious elements of structure and power, where bonding between men is for the most part a conscious assertion of their (heterosexual) masculinity. The authors argue that this tends to obscure the more unconscious elements of bonding, the intimacy and affective attachments that men have and feel for each other.

On the other hand, while some men do relate to each other in ways that disrupt traditional forms, many men remain tied to traditional ways of bonding and relating to each other. There is significant research to show that male bonding does stem from the affections that men feel for other men. However, men continue to struggle to express this affection in healthy ways.³³² Myke Bartlett observes that men and boys want to have more intimate friendships but often do this in negative ways, for example through drinking high amounts of alcohol.³³³ The Man Box study found that young men still seek out women in order to confide, express their emotions and receive emotional support.³³⁴ This shows that these men feel a range of emotions but feel unable to share these emotions with other men.

Some scholars suggest that while patterns of male bonding do appear to be in flux, this doesn't automatically extinguish traditional patterns. Hammaren and Johansson argue that both traditional and non-traditional patterns can occur in male peer relationships at the same time, and can include traditional hegemonic forms that are consciously enacted in particular settings as well as more inclusive forms based on 'emotional closeness, intimacy, and a non-profitable form of friendship'.³³⁵ Importantly, this dual manner in which male peer relationships are conducted doesn't necessarily challenge gender inequality or the position of power and privilege that men in general occupy. Arxer argues that this may even signal a shift in the strategies for maintaining hegemonic masculinity and male dominance. He suggests that the non-hegemonic (being emotional or cooperative) ways of relating to other men is not always outrightly excluded but in some cases is 'incorporated into the strategies of gendered domination ... hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculine practices are not strictly segregated in homosocial interaction among men'.³³⁶ Moreover, there is research to suggest that these newer patterns of male bonding are more common among men who occupy positions of privilege and who are therefore more able to engage with more progressive and cooperative expressions of masculinity that are less available to other men.³³⁷

Thus, while there appear to be shifts in the contemporary patterns of male bonding and peer relationships, this does not necessarily signal a shift for all men, nor does it appear to be a significant disruption to the ways in which male peer relationships maintain dominant patterns of masculinity and men's behaviours towards women. It is currently unclear exactly what these changes might mean for our current gender system, hence further research is needed in this area.

3.4 Priority sites and settings

Change the story notes that effective prevention efforts should engage people across a range of contexts and settings. It names 11 priority settings that capture where people live, work, learn and socialise, and includes education settings, the arts, health and community services, and the media.³³⁸ Delivering gender equality work in these settings is important as these environments help foster and influence how people think and behave, the attitudes they hold, and the norms and practices they adhere to. This means these settings offer promising opportunities for driving change in relation to gender equality and preventing violence against women.

The research on masculinities and the engaging of men in prevention suggests that prevention work should be undertaken in all of these broad settings that men populate and hold significant power and influence. Working in these settings creates important opportunities to reach large groups of men. Moreover, because these broad settings help produce, reinforce and maintain dominant forms and patterns of masculinity that underpin an overall system of gender inequality, a focus on them is vital. Within these settings, a number of specific sites of influence are consistently highlighted in the literature. These sites are seen to promote and sustain dominant forms of masculinity and may be particularly challenging in prevention efforts to engage men. They include workplaces, sport and other sites in which men engage in large numbers, such as pornography and online gaming.

3.4.1 Workplaces

The workplace has been identified as a key setting for prevention work more broadly.³³⁹ As Flood notes, systemic gender inequalities are embedded in the majority of organisations and workplaces.³⁴⁰ These are often characterised by a particular culture of masculinity where men occupy the most powerful positions and receive the most reward for their work. As a result, there is increasing public discourse on gender equality in the workplace, the gender pay gap, and gender quotas at the leadership and executive levels.

Regarding violence against women specifically, research has focused on the prevalence and impacts of sexual harassment in the workplace,³⁴¹ especially in the wake of the Me Too and Times Up movements, which have triggered an unprecedented awareness of this particular problem.³⁴² While the problem of men's harassment and violence against women is present across many different sectors and workplaces, some scholars argue that prevention efforts to reduce and address violence against women is particularly difficult in traditionally masculine lines of work, such as defence, policing and manual labour jobs.³⁴³

There is also research to suggest that pressures to be masculine in male-dominated workplaces can result in negative mental health impacts on men. A recent study in Canada found that workplaces characterised by dominant forms of masculinity — where men are expected to be tough, stoic and keep up with their peers in the workplace — resulted in higher stress levels and negative mental health outcomes for men.³⁴⁴ Pressures to uphold work practices considered to be masculine can push men to persevere beyond what is healthy and sustainable.

In other research the notion of 'masculine contest culture' has emerged as a key area of focus. A significant body of work employs this idea to describe and analyse the ways in which men demonstrate their masculinity (prowess) in competitive ways to other men in the workplace.³⁴⁵ Importantly, the research suggests that workplaces with these types of 'contest cultures' lead to higher rates of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment towards women.

3.4.2 Sport

For decades, scholars of masculinities have examined the links between sport and masculinity.³⁴⁶ Sport has long been considered a male domain, and has a long history of excluding women and also of marginalising men who don't conform to dominant standards of masculinity, such as gay men.³⁴⁷ ^{viii} Some researchers contend that high-contact sports, such as boxing and football, are an organised and legitimised form of violence. Sports sociologist Michael Messner suggests that within these sports, men 'actively construct meaning around their acts of aggression and violence'.³⁴⁸

Research also highlights the specific links between sport and violence against women, and in particular sexual violence.³⁴⁹ This work has focused on the dominant structures and discourses in these sports, and the ways in which they foster a culture that is supportive of violence and which enables the objectification and mistreatment of women. In Australia, much of this focus has landed on two of the most popular football codes: the National Rugby League (NRL) and the Australian Football League (AFL).³⁵⁰

Further, the research on sport and violence has often included an interrogation of male peer relationships. In team sports there is an emphasis on teamwork and giving up one's body for the good of the team. Donald Sabo calls this the 'pain principle', where using the body in violent ways, playing when injured and playing through pain are considered a necessary sacrifice.³⁵¹ Messner writes:

We cannot understand men's commitment to risk-taking, playing with serious injuries, and constructing their bodies as machines or weapons, unless we understand how sport provides a context for men's emotional connection with other men.³⁵²

However, the literature on male bonding in sport has also considered the ways in which locker-room talk, the prevalence of group sex, codes of silence and loyalty to team-mates are associated with male athletes' violence against women.³⁵³ In his book, Messner highlights the problem of group sexual assault in sports and pinpoints its 4 key elements:

- sexist discourse
- heterosexual 'voyeurism'
- suppression of empathy towards self and others
- a culture of silence ³⁵⁴

Importantly, this doesn't mean that involvement in sports automatically correlates to higher rates of violence than the general population. In their evidence review, Flood and Dyson show that correlations between men's involvement in sport and their use of violence against women greatly differ across different sports. For example there are different correlations between high-contact team sports such as football and non-contact sports such as tennis, golf and competitive diving.³⁵⁵ Further, there are other local and contextual factors to consider, all of which can influence male athletes' behaviours and attitudes. As the authors note, 'when rugby league or AFL players sexually harass women in pubs, pressure women into sex in hotel rooms, or make obscene phone calls, in one sense, they are acting just like thousands of other young men around the country'.³⁵⁶ In fact, there is no Australian data to suggest that male sports participants are more likely than other men to hold violence-supportive attitudes or perpetrate violence against women.³⁵⁷

Similarly, a recent review of the evidence on unsanctioned aggression in amateur sports found that the correlation between involvement in sports and higher rates of unsanctioned aggression and violence were inconclusive.³⁵⁸ One study found that young men who participated in competitive contact sports displayed instrumental aggression confined to the competitive context and did not display hostile aggression in other contexts.³⁵⁹ This suggests there are many different influential

viii Researchers have noted that sport has long been a platform for homophobia, and also a strategy for policing the masculinities of men and boys who play sport. However, there is some research that suggests homophobia is dissipating across most sports and gay male athletes are starting to 'come out' in greater numbers. See Anderson (2011), note 347; and Anderson (2013), note 135.

factors and that the broader social environments and contexts in which athletes engage and act are also important to consider. However, there are distinct features of some sports, in particular contact and team sports, that can increase the likelihood that men involved in these sports perpetrate violence against women, especially sexual violence. According to Flood and Dyson these include:

- male bonding that encourages sexism and disrespect towards women
- the glorification and encouragement of aggression and violence in some sports
- the subordination and sexualisation of women in sport
- celebrity status and entitlement
- excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs in some sporting cultures³⁶⁰

Importantly, there has been much progress made over recent years, with the AFL and NRL both taking large strides and incorporating gender (and other) equality initiatives into various levels of their sports. In 2017 the inaugural season of the Australian Women's Football League (AFLW) was introduced, and there have been many initiatives and programs that directly address the issue of gender inequality in sport and that seek to promote respectful relationships³⁶¹ (see Section 4.2.6 for some examples). However, it remains important to extend the research on masculinities and sport and to continue to engage with this setting in order to further understand and address the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity and male peer relationships can produce and maintain sporting cultures that are sexist, homophobic and violent.

3.4.3 Pornography

Pornography has long been an important site for analysing masculinities. A large number of people, particularly men, engage with porn on a regular basis.³⁶² Specifically, porn is considered a key site for the socialisation of men, one that influences men's sexual practices. In this regard, the literature examines the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity are eroticised through particular modes of representation and, specifically, how these representations shape the sexual behaviours and attitudes that men, especially young men, adhere to.³⁶³

This examination of the effects of pornography is central to the debate. Some research suggests that men's use of porn results in a greater attachment to traditional masculine ideology and increased objectification, coercion and violence towards women.³⁶⁴ A review of more than 350 pieces of research (across 20 years) on pornography use by adolescents found that more frequent use was associated with stronger gender-stereotypical sexual beliefs and higher levels of sexual aggression.³⁶⁵ Importantly, the relation between pornography use and aggression was stronger for boys than girls and correlations found between pornography use and sexual victimisation was largely related to girls.

Since the advent of online porn, there has been an increasingly focused attention on the effects of pornography with a number of scholars examining how the political and social operations of pornography have been newly shaped by the internet.³⁶⁶ Some research suggests that the increased availability and accessibility that the internet offers has meant a marked increase in the dissemination of representations that are degrading to women and violent, all of which is seen to have negative impacts on male sexuality and men's attitudes and sexual behaviours towards women.³⁶⁷

It is important to note that the research on the impacts of porn use by and on men and boys is not conclusive. In fact, in a recent US study, pornography users were found to hold more egalitarian gender attitudes.³⁶⁸ Further, a systematic review of 21 studies found that the impacts of pornography on sexual violence offending is complex and needs a deeper consideration of many different factors.³⁶⁹ As Flood notes, we need to move beyond simplistic accounts that fail to allow for other factors that might be at play, the diverse range of representations in porn, the different forms porn takes and who is consuming it.³⁷⁰ A recent content analysis of porn highlights that some types of porn contain greater representation of women's sexual agency and pleasure.³⁷¹ Other studies have noted that porn can be an important tool for exploring sexual practices and subjectivity.³⁷² This is especially

true for queer people, whose sexuality and sexual practices are not represented in mainstream discourses and structures. Some studies show that gay and bisexual men access porn to compensate for the lack of education and information that is available to them, particularly in socially conservative states or contexts.³⁷³ All of this suggests that further research is needed in order to account for some of these nuances and complexities regarding the impacts of pornography on men and boys.

3.4.4 Online gaming

There is ongoing debate regarding the effects of media that depicts violence and aggression. Some studies have shown the consumption of violent film, television, music, printed media and video games correlates with increased aggressive or violent attitudes and behaviours.³⁷⁴ More recently, there has been a specific focus on video games, and particularly online gaming due to its widespread popularity, especially among young men. A significant part of this work examines the ways in which gender is represented in these games — where men are often depicted as aggressive and dominant and women as passive and as sexually objectified — and it draws attention to the impacts of these representations.³⁷⁵

Some research has established direct links between the playing of video games and increased feelings and behaviours of aggression.³⁷⁶ A meta-review of a range of studies found that the playing of video games resulted in increased aggressive behaviour, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, and decreased empathy and prosocial behaviour.³⁷⁷ Studies also show that players of violent video games are more likely to endorse a view of masculinity that involves aggression, dominance, toughness and suppression of emotion.³⁷⁸ In other studies, a higher endorsement of traditional forms of masculinity was found to be a moderator and an important factor in the links between the playing of video games and increased aggression in behaviours and attitudes in men.³⁷⁹

Some research considers the interactivity of video games and the ways in which this can result in greater affect or impact on the player. In other words, there is some concern that since the gamer actively controls the game and is an active participant, negative representations of aggression and violence can more easily seep into their attitudes and lived behaviours. One study suggests that greater increases in aggressive affect and cognition are associated with the playing of video games rather than the watching of film or recorded game play with similar content.³⁸⁰ Online gaming is an emerging area of study and one that needs further development.

3.5 Masculinity and violence

3.5.1 Violence as a learned response

A significant body of research suggests exposure to violence, especially at a young age, is a factor in higher rates of perpetration of violence. Violence is seen in this research as a learned response. The evidence emerges out of the psychological literature, which examines how individual learned violent behaviour can develop through exposure to or experience of violence, in what is often referred to as ‘intergenerational transmission’.³⁸¹ *Change the story* explains that a direct experience of violence can contribute to a normalisation of violence, including an acceptance of violence against women.³⁸² Some studies with male perpetrators of violence and with practitioners who work with perpetrators reveal that a significant number of these men had regularly experienced or witnessed violence as a child, and that this was a factor in their own perpetration of violence.³⁸³ For these men, violence was internalised as normal behaviour or was used as a coping mechanism.

It would be incorrect to assume, however, that there is a clear or inevitable pathway between experiencing and perpetrating violence. *Change the story* explains that this pathway is dependent on a range of additional factors. The regularity and length of exposure to violence, the lack of support networks, and the absence of other positive discourses and alternative role models are all important considerations.³⁸⁴

Importantly, the social learning of violence intersects with the learning of gender norms and roles. In other words, there are gendered patterns to this learned violence. Flood notes that boys who experience violence are more likely than girls to use violence as adults, or develop violence-supportive attitudes.³⁸⁵ Similarly, *Change the story* explains that the impacts of exposure to and experiences of violence reflect ‘existing gendered socialisation and patterns of violence, that is, boys and men are more likely to go on to perpetrate violence, and girls and women to experience and/or accept it’.³⁸⁶ Other research confirms the important role that gender (masculinity) plays in these learned behaviours and draws links between the experience of violence and patriarchal socialisation, where violence might be seen as a legitimate way for men to solve problems, or to prove their manhood.³⁸⁷ Moreover, the learning of violence by boys occurs in tandem with a learning of masculine norms and roles that encourage and legitimise this violence.³⁸⁸

Further to this, the research suggests that both the experience of violence and its learned response can be exacerbated by structural inequalities such as racism and poverty. Violence may be used as a means for men to assert their masculinity and maintain a sense of power in the face of broader systems of power that render them disadvantaged and powerless. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people, the intergenerational trauma that stems from ongoing impacts of colonisation (loss of land and culture, erosion of identity, forced breaking apart of families, and racist and assimilationist government policies) compounds and leads to expressions of violence (by men in particular) and higher rates of violence in these communities.³⁸⁹ The intergenerational transmission here is two-fold, where a collective trauma is passed onto each generation and the learned response of violence is also passed on. Thus, it is important to give consideration to the ways in which experiences of violence intersect with gender (masculinity) and structural inequalities.

3.5.2 Masculinity and the normalisation of violence

The literature on masculinities also examines the links between masculinity and violence more broadly. Much of the research examining violence as a learned response focuses largely on violence experienced in intimate family or community settings. This focus tends to ignore the numerous ways society in general teaches men that violence and aggression are masculine behaviours. Research shows that masculinity and violence are intimately connected, supported and legitimised both through essentialist discourses and within broader institutional and cultural settings.³⁹⁰ The *Change the story* framework suggests that the condoning of violence whether formally through our laws or informally through our support of violent sports and media, leads to a normalisation of violence, which helps reinforce the gendered drivers of violence against women.³⁹¹ Importantly, this violence that is justified and supported by our society is associated with men and masculinity.

Connell notes that violence often underpins male authority over women, meaning men’s position of power, and women’s subordination, is often secured through violence.³⁹² This includes both direct and indirect forms of violence experienced by women, whether from their partners, or from the types of violence enacted within institutional settings and broader social structures. Measham draws attention to the institutional violence experienced by women, children, gay people, Indigenous people and refugees in Australia, and writes, ‘it is hard to escape the masculine character of that violence’.³⁹³ Institutional violence may not always be visible or apparent. It may include other forms of coercion and control that support or lead to direct forms of violence. As outlined in Section 2.4, men’s control of women is enabled and maintained by structural forces, whether through legislation that controls women’s bodies, or through our economic structures that produce gendered patterns of labour. This inequality has been shown to help drive violence against women. As Flood suggests, violence against women must be understood more broadly as the full range of physical and non-physical behaviours and practices that women find harmful, alongside coercive and controlling strategies that underpin or lead to these behaviours.³⁹⁴ All of this demonstrates the explicit links between masculinity and violence.

There is further evidence that as a society in general we legitimise, support and encourage men’s violence. Men (and boys) are expected to demonstrate an aptitude for violence. Salter notes that even if we seemingly discourage overt and direct use of violence, boys and men are expected to use

violence in more coded ways — for example, to be physically rough, to play contact sports and so forth.³⁹⁵ And this starts from a very young age. Daniels et al. argue, ‘boys and girls receive differential support for being physically active from an early age’.³⁹⁶ Boys are encouraged and rewarded for behaviours that involve vigorous activity and that engage their gross motor skills. The expression ‘boys will be boys’ naturalises and legitimises the clumsy aggression that boys are expected to embody. We often even essentialise aggressive and violent behaviour in boys.³⁹⁷ On the other hand, girls are discouraged from engaging in rough physical activity.³⁹⁸

Thus, we expect men and boys to adhere to dominant masculine norms such as aggression, dominance and toughness, all of which are associated with a culture of violence. Violence is a means for men to align themselves with these norms and to prove and demonstrate their manhood.³⁹⁹ Further, male violence is one of the key ways that men exercise their power, assert their authority and establish their status. Carrington and Scott note that this is particularly apparent for men who are experiencing social and economic shifts that challenge this status and privilege.⁴⁰⁰ Men who are denied the same status and power of other men, who face discrimination and disadvantage, might use violence to assert or reclaim a sense of power.⁴⁰¹

All of this underlines the strong expectations placed on men to be powerful and occupy a position of status and privilege over women. This means that men who occupy the highest positions of power might use violence (in all of its forms) to maintain this power, and men who are allowed little power, might use violence to gain or reclaim authority. Interestingly, this use of violence — where men as a group use violent measures to maintain their dominance over women — suggests that patriarchal systems and gender hierarchies are not a natural fact or inevitable. Rather, these systems can be contested and changed.

Prevention efforts therefore must pay attention to the full spectrum of masculinity and violence, and address all the ways in which masculinity is linked to violence. It would be a mistake to sever these links. Violence is a continuum, from norms that emphasise aggression and dominance, right through to the enactment of violence, either in its justified forms, or in ways that we condemn and punish.⁴⁰²

Addressing the full spectrum of the links between masculinity and violence is no easy task. Studies show that men might oppose more direct forms of violence and sexism, but be more supportive of violence that manifests in less obvious ways. The Man Box study in Australia reveals that the majority of young male participants reject overt manifestations of sexism in the form of violence, but are far more accepting of other forms, such as sexist jokes and attitudes.⁴⁰³ Similarly, a report by VicHealth found that, in Victoria, many people consider physical and verbal forms of harassment and violence against women to be unacceptable; however, sharing sexist jokes and making general sexist comments were more accepted and considered harmless.⁴⁰⁴ Further to this, the bystander responses in this report show that bystanders were more likely to intervene when witness to direct forms of violence and less likely against general sexist attitudes and discourses.

Furthermore, violence that occurs between men is seen as more acceptable than violence directed towards women and children. A study in South Australia showed participants tended to divide violence into two types: normal violence (between men) and gendered violence (against women).⁴⁰⁵ In a number of focus groups conducted as part of the Man Box study, participants indicated that violence between men was more acceptable than violence against women. Interestingly, these responses were often shaped by social expectations, with one participant stating, ‘if they [two men] want to fight that’s up to them. I see it as different [to hitting a woman]. That also comes into being a man, you’re expected to protect other people.’⁴⁰⁶ In this case, the expectation for men to be a protector shaped the participant’s judgement of this violence.

These studies reveal our tendency to normalise violence between men, while viewing violence against women through a gender lens. However, some scholars argue that both are gendered, and are underpinned by gender inequality and dominant norms of masculinity.⁴⁰⁷ We rarely engage with men and boys regarding other violence, for example mass shootings and gun violence, and how this is also tied up in gender.⁴⁰⁸ Violence is intimately tied to masculinity and power. Violence is supported and encouraged in men, and this link between violence and masculinity is reinforced throughout our

institutions, norms and practices. Thus, men's use of violence is gendered, whether this violence is directed against women, children or other men.

This intimate link between violence and the norms, structures and practices of masculinity means that efforts to encourage men and boys to disengage from violence (and to address violence against women) are especially challenging. Prevention work requires an understanding of how cultural and structural (material) aspects of gender inequality and of masculinity promote violence.⁴⁰⁹ We require a better understanding of what violence means to men. Hearn writes. 'men's violence can be sources of pride, be shameful, be routine in reaffirming power, or they can be backlash reactions to loss of or perceived threat to power'.⁴¹⁰ We also need a better analysis of male peer relationships which may encourage and pressure men to use violence, but also provide an emotional context for men to bond and relate to each other. This can be true for boys as well. An ethnographic study in Australian schools found that many boys experience peer pressure to involve themselves in physical fighting and to use violence.⁴¹¹

In order to address gender inequality and the drivers of violence against women, it is vital that we gain a better understanding of dominant forms and patterns of masculinity (the roles, attitudes and behaviours that men and boys are expected to embody), the ways in which these intersect with structural inequalities, and the ways in which they are maintained in particular settings and through male peer relations. Moreover, we need to better understand what violence means to men, and we must emphasise the continuum that exists between masculinity, sexism and violence.

Part 4: Promising approaches for prevention work addressing masculinities and engaging men

This section provides an overview of some of the current work that seeks to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women. In particular, it outlines a number of key programs and initiatives as discussed in the literature and points to specific strategies for engaging men and boys in effective and meaningful ways.

The research reviewed in this section shows:

- Well-designed programs and initiatives that effectively engage men and boys can contribute to the reduction and prevention of violence against women.
- Prevention efforts are more likely to be effective when they engage the whole population and work at all levels of society.
- Prevention efforts that seek to engage men commonly aim to build men's awareness, encourage reflection and build knowledge and skills about how they can actively help increase gender equality and prevent violence against women.
- Efforts to engage men increasingly address dominant norms and practices of masculinity and seek to transform the ways in which men and boys engage with these.
- Prevention efforts that appeal to men's emotions can be effective for engaging men and boys. This includes work that builds empathy and uses positive messaging.
- Multiple strategies are needed to engage different men and boys, and these should be tailored in ways that maximise their effectiveness and impact.
- Programs and initiatives that seek to engage men who experience structural and social disadvantage should be community-driven, culturally relevant and should avoid reinforcing the structures and discourses of discrimination that impact these men.
- Many programs and initiatives have not been comprehensively evaluated and there is a lack of up-to-date data that measures or monitors the impact of these initiatives, particularly in an Australian context.

4.1 Engaging men and boys in primary prevention efforts

An existing body of research focuses on how to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women. This focus underlines the recent philosophical shift from engaging men as perpetrators, to engaging men as allies.⁴¹² As scholars have argued for some time, men are a key part of the problem and must therefore be part of the solution.⁴¹³ Flood writes, ‘we have no choice but to address men and masculinities if we want to stop violence against women’.⁴¹⁴ This suggests that to help prevent violence against women we need to further understand how masculinities operate and help drive violence against women. However, we also need to engage men in efforts to challenge gender inequality, by increasing their awareness, encouraging reflection, and building their knowledge and capacity to actively challenge dominant forms of masculinity.

4.1.1 Implementing a primary prevention approach

To date, a diverse range of interventions has been employed to engage men and boys. Increasingly, programs and interventions directly address dominant gender norms and practices, and seek to transform the ways in which men and boys engage with these.⁴¹⁵ The evidence continues to demonstrate fundamental links between gender inequalities and violence against women, and that effective interventions must address gender and power as well as include an interrogation and analysis of the norms and practices of masculinity.⁴¹⁶

This suggests that prevention efforts should employ a whole-of-population approach. Work should aim to reach all men and boys in order to be effective and have the greatest impact on gender inequality and the problem of violence against women. One way to achieve this is to ensure that programs and initiatives address gender inequality at all the different levels of society, in line with the social-ecological model.⁴¹⁷ Flood provides a comprehensive outline of this scope and posits what he calls a ‘spectrum of prevention’, outlining six levels of intervention to capture how and where this work can be implemented:

1. *Strengthening individual knowledge and skills* – This involves one-on-one work that is delivered through practitioners, family (fathers) groups and community leaders. It aims to increase the capacity of individuals to avoid or prevent violence against women.
2. *Promoting community education* – This includes face-to-face educational groups and programs that are often delivered in schools, universities and workplaces, and also includes social marketing and other media strategies that aim to shift public awareness, attitudes and norms relating to gender inequality and violence against women.
3. *Educating providers* – This involves educating professional employees of health, social and community services so they can educate, support and engage others in prevention efforts.
4. *Engaging, strengthening and mobilising communities* – These interventions address the local and collective conditions that underpin and enable men’s violence against women. These approaches are largely structural and institutional, and include economic empowerment, social empowerment and community mobilisation, for all women, and particularly for groups that experience other marginalisation and disadvantage.
5. *Changing organisational practices* – These strategies support organisations and institutions (for instance, workplaces, sports, schools and faith-based organisations) to change their practices, policies and culture. These strategies increase the potential to influence the vast number of people who come into contact with these institutions. Importantly, a whole-of-organisation approach is most effective for supporting change and influencing gender norms, structures and practices.
6. *Influencing policies and legislation* – This approach sits at the larger end of the spectrum and seeks to influence, reform and change policies and legislation that help shape and underpin gender inequality and the problem of violence against women. Addressing law and government policy, which have large reach, impact and influence on the broader population, is critical.⁴¹⁸

Significantly, there may be some overlap between work delivered at these different levels and its outcomes. For example, policy reform that addresses gender inequality will also influence how organisations and communities shape their culture and practices, and how social marketing campaigns frame their strategies. Flood notes that the most effective prevention efforts will work across multiple levels and employ multi-faceted approaches.⁴¹⁹ Engaging men and boys to respect and address the problem of violence against women is complex. It requires a dynamic and multi-faceted approach rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. *Change the story* explains:

a population-wide approach to prevention cannot rely on any single program or technique to reach everyone. It needs to include a range of different techniques ... if it is to reach and resonate with all groups in our diverse society.⁴²⁰

This means we should regularly assess where this work is focused, and pay attention to where gaps may exist.

The *Calling Men and Boys In* report exemplifies a primary prevention approach to engaging men and boys.⁴²¹ Produced by the Government of Canada in 2019, this report gathers a range of insights and expertise from roundtables conducted across the country to help inform a whole-of-government-approach to gender equality work with men and boys. In particular, the report produces a range of recommendations that address all the different societal levels and which call on government support to develop programs and campaigns, engage communities, build sustainable funding, form networks and partnerships, and develop effective policies and legislation.

4.1.2 Education-based initiatives

There is significant consensus among researchers that education must play a central role in efforts to engage men. In fact, education sits across all of the levels outlined by Flood. This is unsurprising. A key aim of this work is to raise awareness and increase men's understanding of what violence against women is, what drives it, and how men themselves are implicated in the problem and can be involved in preventing it.

To date, a large portion of prevention education has been delivered in schools and universities, often through a curriculum. However, education programs also exist in other institutional settings such as in sport, community groups and workplaces.⁴²² In fact there is a growing recognition that interventions should be implemented in key settings that are male-dominated or where large groups of men congregate and socialise, such as work, school and recreational settings.⁴²³ Indeed, these settings are often sites for gender inequality and violence against women, making such interventions necessary and vital. However, these sites also play an important role in educating men and boys on gender equality and the prevention of violence, and can equip them to recognise and challenge the structure, norms and practices that exacerbate and maintain the problem of violence against women.

For example, sport has the capacity to shape and influence people's attitudes and behaviours in both negative and positive ways. It can therefore play a crucial role in engaging men and boys in gender equality work.⁴²⁴ In fact, this setting is seen to be important and influential: the majority of Victorians expect sports organisations to show leadership in gender equality and respect for women.⁴²⁵ *Change the story* notes that sport and recreation settings provide an opportunity to reach large groups and communities, especially young men and so can have a wide reach and influence over changing attitudes and norms regarding gender across the population.⁴²⁶ There is already good work being done in sporting organisations and clubs, such as the AFL and NRL.⁴²⁷ A number of initiatives that have been developed for sports settings are outlined in Section 4.2.6.

Current research suggests that effective education programs and curriculums often include a whole-of-institution approach. They are inclusive and relevant to their intended audience, encourage reflection and participation, and are ideally delivered over long periods of time.⁴²⁸ Some research also highlights that the education of men and boys should start from a young age.⁴²⁹ Maryjo Oster, a researcher in health and education, highlights that the attitudes and practices associated with violence, start with what we teach boys.⁴³⁰ In fact, both prevention research and prevention

intervention strategies, are increasingly focused on younger men.⁴³¹ However, programs and curriculums produce varied results in terms of their effectiveness and impact, which suggests we need to keep developing strategies that can maximise the impact of these programs. This also means that an increased focus on evaluation, to measure and monitor the impact of this work, is critical.

4.1.3 Media campaigns and initiatives

Research suggests that media campaigns and initiatives can play an important role in educating men and boys. They have become a well-established arm of prevention work. These campaigns aim to provide public information and to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women. However, social marketing campaigns that more pointedly seek to influence attitudes and behaviours are also increasingly common.⁴³² There is already some evaluation that illustrates the positive impact these initiatives can have in building awareness and encouraging reflection.⁴³³ An evaluation of the *Man up* project, a documentary that encourages men to challenge their conformity to masculine norms and stereotypes, found that the documentary had prompted almost two-thirds of participants to rethink and challenge stereotypes of masculinity.⁴³⁴ This result suggests that media campaigns offer promising possibilities for shifting norms and attitudes.

A number of scholars point to particular guiding principles that can help to frame the development of media initiatives in order to maximise their positive impact. Flood suggests media campaigns should be guided by four key principles:

- They should be informed by a strong evidence base and use appropriate theoretical models of change.
- They must be comprehensive and employ multiple strategies in multiple settings in order to reach more people.
- Campaigns should aim to engage their target audience, by understanding what is familiar and appealing to this audience, and by employing positive messaging, role models and other influencers. The use of male role models as ambassadors and allies in these campaigns is increasingly seen as an effective way to appeal to men and boys.⁴³⁵
- Media campaigns must aim to be relevant to the contexts and communities in which they are delivered.⁴³⁶

More recently, social marketing campaigns have included a bystander focus, which aims to encourage people to intervene when they witness sexism and violence against women. This is seen as a key way to mobilise the majority of men who are not violent and to increase the willingness of everyone to intervene and 'call out' sexist or violent behaviours. Research shows that many men in Australia have the opportunity to help prevent violence against women by becoming active bystanders. However, not everyone would be comfortable intervening and/or would know how to.⁴³⁷ Further to this, some studies reveal men find it more difficult to intervene in male-dominated settings, such as sport, due to the normalisation of sexism and violence in these settings.⁴³⁸ Contexts that are characterised by a culture of sexism can obstruct men's ability to reflect on their own attitudes or to challenge their peers who display sexist or violent attitudes and behaviours.

A number of reports outline and analyse the different approaches, challenges and impacts of bystander action.⁴³⁹ In Promundo's current gender equality curriculum, bystander responses are included in the toolbox for engaging men and boys in primary prevention.⁴⁴⁰ The evaluation of bystander approaches has been limited and has shown mixed results in terms of their effectiveness and impact. However, there is some evidence to suggest that bystander campaigns and programs can raise awareness and increase the willingness of men to intervene and act when other men are engaging in sexist and/or violent behaviour.⁴⁴¹ This suggests that bystander action can have a positive impact and has potential to be even more effective with the application of sophisticated frameworks and delivery.

Although media campaigns form part of a holistic approach to prevention, there is some concern that these initiatives tend to be individual-based and too narrowly focused on changing individual attitudes. A UK study found that prevention efforts were often dominated by media campaigns, ambassador programs and other localised initiatives, which suggested that, overall, prevention work in the UK had remained too individualised and fragmented.⁴⁴² The evidence indicates that such programs may impact and help shape more positive individual attitudes. However, they are less likely to result in long-lasting attitudinal change or result in behaviour change.⁴⁴³ This suggests that these approaches can be more effective when they are combined with other group-based initiatives and are delivered in conjunction with larger-scale efforts to encourage broader cultural and structural change, for example, through organisational and community education programs or through reforming government policy or legislation. As highlighted in the six levels of intervention, media-type approaches are an important element of prevention work. However, they must be engaged alongside all the other components of the spectrum. This will ensure that the impacts are greater and longer-lasting.

4.1.4 Engaging men as fathers

There is significant research that examines the influential role of fathers in gender equality and prevention efforts. The XY database holds a large range of resources on fathers and their role in prevention, including academic and grey literature and examples of numerous programs and campaigns (<http://xyonline.net/category/article-content/fathering>). Some studies show that the behaviours and attitudes of fathers help shape how their children view gender, and in particular can help shape their sons' gender ideologies and experiences of masculinity.⁴⁴⁴ Fathers play a significant role in socialising and shaping their sons' masculinity, and sons may validate the masculinity of their fathers by conforming to and displaying similar patterns of masculinity.⁴⁴⁵ Thus, the father-son relationship is an important mediator for how dominant forms of masculinity are passed on and maintained within the family and in society more broadly.

It is therefore critical to engage fathers in gender equality and prevention efforts. There has been a resounding call for fathers to be engaged in efforts to promote gender equality and to help shift traditional gender norms and roles.⁴⁴⁶ Engaging fathers in this way is seen to have positive effects on these men and also on their children and families. The first step in many of these initiatives involves encouraging men who are fathers to reflect on and challenge their own attitudes and behaviours relating to masculinity and violence against women. This is important because men's adherence to dominant forms of masculinity often dictates how they behave as fathers and shapes the messages that are passed onto their children.⁴⁴⁷

There are some good examples of initiatives that engage fathers in positive ways to help disrupt traditional gender roles and ideologies within the family, and therefore for their children. MenCare is a global initiative that aims to promote the positive role men can have as fathers, and supports them to transform gender norms and distribute household labour more equally, in order to advance gender equality and prevent violence against women.⁴⁴⁸ The BecauseWhy media campaign encourages fathers to reflect on and challenge gender stereotypes that limits children.⁴⁴⁹ Similarly, key organisations are increasingly releasing guidelines to help parents promote more positive forms of masculinity to their sons. These include encouraging boys to express themselves fully, supporting them to challenge harmful gender stereotypes, teaching them about consent and helping them identify positive role models.⁴⁵⁰

While significant research already exists on the role of fathers, this continues to be an important avenue for engaging men and boys in gender equality and prevention efforts.

4.1.5 Mobilising communities

Engaging and mobilising communities is another key strategy for engaging men in prevention work. These types of efforts seek to engage community members to address the particular social needs and problems in that community.⁴⁵¹ These initiatives promote broad change across communities rather than just individual change. In this way they are able to produce longer-lasting outcomes. Community-based initiatives typically involve community participation and collaboration. This means identifying, recruiting and collaborating with influencers and role models who are part of that community, including community leaders, mentors and celebrities.⁴⁵² Examples are discussed in Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

4.1.6 Healthy-positive masculinities

Positive messaging and strength-based approaches are increasingly employed in programs and initiatives that seek to engage men and boys in prevention efforts. While these efforts encourage men to challenge existing negative forms and patterns of masculinity, it is also important to offer alternative models and to promote more positive, respectful forms of masculinity. As Flood argues, we must offer some kind of alternative for what men and boys can be rather than simply pointing out what they should not be.⁴⁵³ There is a robust discussion already taking place about which terms we should use to describe these alternatives. The terms ‘positive’ and ‘healthy’ masculinities have gained significant traction in the literature, and are increasingly employed in prevention efforts that engage men and boys.⁴⁵⁴ However, what are these healthier, positive masculinities, and what do they look like in practice? Often when we encourage men to embrace positive, healthier masculinities we in fact mean they should embrace the traits and behaviours commonly associated with women and being feminine, and which men and boys are not encouraged or supported to display. This suggests that promoting alternative forms of masculinity might not be the way forward, especially if our real aim is to move beyond binary thinking and to promote other ways for men to be that aren’t tied up in categories of masculinity.

In practice however, the abandonment of masculinity altogether might not be the best way forward. Flood suggests that while part of our work should involve challenging binary categories of masculinity and femininity, a strong argument remains for using notions of masculinity to engage men and boys, even if this is really about encouraging them to ‘embrace qualities socially coded as feminine’.⁴⁵⁵ O’Neil also argues that positive conceptualisations of masculinity are needed in order to encourage men to alter negative, harmful forms of masculinity and expand their view of what they can be.⁴⁵⁶ A review of studies published between 1950 and 2015 on sexual assault in US colleges found that prevention efforts tended to focus largely on challenging and changing negative aspects of masculinity. Conversely, they focused less on identifying positive qualities in men that reduce the likelihood of men perpetrating violence, and/or increase the chances of men becoming active bystanders and becoming involved in other prevention efforts.⁴⁵⁷ The authors concluded that prevention efforts should consider further enquiry into more positive forms of masculinity, and that such enquiries can help advance prevention efforts.

The dialogue and debate regarding terminology and what alternative masculinities should look like needs to be further developed. For now, at least, the research agrees that whatever we seek to promote as alternatives should emphasise the multiplicity of masculinities and aim to be gender transformative. The forthcoming work on ‘healthier masculinities’ by VicHealth will provide a deeper understanding of this research, and the ways in which positive conceptions of masculinity/ies can help promote gender equality and drive better health and social outcomes for individuals and society as a whole.⁴⁵⁸

4.2 Examples of prevention programs and initiatives

4.2.1 Policy-based initiatives

MenEngage Alliance

The MenEngage Alliance is a global advocacy network that partners with hundreds of non-governmental organisations including the United Nations. The alliance seeks to engage men and boys to reduce gender inequality and end all forms of gender-based violence. Its advocacy also includes a focus on promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; increasing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment; preventing homophobia and transphobia; advocating for LGBTI rights; preventing child sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and trafficking; and supporting men's positive involvement in maternal and child health as fathers or caregivers. The alliance seeks to influence policy makers at local, national and international levels of government, and to address and transform macro-level policies that perpetuate gender inequality and help drive violence against women.

4.2.2 Practice-based initiatives

Wise Guys

Wise Guys is an Australian male behaviour change program developed by NIRODAH that delivers evidence-based education to young men aged 11 to 18. Using a strengths-based approach and the current Man Box research, this program delivers a series of lessons to help participants gain essential skills, and to empower them to identify the impacts of long-standing gender stereotypes on themselves and others, and to actively question and challenge these attitudes and stereotypes. Further, it aims to help young men develop more positive forms of masculinity and build respectful relationships with others.

Promundo Manhood 2.0

Manhood 2.0 describes itself as a 'gender-transformative curriculum' designed to engage young men aged 15 to 24. It aims to help them reflect on and question harmful gender norms in order to reduce a range of negative health outcomes and to prevent sexual and intimate partner violence and bullying. The curriculum was created for practitioners who engage young men in gender equality and prevention work, but it also encourages broader collaboration with service providers and other advocates who are influential in the lives of young men. It applies an intersectional lens to consider multiple intersecting identities, and to encourage young men to think beyond the rigid categories of male and female and to value other expressions of gender. The curriculum manual itself is divided into a range of themes and activities on topics such as gender identity and power in relationships. The program is an adaptation of Program H, which has been evaluated and shown to be successful at reducing perpetration of sexual violence and increasing support for more equitable gender norms and relationships.⁴⁵⁹

4.2.3 Community-based initiatives

Modelling Respect and Equality (MORE) Yarra Ranges (2019)

MoRE Yarra Ranges is a 3-month training program developed by The Men's Project, delivered to communities in the Yarra Ranges, Victoria. The program aims to support community leaders and influencers to build their knowledge and skills in relation to issues of gender equality and respect, and to create change in their communities. Specifically, the program helps participants identify men's harmful attitudes and behaviours, and helps men and boys embody more positive, respectful masculinities. The program works with teachers, coaches, health professionals, youth workers, parents, and other community leaders to help them make a positive impact in their communities.

The Rural Challenge Project Gender Equality Leadership program

Rural Challenge is run with organisations and institutions in regional Victoria, including Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades and football and netball clubs, which play a key role in helping to promote and shape positive community attitudes and behaviours. Specifically, the program employs a primary prevention approach and draws on *Change the story* to increase knowledge and awareness of gender inequality and violence against women. Further, it seeks to engage men and boys as positive role models, bystanders and advocates. The program uses a toolkit and other materials to provide guidelines and to deliver workshops to members of the clubs and brigades with the aim of creating a respectful and inclusive culture. Importantly, the program can be tailored to engage specific local contexts. The program's success is reflected in its partnerships, which include Women's Health Loddon Mallee, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, CFA District 2, AFL Central Victoria and Centre for Non-Violence. In 2018 the program was highly commended in the category of Community Safety in the National Local Government Awards.

4.2.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives

Wurramiyanga Men's Healing Project (WMHP)

The WMHP is a program developed and operated by the Healing Foundation. The program uses a range of cultural, educational and therapeutic healing activities to strengthen, support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. In particular, it encourages men to reconnect with traditional cultural knowledge and respected Elders in order to strengthen their own identities and sense of community. This approach is used to help create behaviour change in men within these communities, and to improve their engagement with mental health services, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The program is seen to reduce a range of negative social and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and their communities, including family and domestic violence, incarceration, suicide, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Strong Aboriginal Men (SAM)

SAM is a culturally sensitive prevention initiative based in New South Wales that consults with and engages Aboriginal men in conversations about personal and community experiences of violence and abuse. During three 2-day workshops spread over consecutive months, the program encourages Aboriginal men and boys over the age of 15 to consider the individual and community attitudinal factors as well as the contributing historical, social and economic factors that underpin violence against women. In this way, SAM employs a gender transformative approach to help address attitudes, norms, structures and practices that help drive violence and abuse. Importantly, it helps identify more positive dimensions of Aboriginal masculinities, which can play a key role in helping to prevent violence against women. The SAM program is in high demand in Aboriginal communities. Post-program evaluation data shows increases in rates of disclosure of both experiencing and perpetrating violence, and increased help and support-seeking behaviours.⁴⁶⁰ Overall, the program has proven to be successful at raising awareness and building community capacity to respond to violence against women, and has resulted in positive personal outcomes for the men involved in the program.

4.2.5 Media and social marketing initiatives

The Men's Story Project (MSP)

MSP is a story-telling and dialogue project that creates live public forums in which a diverse range of men can discuss and explore social understandings of masculinity. These live story-sharing events are filmed and used to create content for documentaries, social media and other educational tools. In particular, these events aim to challenge and create critical dialogue on social norms of masculinity,

through addressing topics such as sexuality, gender identity, relationships, gender-based violence, men's health and gender equality. The project has, thus far, been a success, gaining extensive press coverage as well as receiving an array of awards, primarily from US universities. An evaluation of an MSP production in a US university found it had positive impacts on audience members, who demonstrated increased knowledge and valuing of:

- multiple masculinities and intersectionality
- ways to challenge stereotypes and essentialisms
- ways to rethink dominant forms of masculinity, including suppression of emotion and use of violence⁴⁶¹

The Line

The Line is a primary prevention behaviour change campaign aimed at young people aged 12 to 20 years, delivered by Our Watch (<https://www.theline.org.au/>). The program produces a wide range of online content such as memes and question-and-answer style social media posts, website articles and campaigns, and YouTube video content. The content itself covers topics such as sex, gender, dating and respectful relationships, all with the aim of encouraging young people to develop healthy and equal relationships, and to reject violence. Long-term, *The Line* is intended to help prevent violence against women by addressing the drivers of violence against women, including rigid gender roles and stereotypes of masculinity, and male peer relationships that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

Doing Nothing Does Harm campaign

The *Doing Nothing Does Harm* campaign is a bystander campaign produced and delivered by Our Watch. The campaign presents a video series and accompanying website that provides information about how to recognise and respond to incidents of sexist and disrespectful behaviours towards women (<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/doingnothingdoesharm/home>). The videos show examples of everyday sexism based on deeply entrenched social norms and attitudes regarding gender and sexuality. The campaign encourages and motivates bystanders to challenge and change harmful gendered attitudes, norms and practices that underlie these incidents. While the campaign does not explicitly reference men and masculinity, it enables men to identify everyday sexism and disrespect towards women and encourages them to challenge behaviours underpinned by dominant norms of masculinity.

4.2.6 Sports-based initiatives

Club Respect

Club Respect is a program developed by NIRODAH and Victoria Women's Trust. It supports grassroots sports clubs to build cultures of equality and respect. Specifically, the program seeks to deconstruct and redevelop existing club cultures, and to foster respectful attitudes and behaviours among players, parents, coaches and other club members to help prevent disrespect and violence against women. While the program acknowledges that gender is important for understanding how sports often become 'boys clubs' with particular structures of power, Club Respect does not engage explicitly with questions of masculinity and how challenging dominant attitudes, norms and practices of masculinity can help to transform these club cultures. Despite this, it has been successful at helping to increase safety and gender equality in sports organisations and clubs, and has created important partnerships with sports clubs and other organisations, including Mahana Culture, NRL Victoria and North Melbourne Football Club.

NRL Respectful Relationships Sex & Ethics program (RRSE)

The RRSE program is an education and behaviour change program aimed at male rugby players in order to reduce violence against women. Developed in Queensland in 2009, the program runs for 6 weeks and is delivered to NRL players. The RRSE aims to help build players' knowledge and skills regarding ethical sexual decision making and consent, healthy communication in relationships, how to recognise abuse in relationships, ethical use of social media, and positive bystander behaviour targeted at sexual violence and gender-based abuse. Evaluations of the program have shown improvements in participants' knowledge of sexual violence and its impacts, and improved knowledge and skills in conducting respectful relationships.⁴⁶²

4.3 Effective strategies of engagement

4.3.1 The role of empathy and emotion

Programs and initiatives such as those described in Section 4.2 employ specific strategies of engagement. The research highlights that some strategies are especially promising for reaching effective prevention outcomes. In particular, there has been some focus on engaging men's emotional levers. Research has found that men are more motivated to engage in prevention work when they can make a personal or intimate connection to the problem of violence against women.⁴⁶³ One study found that many of the men actively engaged in the prevention of domestic violence, for example, had either known someone who had experienced violence, known someone who had perpetrated it, or they had experienced it themselves.⁴⁶⁴ Farr et al. note that when men are able to build empathy for women who are victims of violence, these men are less likely to engage in violence or sexist behaviour towards women.⁴⁶⁵ This suggests that prevention efforts could be more effective if they can engage men's emotions, which can help build greater empathy and increase men's willingness to address violence against women. Importantly, this should be done in ways that do not inadvertently devalue women or reinforce the idea that men need to protect women.

Further, some research shows that engaging men and boys in ways that are shaming or humiliating can be ineffective. These studies indicate that feelings of shame, fear and guilt act as barriers, and can provoke denial and other defensive reactions from men.⁴⁶⁶ An extensive review of perpetrator studies found a common correlation between reported low self-esteem and the perpetration of violence.⁴⁶⁷ This suggests that addressing the factors underlying self-esteem problems could be more effective than employing strategies that are negative and shaming. Another study concluded that the acknowledgement of shame in men who perpetrate violence is important.⁴⁶⁸ However, it also found that shame is not a helpful emotion in the long term, and therefore this approach would need to be carefully managed.

Although some research has found links between low self-esteem and increased aggression this does not mean that engaging men and boys who have higher self-esteem in ways that are shaming or humiliating is effective. In fact, some studies found strategies that shame and humiliate may even provoke or increase aggression in men and boys who feel entitled and who have a narcissistic sense of self.⁴⁶⁹ This suggests strategies that evoke negative emotions rather than positives ones are less effective in engaging men in prevention work, and also less effective for interventions with men who perpetrate violence.

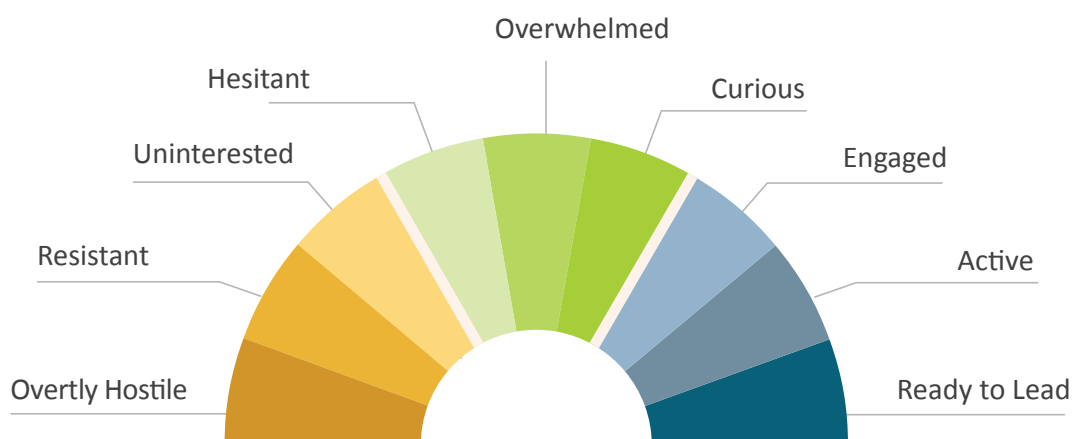
Further to this, the research suggests that providing positive messages, by focusing on what men should do rather than what they should not do, may be more effective.⁴⁷⁰ Certainly, within bystander approaches, providing men with practical guidance and skills for how to intervene has become a key focus, and is seen to be important and effective.⁴⁷¹

4.3.2 Employing multiple strategies

Strategies that seek to personalise the issue and appeal to men’s emotions have been effective for engaging men. However, interventions should utilise a range of strategies in order to maximise their impact. Different strategies engage different men. The first step, then, is to recognise the different circumstances and factors that affect different men so that strategies can be tailored in a way that is meaningful and relevant.⁴⁷² Funk’s ‘continuum of male engagement’ is a useful tool for mapping out the positions of different men in relation to prevention efforts. The continuum describes a range of positions to help understand where men sit on the continuum, from those who are overtly hostile or resistant, to those who are hesitant and curious, right through to those who are actively engaged and ready to lead (see Figure 2).⁴⁷³ This tool was developed to assist practitioners and organisers seeking to ‘recruit, mobilise and organise men and boys in efforts to prevent gender-based violence’.⁴⁷⁴ In particular, it helps to pinpoint which strategies could be most useful for engaging men at each particular level. While we should start by engaging men from whichever level they are at, our aim should be to move them along the continuum towards more active engagement and involvement. This will require both patience and care, since it is likely that men will stay at the same position for some time.⁴⁷⁵ Gender transformation involves the changing of values and practices we are often deeply invested in. Thus, this work can be slow and difficult.

To complicate this process further, it may also be important to highlight how different contexts influence men’s attitudes and behaviours. As outlined in Section 2.2.2, men perform different masculinities in different contexts. This means they might conform to dominant forms of masculinity in some contexts, such as the workplace and when playing sport, but disrupt them in other contexts, for example in their role as fathers. This still suggests that multiple strategies are required to engage men and boys, but also that the particular context and/or setting should be considered when developing these strategies.

Figure 2: Continuum of male engagement



Source: Funk, R (2006) *Reaching Men: Strategies for Preventing Sexist Attitudes, Behaviours and Violence*, Indianapolis, IN: Jist Publications

4.3.3 Developing approaches that are culturally relevant and community-led

Intersectionality must be made central to all prevention work that seeks to *engage* men and boys. As a theory, it provides an account of power that highlights the ways men as a group hold power over women as a group, while also acknowledging that many men have differential access to power. This insight is crucial given that in order to achieve gender equality, men must relinquish some of their power.⁴⁷⁶ This presents a particular challenge when engaging men who experience discrimination and disadvantage. Men who experience poverty or adversity may feel vulnerable and powerless even though typically, they experience greater advantages than similarly placed women.⁴⁷⁷

Prevention programs that seek to engage these men, often risk alienating them. Encouraging men to challenge the privilege they experience in relation to women can be alienating because first, these men do not feel privileged or empowered, and second, they may be resistant to giving up what power they do hold over women in their communities.⁴⁷⁸ Salter highlights the fact that prevention programs in Australia often focus on addressing the links between masculinity, dominance and power, but that this does not effectively engage men and boys who ‘live at a considerable distance’ from this account of masculinity.⁴⁷⁹ This means there is little consideration of whether men and boys who experience structural inequality and disadvantage are in fact able to challenge and prevent violence against women.⁴⁸⁰

An intersectional approach enables us to recognise and understand the different experiences of men and their differential access to power, and is therefore integral to accounting for men’s different patterns of engagement. This suggests we need to develop programs that take into account the diversity of men’s relationships to power and privilege.⁴⁸¹

Further to this, the research highlights a number of key principles that can help practitioners and advocates engage men and boys through an intersectional lens. Prevention efforts should:

- be led by communities and aim to strengthen these same communities
- use a variety of strategies that avoid reinforcing structures and discourses of discrimination
- convey messages that are positive and meaningful, to encourage men to adopt a more active role in their communities
- include rigorous evaluation, to ensure they are working and, more importantly, that they are not exacerbating the problem⁴⁸²

One single approach will not work for all men. Thus, it is important that researchers, practitioners and organisers keep this in mind when researching and working with men. The challenging of gender inequality and dominant forms of masculinity is central to efforts that seek to engage men. Research shows that this focus on gender must be culturally relevant, or community-driven, in order to improve the acceptance of these programs and enhance their impact.⁴⁸³ For example, programs that challenge men’s overall power and privilege are unlikely to be effective in communities that are poorer and experience more disadvantage, where the boys and men in these communities do not see their lived realities through a frame of privilege.⁴⁸⁴

There are also very particular considerations when it comes to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. First, these initiatives must be developed and implemented in ways that are culturally relevant and community-led rather than being a ‘culturally appropriate’ adaption of western program models. Second, such work must meet the specific needs and respond to the specific life circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys. In other words, prevention strategies that seek to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men must acknowledge the particular historical context of colonisation and respond to its ongoing effects, which include ongoing systemic and structural violence and cycles of ‘intergenerational trauma’. Numerous Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and key resources such as *Changing the picture* and the Healing Foundation’s *Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence prevention framework for men and boys*, provide specific guidance and principles for such work.⁴⁸⁵

An understanding and acknowledgement of the structural inequalities experienced by some men is vital to this work. The viewing of prevention efforts through a structural lens highlights the complex interactions that occur between masculinity, gender inequality and men’s different experiences of privilege, disadvantage or discrimination, and how these differences result in varied levels of understanding and/or engagement in prevention work. Moreover, it helps us to recognise which programs and initiatives carry the risk of reinforcing racism, homophobia, ableism and other types of discrimination, and how we might avoid this in future efforts.

4.3.4 Looking ahead

Engaging men and boys in prevention remains a key challenge for those working to prevent violence against women. While a more extensive evaluation of the current strategies is needed, research shows there is already a range of promising practice that can help advance gender equality efforts and effect change. Violence against women is a significant and complex problem that occurs across all contexts. Thus, we need to use every means to address this problem. Research shows that in order for prevention to be truly transformative, we must be willing to employ multiple strategies that apply an intersectional lens and which address all the levels outlined in the social-ecological model. This means balancing more individual-focused strategies with strategies that attend to the broader cultural and structural landscape.

Funk notes that there ‘continues to be tremendous learning about how to effectively engage men’.⁴⁸⁶ Even in the past year, a range of resources have been developed that provide a comprehensive analysis of how we might effectively engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women.⁴⁸⁷ These kinds of resources and knowledge are sorely needed to engage men and boys. Effective engagement remains a challenging task that will take much effort over a long period of time.

Part 5: Key challenges and tensions in work addressing masculinities and engaging men

The literature consistently highlights a number of key challenges and tensions that emerge in prevention work which addresses masculinities and seeks to engage men. The following section provides an outline and analysis of the most pressing challenges and points to a number of ways in which we might begin to address these tensions.

The research consistently shows:

- There are numerous barriers and obstacles that prevent men and boys from engaging in prevention work in a meaningful way. These include an unwillingness to challenge and deconstruct masculinity or male privilege; feelings of loyalty towards other men; negative feelings of shame and guilt; and a lack of knowledge and skills.
- Some prevention efforts rely on dominant norms and stereotypes of masculinity which can inadvertently reinforce or perpetuate the very patterns that need to be challenged.
- The majority of men are complicit in maintaining a system of gender inequality, which delivers benefits to men as a group over women as a group. The extent to which different men benefit depends on their proximity to dominant forms of masculinity and their access to political, economic and social resources and power.
- Addressing men's complicity and privilege is difficult because many men struggle to recognise how their own individual attitudes and actions contribute to maintaining dominant forms of masculinity and a system of gender inequality that help drive violence against women.
- Women can also be complicit in supporting dominant forms of masculinity, and some women benefit (over other men and women) from a system that marginalises people based on their race, age, sexuality, ability and socio-economic status.
- Men experience negative impacts to their health and wellbeing due to dominant forms of masculinity and the pressures to conform to them.
- Men who are negatively impacted by other systems and structures of discrimination, such as colonisation, racism, homophobia, ableism and classism, suffer disproportionate negative impacts to their health and wellbeing compared to more privileged men.
- Efforts to challenge dominant forms of masculinity and address gender inequality and other forms of structural inequality and social disadvantage can help prevent violence against women and can also help reduce a range of negative impacts to men's health and wellbeing.
- Efforts to engage men and boys can risk side-lining and marginalising women's voices. Strategies that seek to engage men should be developed in collaboration with women and be delivered in ways that maintain accountability to women.
- Prevention efforts are often met with backlash and resistance, which can result in increased sexism, aggression and violence against women. It is important to develop strategies to respond to and address overt forms of backlash to minimise its impact.

5.1 Engaging men and boys in effective and meaningful ways

Work that seeks to engage men and boys in prevention activities faces a number of key challenges that are consistently highlighted in the literature. Many of these challenges stem from two central questions or tensions:

1. How do we engage men and boys in ways that are meaningful, long-lasting and effective?
2. How do we engage men and boys in ways that help address the problem of violence against women rather than exacerbate it, and transform the current gender system rather than reinforcing and upholding it?

5.1.1 Potential barriers to engaging men and boys

The research pinpoints a number of potential barriers that can hamper efforts to engage men in prevention work. As Stephen Burrell notes, prompting men to take the first step of hearing and reflecting on the problem itself can be difficult.⁴⁸⁸ Men may believe violence against women is only a women's (feminist) issue, and some even see it to be the natural order of things.⁴⁸⁹ This means men can feel alienated from the problem, and therefore be unwilling to become involved.

Effective prevention efforts seek to transform a gender system that privileges men and boys, and marginalises and disadvantages women. This presents a challenge when engaging men and boys, as prevention work necessarily requires men to deconstruct and challenge their privilege and power. The research shows that men are more likely than women to hold attitudes that are more supportive of gender inequality and violence. Thus, they can feel hostile or defensive towards work that seeks to change these attitudes, or be unwilling to challenge their own complicity in a system that largely benefits them.⁴⁹⁰ This suggests that men's level of involvement in work addressing gender inequality is often shaped and underpinned by gender inequality.⁴⁹¹ It is in men's interests to maintain the current gender system. Moreover, they may feel pressure to maintain this system due to loyalty they feel to other men. Challenging men's violence against women, or men's complicity in this violence, may be akin to taking a moral stance with women, against the collective of men.⁴⁹²

Pease argues that work which challenges the privilege held by men elicits a strong emotional response from men because privilege is so closely linked to their investments in masculinity and power.⁴⁹³ This response presents a challenge when attempting to engage men in prevention work that addresses gender inequality. Pease writes, 'Men often want things to change but they do not want to relinquish their power.'⁴⁹⁴ In this way, privilege acts as the glue that keeps men tied to sexist ideologies and dominant patterns of masculinity. A qualitative study of activists working with men in prevention highlights some of the challenges of doing this work with men of a privileged group. Respondents noted that these men found it enormously difficult to acknowledge and challenge their (and their peers') own privilege and power.⁴⁹⁵ This was the overarching and most pressing challenge of working with these men. Even men who hold egalitarian values and are actively involved in challenging sexism and violence against women, experience some discomfort in addressing and challenging the systems and institutions that grant men many benefits.⁴⁹⁶ This discussion of privilege and complicity is examined further in Section 5.2.

Similarly, men may be reluctant to reflect on and challenge their own attitudes relating to masculinity. Much prevention work aims to transform the norms, structures and practices of masculinity that have been in place for centuries. Asking men to challenge these and to find other ways of being men is no easy task.⁴⁹⁷ This may explain why some men deny that violence against women is a problem and that masculinity is a key part of this, or why they often minimise the severity of the problem of violence against women. These are common responses, particularly by men who have a history of violent behaviour towards women. A recent study of perpetrators of violence found that many of the participants denied or minimised the seriousness of the violence they had perpetrated, with some even blaming the victim.⁴⁹⁸

Some research suggests that men disengage due to feelings of fear, shame and guilt when implicated in the problem of violence against women.⁴⁹⁹ In a study of advocates working with men in the UK, one participant states: ‘You don’t want them [men] walking into your workshop thinking, “I’m here because of a punishment.”’⁵⁰⁰ Encouraging men to engage in this work can prompt feelings of discomfort or defensiveness. This suggests we need to manage how far we push to avoid putting men offside.⁵⁰¹ At the same time, it should be expected that men will feel some level of discomfort. Pease writes, ‘If we confront oppressive attitudes and behaviour too strongly, we may lose the engagement of the man being confronted. However, if we do not confront sufficiently, then we may well be colluding.’⁵⁰² This is a difficult tension to navigate when engaging men and boys. We should aim to engage men in a positive manner and in ways that are encouraging. However, part of this work means that men do need to acknowledge their privilege and the ways in which they are implicated in the problem of gender inequality and violence against women.

It is important to note that men’s hesitance or resistance to engaging in prevention efforts does not always stem from hostility, privilege or lack of care. Often men do not engage due to a lack of knowledge of the problem or a lack of opportunity to engage.⁵⁰³ Men may not fully understand the depth and seriousness of the problem, nor feel they have the knowledge or capacity to intervene or take the appropriate actions. Similarly, they may feel overwhelmed by the problem and unsure how to make a meaningful contribution.⁵⁰⁴ Many men may not be resistant to being involved, and some may want to but feel unsure or unclear about how to do this. Thus, we need to develop prevention strategies that can educate, mobilise and inspire men to become a part of this work.

Further to this, the large majority of work that engages men and boys in primary prevention has been developed with white, privileged men in mind, with fewer programs and initiatives designed to effectively engage men from other backgrounds and experiences.⁵⁰⁵ This severely limits our understanding of what gender and violence mean to different men, how these understandings translate into practices, and how best to address these different patterns and their outcomes. We need to find ways to expand this engagement work, to increase its reach and impact.

5.1.2 Maintaining a gender transformative approach

Change the story emphasises that prevention efforts ‘must actively challenge and change rather than inadvertently reinforce or perpetuate harmful gendered social norms, structures and practices’.⁵⁰⁶ This necessarily involves conscious efforts to transform the systems and structures of gender inequality, and to avoid actively working within this system and thereby reinforcing it. In relation to engaging men and boys, this means avoiding strategies that rely on dominant stereotypes of masculinity or other gender restrictive methods.⁵⁰⁷ Although the majority of prevention work aims to be gender transformative, research indicates that, in practice, this presents a huge challenge. Prevention efforts do, both consciously and inadvertently, adhere to strategies of engagement that are gender reinforcing rather than transformative, especially where men and masculinities are concerned.⁵⁰⁸

Avoiding ‘real men’ strategies

Strategies that appeal to men and boys to ‘man up’ or be ‘real men’, can be gender reinforcing rather than transformative. Encouraging men to return to a ‘real’ masculinity is akin to asking men to draw on particular masculine norms, such as aggression, toughness and even the use of violence, in their defence of women.⁵⁰⁹ Thus, rather than challenging dominant norms of masculinity, this strategy colludes with them. The research consistently highlights that dominant norms often underpin men’s perpetration of violence. This suggests strategies that appeal to these norms are counterproductive at best, and harmful at worst. Salter writes:

The compromise offered by the “real men” approach to violence prevention is to call for only a partial cessation of violence. Male aggression is re-envisioned as a potentially emancipatory force that can be directed against perpetrators of violence against women. This risks transforming violence prevention efforts into a platform for performances of aggressive masculinity.⁵¹⁰

This is particularly critical given the evidence shows men who are most concerned about their status as 'real' men are most likely to turn to violence when that status is threatened or unattainable.⁵¹¹ Thus, strategies that engage men by encouraging them to 'man up' or be 'real men' provide only a temporary solution to the problem of involving men in prevention work.⁵¹² These strategies may engage men in the short-term, but overall they help to further reinforce and entrench the gendered drivers of violence against women.

The 'real men' strategy also fails to acknowledge the reality of men and masculinities as diverse and multiple.⁵¹³ In other words, it suggests there is one way to be a man and it employs a 'one size fits all' approach. Furthermore, it suggests there is an essence of manhood that men can return to.⁵¹⁴ In this way, it essentialises men. Against this definition of what 'real men' are, anything else is an aberration or unnatural. This also works to reinforce an oppositional relationship between men and women, where real men are seen to be the things that women are not.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, it essentialises women as well. Within the 'real men' discourse women are posited as vulnerable, and in need of protection.⁵¹⁶ This is what scholars call benevolent sexism. The differences between men and women are emphasised in a manner that appears respectful towards women but which assumes women are the 'weaker' sex.⁵¹⁷ This type of sexism may seem harmless, but some scholars suggest it might be more harmful than obvious forms of sexism. It rationalises and endorses men's dominance, and keeps women subordinate, all under the guise of respecting and appreciating women.⁵¹⁸

On the other hand, some research suggests campaigns that appeal to traditional forms of masculinity do have an important role to play in engaging men and boys. In particular, these campaigns are seen to be effective at raising awareness of the problem of violence and being able to provide a 'hook' for prompting men's engagement. It is understood that while these strategies are not effective for creating long-lasting impact and change, they can be an important first step. One study found strategies that allow men to see themselves reflected in anti-violence efforts, and which help them make personal connections to the issue, were seen to be the most effective.⁵¹⁹ This could include strategies that find a point of connection to the issue of violence, with violence framed as something harmful that could be experienced by these men or someone close to them. Some respondents in the study saw strategies that capitalise on traditional stereotypes of masculinity as especially effective for engaging men, and a third of the respondents highlighted the importance of having messengers or role models that they could relate to, or who were reflective of themselves. Another study of young teenage boys in the US measured the impact of the Men of Strength campaign. It found the headline of the campaign, 'my strength is not for hurting', generally resonated with the participants based on its appeal to male characteristics (strength), which many of these men aspired to.⁵²⁰ Violence prevention strategies in which men see themselves and their context and surroundings represented and reflected can be effective for prompting reflection and attitudinal change in men.

Flood outlines the difficulty of engaging men effectively without being counterproductive. He explains that 'real men' strategies for engaging men may have short-term appeal, but are less likely to have long-term impacts. At the same time, however, interventions that target the ordinary man cannot be so idealistic and uncompromising that they fail to engage this audience.⁵²¹ Flood highlights that social marketing campaigns which draw on stereotypes of masculinity are often trying to balance complicity and challenge. He writes that 'they collude enough with masculine cultural codes that they engage a male audience, yet hopefully they subvert the association of masculinity and violence enough to make a difference to men's attitudes and behaviours'.⁵²² Some research suggests a campaign's ability to create attitudinal and behavioural change can depend on how they are delivered. A study that measured the response to the *Man up* documentary, aired in Australia in 2016, found that the intentional (and ironic) use of the term 'man up' was effective for engaging men, while also prompting some men to actively recognise and challenge stereotypes of masculinity and the narrow constructions of what it means to be a man.⁵²³ While many participants continued to refer to some traditional norms of masculinity – such as courage and strength – when asked what the term 'man up' meant to them, they also saw it as 'a call for men to be open about their emotions and connect with others'.⁵²⁴ In this way, the campaign managed to find a balance between engaging men effectively and also prompting some level of change in how these men thought about masculinity.

Avoiding ‘good men versus bad men’ narratives

Engagement strategies may also rely on a ‘good men’ versus ‘bad men’ narrative. This is closely related to the ‘real men’ discourse, whereby there are good men and bad men, and the ‘real’ men are the ‘good’ men.⁵²⁵ In the context of violence against women, those who enact this violence are cast as being the ‘bad men’. Again, this maintains a division between men and women, and essentialises men, where good men (and real men) stand against violence and protect women. However, it also creates a division between men. This raises a number of concerns.

The dichotomy of good men and bad men is underpinned by a focus on the individual rather than on the broader cultural and structural forces of masculinity and gender inequality. Kate Seymour notes that the motif of the good man is often central to prevention efforts. However, this individualises the problem so that most men are not implicated in the violence. She writes:

The ability to align oneself with the “imagined community” of good men is an especially effective way to direct attention away from structural relations of privilege ... and towards the deficits, or deviance, of individuals. Interpersonal violence and “structural” violence, however, are neither mutually exclusive nor “dichotomous”.⁵²⁶

As Flood explains, violence prevention efforts that rely on this simplistic dichotomy between good men and bad men are problematic in two ways. First, they ignore that all men are implicated in a gender system that privileges them over women. Second, they refer to direct and visible forms of violence, ignoring other forms of violence, and the many sexist and coercive behaviours that underpin and drive this violence.⁵²⁷ The ‘good men versus bad men’ narrative is often employed as an engagement strategy to minimise defensive reactions among men. The problem of violence is seen to belong only to some men, on whom efforts should focus. Salter writes that if bad men aren’t real men, ‘then the rest of us don’t have to reflect on what their behaviour says about masculinity more broadly’.⁵²⁸

In a large-scale analysis of the dominant public discourses of violence in Australia, it was found that violence was represented and spoken about in relation to particular men and particular types of masculinity.⁵²⁹ Violence was often seen as central and innate to who some men are, rather than it being a product of broader social structures and norms. As Seymour explains, these discourses tend to ‘obscure the complex relationship between gender identity (masculinity/ies) and violence but also provide a smokescreen for the ubiquitous ordinariness of state and socially sanctioned violences’.⁵³⁰ Attributing violence to individual men, or particular groups of men, distracts from the everyday violence and sexism that occurs in our broader social structures, and also detaches this violence from norms of masculinity.

A further concern is that strategies which employ a good man versus bad man narrative, and which appeal to dominant masculine norms, lack an intersectional analysis. As noted in Section 1.1, women who experience social marginalisation and structural disadvantage also experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence. There is a tendency then to cast the men in these communities as ‘bad’, and to wrongly promote a discourse that these men perpetrate higher rates of violence against women compared to other men. First, this ignores the fact that women who experience social discrimination and structural disadvantage experience violence at the hands of men more broadly, not just within their own groups or communities. Second, it fails to get underneath the problem to adequately understand how some men are impacted by structural inequalities, such as racism and poverty, and how this helps to shape and influence the way these men construct their masculinities.⁵³¹ As discussed in Section 2.3, research shows that men who experience marginalisation and who face disadvantage might rely on violence and dominant forms of masculinity to achieve social status and assert a sense of power.⁵³² Importantly, men who experience discrimination also bear the brunt of the blame for violence against women. And yet, there is little interrogation of the systemic and structural violence and discrimination that they themselves experience, largely at the hands of ‘good men’. This suggests we must highlight the ways in which gender inequality intersects with other structures of power to produce particular patterns and outcomes. Strategies that are too individual-focused, such as the ‘real men’ and ‘good men’ narratives, lose this deeper focus and understanding.

5.2 Complicity and privilege

5.2.1 Complicit masculinities

In addressing men's violence against women, we should engage all men, not only men who use violence. The majority of men are complicit in maintaining a system of gender inequality that helps to drive violence against women. Connell's definition of what she calls 'complicit masculinities', is useful here.⁵³³ She argues that while few men are able to actually reach or practice the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, the majority of men 'collaborate' in sustaining these ideals because they help to support and uphold the current gender system. She writes that 'the public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and [therefore] what large numbers of men are motivated to support'.⁵³⁴ Men support dominant forms of masculinity, or do nothing to challenge them, because they benefit from them. This is what Connell calls the 'patriarchal dividend'.⁵³⁵ She explains, 'the number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern ... may be quite small. Yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women'.⁵³⁶

Importantly, this patriarchal dividend is distributed unevenly. Pease explains, 'Men do not all benefit equally from the operation of the structures of domination. Issues of race, sexuality, class, disability and age affect the extent to which men benefit from the patriarchal dividend. While the gender hierarchy involves men's domination of women, it also includes a system of internal dominance in which a minority of men dominate the majority of men'.⁵³⁷ Thus, we must recognise that not all men benefit in equal measures, due to a range of structural inequalities that men also experience. And yet at the same time, men as a group benefit over women as a group. Holding these ideas together is challenging but important. Moreover, the extent to which different men benefit from a system of gender inequality depends on their proximity to dominant norms and structures of masculinity. Those with greater access to political, economic and social resources, and who are able to meet the expectations of how men should be, benefit most. Fahlberg and Pepper write:

While all men benefit from the patriarchal structures that govern contemporary society, individual men must actively work to sustain their dominant position in the gender hierarchy or face marginalization or subordination by male peers. In other words, men must continually compete with other men to attain power and status. This is often accomplished through practices and traits that are considered masculine and through the marginalization of women and other subordinate groups. As a result, the maintenance of masculinity as a meaningful practice relies upon a continual re-enactment or performance of the characteristics associated with it.⁵³⁸

5.2.2 The 'Not all Men' argument

This account of complicity is important for addressing the argument that 'not all men' are sexist or violent towards women. The 'not all men' argument alleviates the majority of men from responsibility and ignores how men are complicit in an overall system that supports this sexism and violence. Tal Peretz argues that male privilege is 'integral to an unequal gender order and enacted at multiple analytical levels (internally, interpersonally, institutionally, and culturally)'.⁵³⁹ Male privilege works in dynamic and complex ways. It is a key factor in sexism and men's violence, and yet it often goes unacknowledged.

In relation to violence, Flood notes that men who use violence against women receive direct benefits, which could include receiving sexual services, gaining control over decision-making, gaining a powerful sense of self, and enabling proof of their manhood to other men.⁵⁴⁰ More widely, however, men in general benefit from violence against women as it helps to maintain men's overall authority, which confers many rights and privileges to men as a group. Flood explains, 'While it is valuable that some men wish to see themselves as free of sexism, it's not quite accurate. In a sexist society, all of us are sexist to some degree. All men learn sexist thoughts and behaviours, all of us receive patriarchal privileges whether we want to or not, and all of us are complicit to some degree in sexism'.⁵⁴¹

Further to this, scholars emphasise a broader definition of violence. Salter defines male violence as ‘an entire complex of norms, values and practices with deep connections to the social, political and economic order’.⁵⁴² This includes direct forms of violence, but also describes those forms of violence we tend to justify and excuse, such as state violence and unsanctioned violence in sports. Further, it emphasises that there is an entire continuum between violence and the structures, norms and practices of masculinity that can contribute to men’s violence against women. Applying this broader continuum, it is much easier to see how the majority of men are complicit. All of these forms of violence are directly linked to a culture of masculinity that the majority of men engage in and support.

There is often a tendency to attribute violence to particular men or particular communities of men. Flood describes this pattern: ‘Violence is a problem of other men, men not like me. But once we realise that violence and abuse can take various forms, it’s not so simple.’⁵⁴³ Thus, there is a need to bring masculinity into the frame, and emphasise the ways in which it works as an overall system and culture that encourages a range of violence, from physical and sexual to more controlling and coercive practices in which many men are implicated. Seymour explains that prevention efforts often rely on strategies that seek to reassure men that most men are not violent, and that the problem of violence against women is a problem caused by a few bad men.⁵⁴⁴ However, this ignores that the majority of men are implicated in the problem and are complicit because the problem is driven by gender inequality and dominant forms of masculinity. Eastal et al. explain that by focusing on the violent man as a social outsider, these strategies end up creating ‘the impression that violence against women is a rare action by a deviant individual, rather than a widespread social problem’.⁵⁴⁵

5.2.3 Complicity, privilege and prevention work

Further to this, scholars emphasise that not doing violence is very different to actively opposing it.⁵⁴⁶ A large number of men are not violent, but these same men remain silent and do not challenge violence-supportive attitudes, environments and situations. Nor do they actively challenge the dominant forms of masculinity or other power structures.⁵⁴⁷ This becomes clearly apparent if we consider that men hold positions of power within many of our social structures and, therefore, hold great power to effectively address the problem of violence against women. Pease writes:

There are wider issues of men’s complicity with violence against women that go beyond the violence prevention movement. Men, as policy makers and law makers within the state, as health and welfare professionals, as judges and police, as employers and CEOs of companies, all may make decisions that are not accountable to women and that minimise, overlook or ignore men’s violence against women.⁵⁴⁸

The scholarship outlines a number of factors for why men who do not engage in sexist, violent behaviours may also not engage in actively challenging these practices. As already noted, many men do not feel implicated. A review of the Twitter response to the Me Too movement found that many of the male respondents felt they were wrongly implicated, and that violence and harassment is a problem caused by only a small group of men.⁵⁴⁹ In his most recent book, Flood outlines a body of research in the US and Australia that suggests many men perpetuate and adhere to an ‘us and them’ discourse, in which there are bad men who engage in violent, sexist behaviours, and there are good men who do not.⁵⁵⁰ Flood argues that this deflects attention away from a collective responsibility that all men have to address this problem. Further, it suggests that men aren’t complicit in a system that drives this violence. Godenzi et al. write that ‘abuse is a by-product of men’s attempt to maintain a social bond with a conventional or traditional social order marked by gender inequality’.⁵⁵¹

Furthermore, encouraging these men to dismantle a system that rewards and benefits them, poses a huge challenge. Male privilege (like other forms of privilege) tends to be invisible to those who hold it. It is also obscured by other ideas that are taken for granted, such as ‘natural superiority’ or merit. Thus, men who occupy a position of power often do not see it in this way. Kimmel writes that ‘men have virtually all the power and yet do not feel powerful’.⁵⁵² Scholars have pointed to a

number of reasons for this. One such reason is that masculinity is inherently fragile; it is an ideal. This means that many men struggle to embody masculinity some or all of the time, leaving them feeling inadequate or powerless even if they do hold positions of power and influence.⁵⁵³ Further, men demonstrate their manhood in relation to other men rather than women.⁵⁵⁴ This means men compare themselves to other men, and understand their privilege in relation to other men. This explains why many men do not feel powerful, because they can always find another man who holds more power. Men locate themselves in relation to other men, not women.

In fact, women often become the currency that men use to prove their worth and status to other men, by objectifying women and treating them as lesser.⁵⁵⁵ The general patterns of male bonding and men's relationships often maintain a culture of masculinity that allows men's sexism and violence against women to flourish.⁵⁵⁶ Male peer relationships are also a key factor in men's general reluctance to actively challenge violence against women. A study in New Zealand found that mateship was commonly associated with displaying loyalty to other men, and this was found to be a key factor that prevented men from talking about and challenging the problem of domestic violence more generally.⁵⁵⁷

It is likely that men who experience the most privilege and who have greater access to power are more able to transform their lives. Therefore, they have more agency to be able to engage in efforts to prevent violence against women. An analysis of the White Ribbon ambassador program found that it is overwhelmingly privileged and socio-economically advantaged men who engage in the ambassador and ally programs to help prevent violence against women.⁵⁵⁸ Salter argues that prevention efforts should aim to engage men who hold more privilege and power because these men have greater capacity and resources to engage in prevention work.⁵⁵⁹

This same type of agency may not be available to men who hold less power and who experience disadvantage.⁵⁶⁰ As noted earlier, some research suggests that privilege can dictate whether men practice or refrain from violent behaviours. Men who face marginalisation based on their race, class or sexuality, and are therefore excluded from the dominant male power structures, may feel 'under threat' more frequently and resort to the most available resources (for instance, sexism and violence) to validate their masculinity, exert some sense of power and earn respect. Jansson writes:

In a society that offers high possibilities for men doing masculinity with conventional means, men with high access to economic, social and cultural resources of doing masculinity will naturally strive to distance themselves from violence against women as part of their masculinity construction. In a society that offers low possibilities for men doing masculinity with conventional means and where men have low access to economic, social and cultural resources, violence against women presents one of the few ways for men to reinforce their masculinity.⁵⁶¹

While this suggests that men with greater privilege are more able to exhibit egalitarian and less sexist values, it doesn't necessarily mean that they do. The NCAS report reveals that those experiencing forms of disadvantage are more likely to have lower support for gender equality and higher attitudinal support for violence against women.⁵⁶² However, other demographic groups who also held these levels of support included men as a group, people in male-dominated occupations and people with mainly male friends. Thus, differences in attitudes between men with privilege and men who experience disadvantage are unclear and inconclusive.

Moreover, when men do make efforts to be non-sexist and respectful of women, they remain complicit in maintaining a system that is sexist and hierarchical. Flood writes:

Our task is not to be non-sexist, as this is impossible, but to be anti-sexist. Yes, we can rid ourselves of particular sexist assumptions and stop certain behaviours, but in a sexist culture we can never be entirely free of sexism, because as men, we will still receive patriarchal privileges. For example, our voices and beliefs will usually be given more authority, we will be assumed often to be more competent and promotable workers than women, and we will experience levels of physical and sexual freedom denied to many women.⁵⁶³

Encouragingly, the literature shows that there are increasing efforts to address this complicity, with a particular focus on bystander strategies that aim to engage men to intervene in effective ways.⁵⁶⁴

It is important to ensure that men's efforts to challenge sexism and other related problems are effective. There is some research to suggest that even when men appear actively committed to egalitarian values and to anti-sexism and anti-homophobia, this attitude is at times largely symbolic rather than substantial. Studies have found that men who espouse egalitarian beliefs regarding gender and sexuality may harbour deeper emasculation narratives that more implicitly call for the subordination of women and some men.⁵⁶⁵ In other words, men often have unspoken, even unconscious understandings of acceptable male behaviour that align with dominant expectations. This both obscures and maintains the traditional hierarchies and power structures of gender. The *APA handbook on men and masculinities* refers to 'covert sexism', where men might exhibit a 'condemnation of sexism while also supporting sexist institutional policies and other less obvious ways of maintaining male power'.⁵⁶⁶ Similarly, Flood and Ertel review a range of studies on men's pro-feminist efforts and advocacy, concluding that men can and do engage in effective practice but that often men's advocacy can be 'weak, ambivalent, or even destructive'.⁵⁶⁷ As the authors suggest, the extent of men's advocacy and efforts to challenge sexism and gender inequality, is often limited by their ongoing complicity in these systems. Breaking away from this complicity remains a huge challenge for many men.

Similarly, there is some concern that the increasing emergence of 'feminist' men in the media and other public discourse is often tokenistic. In his analysis of representations of the male celebrity feminist, Feasey draws attention to the media portrayals of these celebrities and asks whether they should be seen to be 'genuinely committed to social and sexual change or should be challenged for feminist-inspired musings that stop short of campaigning'.⁵⁶⁸ Pease suggests that men's motives for adopting feminist identities and engaging in feminist issues, should always be scrutinised. He explains that there are 'attitudes and actions by men which appear to be egalitarian but which actually reproduce men's privilege as "enlightened sexism"'. This, he argues, risks prioritising the 'reshaping of men's identities at the expense of challenging gender inequality and other forms of oppression'.⁵⁶⁹

Efforts by men to challenge violence against women and call out other men can also inadvertently consolidate and reinforce dominant norms of masculinity. A study that measured the motivations of men who had intervened when witnessing sexist behaviour, found that these motivations were sometimes driven by a masculine protection ideology.⁵⁷⁰ Intervening meant these men could feel good about protecting women, especially those close to them. While bystander interventions that challenge sexist behaviours should be encouraged, we need to notice when these interventions also reinforce that which needs to be challenged — a dominant system and culture of masculinity that helps to drive gender inequality. Patriarchal attitudes are deeply embedded and internalised, and therefore difficult to shed, even in attempts to address inequalities and violence against women. This suggests the importance of considering and clarifying the motivations of men who engage in anti-violence work.⁵⁷¹ The question of how men can be effective allies is an important one, and there is some new work that seeks to further develop this dialogue.⁵⁷² This is discussed in Section 5.4.

5.2.4 Women and complicity

The research highlights that women too can be complicit in maintaining dominant forms of masculinity and, inadvertently, maintaining a system that privileges men over women. bell hooks writes, 'we need to highlight the role women play in perpetuating and sustaining patriarchal culture so that we will recognize patriarchy as a system women and men support equally, even if men receive more rewards from that system'.⁵⁷³ The research suggests this complicity can manifest in different ways. Women may be invested in dominant norms of masculinity and support particular practices of men.⁵⁷⁴ A study of university students in Turkey found that many women preferred and were attracted to men who exhibit power (even violence). These men were seen as more likely to be able to protect the woman (and her family) than men who were more sensitive and less traditional.⁵⁷⁵ Similarly, an evidence report found that women also condone norms that encourage men to be

violent, especially violence in its more coercive forms within intimate relationships.⁵⁷⁶ Moreover, women might join men in chastising, stigmatising and humiliating men who adopt gender-equitable roles or who deviate from traditional norms of masculinity.⁵⁷⁷

Thus, women also contribute to maintaining dominant forms of masculinity, despite the fact these norms and practices grant men power and dominance over women. However, it should be noted that some women may benefit from men's power, and benefit from a system that marginalises others according to race, sexuality, ability, socio-economic standing and so forth. Thus, prevention efforts should aim to work with women as well as men in order to, as Jewkes et al. state, 'empower women not just economically but socially and individually and to raise their consciousness, enabling critical reflection on women's own role in male gender socialisation and the maintenance of gender power hierarchies'.⁵⁷⁸

5.3 What about men?

Like women, men experience violence and other negative impacts on their lives due to rigid gender norms and systems and structures of inequality. In fact, men are more likely than women to experience physical violence both in their lifetime and within the past year.⁵⁷⁹ This presents a challenge for those working in prevention. Efforts must consider how to address and frame the impacts on men, without distracting from the evidence that shows first, that women experience much greater impacts from violence and gender inequality than men, and second, that men are largely the perpetrators of all forms of violence and often benefit from a system that privileges them over women. Effective framing of this issue helps to answer questions such as: Why do prevention efforts focus only on women's experiences of gender inequality and violence? Why aren't the high rates of male suicide and depression a priority? Doesn't the focus on masculinity blame and demonise men when men suffer too? A significant body of research addresses these questions. Interestingly, the negative impacts on men are shown to be a result of the same dominant norms and practices of masculinity and structures of power that privilege men over women, and some men more than others.

5.3.1 Negative health impacts on men

Many men experience negative impacts to their health and wellbeing as a result of gender inequality. In Australia and other Western countries, a well-established body of theoretical and empirical research links negative health outcomes for men — such as depression and high rates of suicide — to dominant patterns of masculinity and rigid gender roles.⁵⁸⁰ Although some health problems for (cis) men are due to physiological and biological reasons (for example, prostate cancer) and are unavoidable, poor health outcomes due to sociological factors are preventable and can be addressed.⁵⁸¹ In particular, the literature shows that men who subscribe and adhere to dominant norms of masculinity are subject to significant health risks and often experience poor health outcomes.⁵⁸²

For example, the data consistently shows that men have much higher rates of completed suicide than women. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, suicide is the leading cause of death in males aged 15 to 45 years, and suicide rates are three times higher than those of women.⁵⁸³ These margins are consistent in other countries of similar wealth. In low and middle income countries, the ratio of completed suicide between men and women is lower at 1.5 men to 1 woman.⁵⁸⁴ A number of key studies show a range of factors drive these higher rates of suicide for men. Men choose more lethal methods than women, are more likely to engage in harmful use of alcohol and other substances, develop poorer help-seeking behaviours, have difficulties identifying and dealing with emotional distress, and have fewer coping mechanisms and/or established social networks.⁵⁸⁵ A study of young Irish men who had attempted suicide found these men had problems disclosing their emotional distress and often turned to alcohol and other substances to cope, which was clearly linked to the ways they constructed their masculinity to align with dominant expectations.⁵⁸⁶ Indeed, much of the sociological and clinical research has found that these patterns of behaviour are directly linked to dominant patterns of masculinity.

Similarly, many studies have found negative mental-health outcomes for men are underpinned by dominant norms of masculinity.⁵⁸⁷ In particular, they stem from the expectation that men remain stoic and repress their emotions. Some studies found that some norms more than others, have greater influence on negative mental health-related outcomes for men. Self-reliance is one example.⁵⁸⁸ This confirms other research that finds men often have problems identifying, disclosing and seeking help for symptoms of anguish and depression, resulting in prolonged emotional distress and pain, and/or higher rates of suicidal ideation.⁵⁸⁹

Research has shown that men may use alcohol and other substance abuse as a mechanism to cope with the expectations and pressures of masculinity, and/or to cope with mental health-related problems. Men might turn to alcohol and other substances, or engage in other risk-taking behaviours, rather than seek help from services or other individuals. This is also underpinned by social norms about masculinity, such as stoicism, independence and self-reliance.⁵⁹⁰ A culture of drinking is also encouraged and embedded in spaces that are male dominated, such as sport, and can interact in problematic ways with pressures to embody dominant forms of masculinity, and aggressive or competitive peer relations between men.

Overall, the clinical literature consistently demonstrates that negative impacts experienced by men — depression and anxiety, higher rates of completed suicide, risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse — can be directly linked to dominant forms of masculinity. Significantly, in January 2019 the APA, the peak body for psychological research and practice in the US, introduced its first ever guidelines for psychological practice with boys and men.⁵⁹¹ The guidelines draw on more than 40 years of studies and research to show that dominant/traditional forms of masculinity help produce negative psychological outcomes for boys and men. It explains that boys and men who are socialised according to dominant norms regulate their emotions in harmful ways and develop poor help-seeking behaviours. Thus, they are less likely to engage in positive behaviours, form meaningful relationships or lead healthy lives. Studies in Australia show similar findings. In response to the APA guidelines, the Australian Psychological Society has indicated its intention to develop similar guidelines for men and boys in an Australian context.⁵⁹²

Further to this, a number of recent studies suggest that men who are most attached to, and who strongly adhere to, dominant forms of masculinity may experience increased negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.⁵⁹³ In 2017 the Man Box study conducted by Promundo, classified the degree to which men aged between 18 and 30 in the US, UK and Mexico adhered to dominant norms of masculinity (that is, whether they fitted into the Man Box).⁵⁹⁴ This was measured according to men's adherence to a set of 7 'pillars' or norms: self-sufficiency, acting tough, physical attractiveness, rigid masculine gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control. The study found that those who adhered most closely to these dominant norms of masculinity reported significantly higher incidence of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. The 2018 Man Box study, replicated in Australia, also found that men who endorse these pillars or rules, report greater negative effects on mental health, higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse, higher likelihood of being involved in car accidents, and increased incidents of violence and bullying than other men.⁵⁹⁵ Another recent study found that for men who strongly subscribe to dominant forms of masculinity, the stress associated with the threat of losing one's masculine status could itself result in adverse physiological effects and greater health risks.⁵⁹⁶

Thus, the research suggests that men's attachment to particular, dominant norms of masculinity produces negative health and social outcomes. These particular norms include those that many men feel compelled to attain and embody, such as risk-taking, rigid emotion regulation, independence and self-reliance, aggression and toughness, dominance, power over women and homophobia. This suggests that strategies that focus on encouraging and supporting men to question and challenge these dominant norms and behaviours may be particularly beneficial in reducing negative health and social outcomes for men.

There is some research to suggest that conformity to norms of masculinity can also deliver some benefits to men. In particular, men who adhere to masculine norms are more likely to be accepted by their peers and to receive other financial and social rewards.⁵⁹⁷ One study found a positive correlation between conformity to masculine ideology and better health outcomes. Men who endorse traditional forms of masculinity and are able to meet these standards, often feel positive effects on their self-esteem, resulting in better mental health.⁵⁹⁸ The Man Box studies, conducted in Australia and internationally, measured life satisfaction for young men who were in the Man Box (conforming to dominant norms) and those considered to be outside the Man Box. In Australia, there was no difference in reported life satisfaction. However, in the US and UK, those men in the Man Box reported much higher life satisfaction than those outside.⁵⁹⁹ The report suggests that this result is complex. It found that young men who conform to dominant norms often experience some reward for meeting these social expectations, but overall these expectations exact a high cost, particularly in relation to mental health and other negative social outcomes.⁶⁰⁰

Similarly, the APA handbook highlights evidence of both negatives and positive outcomes for men who conform to dominant standards of masculinity. Men who conform to these norms have been associated with risk-taking behaviours and emotional dysfunction. However, this conformity might also mean these men exhibit higher levels of personal courage, endurance and autonomy, which has positive effects on their wellbeing.⁶⁰¹ Again, these correlations are complex and can vary depending on who is conforming, and in which context. Although the research indicates there are some benefits for men who conform to dominant norms of masculinity, it should be noted that these benefits are received at the expense of women (and some other men). Dominant norms of masculinity are central to maintaining a gender-unequal system that drives many different forms of violence and harm experienced by women.

5.3.2 Men are also victims of violence

Men's violence harms women and it also harms other men. The data shows the majority of victims of violence (whether male or female) report the perpetrator as male,⁶⁰² and men are more likely than women to perpetrate (and experience) violence that results in serious injury or death.⁶⁰³ The most recent crime statistics from the Australian Institute of Criminology show that 64% of homicide victims in Australia are male, and that men commit homicide at six times the rate of women.⁶⁰⁴

It has been well established that violence is a gendered problem. The majority of violence is perpetrated by men, against both women and other men. In the prevention of violence against women sector, there is a necessary focus on men's violence against women. However, scholars also speak of a 'triad of violence', which refers to men's violence against women, against other men, and against themselves (see Figure 3).⁶⁰⁵ Research shows this triad of violence is directly linked to dominant patterns and norms of masculinity, such as aggression, dominance and competitiveness, which men are encouraged and expected to embody.⁶⁰⁶ As noted in the APA handbook, physical aggression is 'a gendered behaviour embedded in the social meanings of masculinities across many cultures'.⁶⁰⁷ These aspects of dominant masculinity help to drive men's violence and lead to significant harm for both women and men.

Figure 3: Triad of men's violence



Source: Kaufman, M (1987) *The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence*, in Kaufman, M (Ed), *Beyond patriarchy: essays by men on pleasure, power and change*, Toronto: Oxford University Press

5.3.3 Men who experience disproportionate negative impacts

Research shows that men who experience marginalisation based on other aspects of their identity (such as race, class, sexuality or disability) experience higher rates of violence (overwhelmingly by other men), suicide and other health-related problems than men who do not experience such marginalisation and discrimination.⁶⁰⁸ This is often underpinned by structural inequalities, such as racism, classism and homophobia. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in Australia have a much lower life expectancy and experience poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous men (see <https://www.caac.org.au/aboriginal-health>). This can be linked largely to structural inequalities and ongoing impacts of colonisation. Men who are gay, bisexual or trans have higher rates of suicide and poorer mental health than heterosexual cisgender men, and they experience higher rates of violence and bullying by other men.⁶⁰⁹ Queer men who experience multiple forms of oppression — for example Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men who identify as LGBTIQ, or LGBTIQ people with disability — face even higher risks of experiencing violence and poorer mental health outcomes.⁶¹⁰ Studies also show that men of lower socio-economic background experience poorer health and social outcomes than men of higher socio-economic status. Men with higher levels of wealth and education have a greater capacity to prevent poor health, through greater access to, and knowledge of, health services and health care, and other forms of social and emotional capital.⁶¹¹

However, research shows that these structural inequalities also intersect with gender and rigid cultural norms around masculinity. For example, the higher levels of violence and bullying experienced by men who are gay, bisexual or trans, are often associated with dominant forms of masculinity that promote heterosexuality and essentialist notions of gender, and which encourage homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.⁶¹² Furthermore, the new *APA guidelines for psychological practice with boys and men* suggest that different social identities contribute to how men experience and perform their masculinities, which in turn impacts their social relationships and health outcomes.⁶¹³ A large body of work suggests men who experience discrimination and disadvantage may form stronger attachments to dominant forms of masculinity and therefore experience increased negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.⁶¹⁴ As noted in previous sections, men who feel they are lacking power may seek to reclaim power through demonstrating characteristics associated

with dominant norms and behaviours of masculinity. Yet, in the pursuit of gaining greater power in this way, men can hurt themselves and others, as these kinds of characteristics produce poorer health outcomes for men and also drive higher levels of violence against women and other men. This suggests there is a need to challenge the structural inequalities and discriminations — such as racism, homophobia and socio-economic disparities — that marginalise particular groups of men, as well as challenging dominant forms of masculinity.

Men living in rural communities experience specific impacts on their health and wellbeing. The expectations that these men be physically tough, self-reliant and courageous has been well documented.⁶¹⁵ This research highlights how adhering to these norms increases the risk of alcohol abuse, violent behaviour, depression and poor help-seeking behaviours. There is other research that examines the impacts on men in rural communities when dominant models of masculinity intersect with broader socio-economic shifts. In their examination of men in mining and farming communities in rural Australia, Carrington et al. examine the shifting socio-economic patterns in these communities, and how these shifts usher in a rise or decline of a visible public masculinity, resulting in different patterns of violence and health outcomes.⁶¹⁶ In mining communities experiencing a boom, an increase in the population of men in these communities and the expansion of men's social networks resulted in more visible, public forms of violence and alcohol-fuelled behaviours. Conversely, in farming communities experiencing a decline in population, the increasing isolation experienced by men coupled with expectations on these men to be stoic and self-reliant led to an internalisation of violence, resulting in higher levels of self-harm and suicide, and higher levels of violence that remained out of view, in particular, domestic violence. Thus, different expectations of masculinity came into play for each of these communities according to wider socio-economic forces. The globalisation of the resources sector brought an influx of men into mining communities, whereas the increasingly technological nature of agriculture meant a declining population in which farmers experienced greater isolation from other men. This study shows that rural communities are not a universal entity that exists in opposition to what we define as 'urban'. Rather, the study illustrates the diversity of various localised communities that we consider to be rural. Further, it underlines how dominant forms of masculinity come into play in different ways to produce different impacts on these communities, according to their intersection with other socio-economic forces.

In summary, the research shows that negative impacts on men's lives are often underpinned by a range of different structural inequalities, including the rigid gender norms and roles that all men are expected to conform to. While the gendered structures and norms in society mean men generally benefit over women economically, politically and socially, groups of men who are negatively impacted by other systems and structures of discrimination suffer disproportionate negative impacts of dominant masculinity compared to more privileged men.

5.3.4 Addressing gender inequality has benefits for everyone

Understanding the links between dominant forms of masculinity and violence against women is the focus of this review. At the same time, however, scholars have acknowledged the pressures imposed on men to engage with these constructs. Patriarchy imprisons men as well as women, although this manifests differently and unevenly, with women overall experiencing greater impacts and fewer benefits. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu cleverly notes how men are 'dominated by their domination'.⁶¹⁷ Men are subjected to the demands and ideologies of masculinity, and it is the enactment of these that produces such devastating effects. It is unsurprising, then, that the dominant norms and practices of masculinity that underpin and help drive men's violence against women also produce negative physical, emotional and social outcomes for men themselves. Both of these problems are driven, at least in part, by dominant norms of masculinity and rigid gender roles.

This suggests that particular social and public health problems can be improved by efforts to challenge dominant and rigid forms of masculinity. The same norms and practices of masculinity that harm women (and gender diverse people) also harm men. Gender transformative work that challenges dominant forms of masculinity has the potential to benefit everyone. There is increasing evidence that efforts to engage men to challenge and question gender norms have greater positive

impacts on both men's wellbeing and for addressing men's violence against women.⁶¹⁸ Problems experienced by men stem from the same source of gender inequality, of which dominant forms and patterns of masculinity, are central.

Challenging dominant forms of, or ideas about, masculinity is not about seeking to blame individual men. Rather, this work acknowledges that many men feel pressured to live up to dominant expectations about what it means to 'be a man', and that this can have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing. Challenging the dominant social structures, norms and practices that currently define masculinity can deliver benefits for men as well as women and gender diverse people.

5.4 Accountability to women

5.4.1 Maintaining accountability to women

Gender inequality is systemic. It is embedded in our structures, norms and practices. Men as a group hold power and privilege over women as a group. Therefore, it is necessary to contemplate the way in which we do work that focuses on men and masculinities in order to avoid reinforcing and maintaining this inequality. As has been outlined, this continues to be a key challenge. Above all, however, prevention efforts must incorporate strategies that maintain accountability to women. *Change the story* highlights the fact that while engaging men and boys in prevention efforts has become increasingly crucial for realising change, 'women's and girls' empowerment must remain central to prevention activity'.⁶¹⁹ This means prevention efforts should take all precaution to avoid worsening the problem of inequality and increasing the associated risks to women and girls.⁶²⁰ Further, it means that women and girls should be kept in the frame.

In practice, however, these principles are not always clear or easily applied. Research highlights that efforts to engage men and boys can end up de-gendering and de-politicising this work. As noted earlier, strategies often rely on dichotomies of good versus bad men, which places an emphasis on some men as the problem rather than acknowledging the broader cultural and structural forces at work. Strategies may also employ gender-reinforcing techniques that fail to challenge the overarching gender system, which marginalises women and privileges men.⁶²¹

Similarly, some prevention efforts risk side lining and marginalising women's voices. Research shows that men who are actively involved in prevention efforts often receive far more praise and experience less backlash than women doing this work. In other words, male privilege persists, even in feminist spaces and in work that largely involves women. Scholars have described this as the 'pedestal effect', where men receive elevated status and power for their efforts in prevention work, and receive excessive gratitude and recognition for doing the same work that women have always done.⁶²² This might even mean that they advance more quickly to leadership positions in organisations and spaces that do feminist work.⁶²³

In his study of the 'Walk a mile in her shoes' protest marches against men's violence, Tristan Bridges found that the male protesters received considerable praise just for attending. In one speech the female organiser stated: 'you all are so brave for doing this. We cannot thank you enough'.⁶²⁴ Similarly, a study on male celebrity feminists found that male celebrities received praise purely for identifying as feminists, even if this did not appear to be backed up by a genuine commitment to social change.⁶²⁵ The study also found that feminism as a symbolic gesture might even increase men's privilege and status, and benefit their careers. Taking this further, the adoption of feminist identities in a symbolic manner by high-profile public figures may inadvertently indicate that contemporary masculinity has successfully disrupted traditional forms, and that we have reached gender equality, which is not the case. In this way, taking on a feminist identity in merely a symbolic way might actually impede efforts to challenge gender inequality.

5.4.2 The 'men will benefit' approach

Prevention efforts increasingly highlight how men will benefit from a gender-equal system, and utilise this as a strategy to motivate men to engage with prevention. Work that aims to maintain a

focus on women while also creating strategies that appeal to men should be approached carefully. Prevention work with men must remain relevant to women and women's organisations that address violence against women. Flood explains that we need to be careful not to focus too much on men, while at the same time recognising that 'men will benefit' strategies do appeal to men, and that men's support is sorely needed.⁶²⁶ These strategies can produce positive outcomes that do challenge violence against women. For example, a number of studies indicate that some men who confront or intervene in sexist behaviours are motivated by the benefits they receive, such as a consolidation of their masculinity or being seen as one of the 'good' men.⁶²⁷ These actions may reinforce these men's masculinities, but they also challenge and disrupt the sexism and violence that is occurring.

Thus, the 'men will benefit' approach can offer an avenue for engaging men and boys to challenge gender inequality and violence, even as we continue to highlight how men benefit from gender inequality and the current power structures.⁶²⁸ As discussed in Section 5.3, research shows that dominant forms of masculinity, gender inequality and other structural inequalities, harm both men and women, in different and similar ways. This suggests that a focus on the benefits to both men and women do not need to be mutually exclusive. However, we must ensure that women do not fall out of the frame. A gender unequal system impacts both men and women, but it is nevertheless men who receive the majority of the benefits and women who are most negatively impacted.

5.4.3 Allyship and accountability

The work of engaging men and boys needs to be executed carefully to ensure these men (and all men) remain accountable to women. There are a number of challenges associated with men's allyship. A national US survey found that men often overstate their allyship with women and believe they are already doing enough to address sexism and violence.⁶²⁹ Men's allyship might manifest in ways that are sexist and problematic, which increases the labour for women who must address sexism and harmful masculinity both inside and outside the movement.⁶³⁰ In one study, activists frequently highlight the domineering behaviours of men within women's organisations, and the various ways in which male privilege manifests.⁶³¹ Further, men are often more motivated to become allies when they can lead the work or when the work is tailored to them.⁶³² These various challenges posed by men's allyship need to be managed in prevention work.

Some prevention work has addressed these challenges by developing and incorporating accountability standards and mechanisms into their programs.⁶³³ These standards outline how men can be good allies by:

- working in consultation with women and women's organisations
- listening to women
- advocating for women's leadership
- acknowledging and reflecting on male privilege, and learning to live with this discomfort
- holding other men accountable and leading by example

Moreover, there are particular ways in which accountability might be implemented at the organisational level. Kris Macomber provides some useful recommendations:

- Provide training to male allies before they take on public and leadership roles.
- Cap men's speaking fees.
- Link men's organisations to women's organisations and groups.
- Institutionalise a process to address issues of privilege internally.
- Reconceptualise accountability to include an emphasis on building gender equality.⁶³⁴

Taken together, the research and recommendations suggest prevention efforts that engage men should be grounded in feminist principles and work in collaboration with women, to ensure they maintain an accountability to women above all.

5.5 Backlash and resistance

5.5.1 Recognising backlash and resistance

Many men are complicit in maintaining a gender-unequal system that leads to men's violence against women. This is true even for men who hold egalitarian values. However, some men actively resist and push back against efforts to realise greater equality and prevent violence against women. This is not a new phenomenon. There is a long history of men's organised opposition to feminist efforts to realise greater gender equality.⁶³⁵

Today, this backlash appears in many different forms, from formal and strategic backlash to other less formal types. Men's rights activists (MRAs) are at the most extreme end of the spectrum of resistance and backlash. These groups have grown in number over the past decade, helped by the popularity of the internet. They commonly seek to actively undermine feminist efforts and even accuse feminism of being guilty of sexism and of creating a world where men are oppressed.⁶³⁶ In its analysis of 12 prominent MRA websites, one study found that these groups tend to emphasise a crisis of masculinity in which they view men as now subordinated within the dominant social structures.⁶³⁷ In this regard, men's rights groups have taken aim at a number of feminist concerns, including the rights of father's and sexual violence.

A significant number of organisations and groups have emerged in response to what they believe to be unfair changes to family law — and specifically laws regarding child custody, support payments and family violence. One extensive study of father's rights groups in the US found a particular rhetoric was employed that aimed to shift the focus from intimate partner violence and victim safety, to an emphasis on false accusations and the problem of fathers being alienated from their families.⁶³⁸ Pease notes that father's rights groups in Australia were successful in influencing law reform under a conservative Howard government.⁶³⁹ This reflects some of the influence and power that these groups have been able to exert.

MRAs have also attempted to shift the discourses on sexual violence. These groups posit sexual violence as being a gender-neutral problem. Men are seen to be unfairly accused, and feminism is seen to have produced a widespread moral panic over a rape culture the MRAs believe does not exist.⁶⁴⁰ All of these discourses have a common theme: feminism is seen as a movement that victimises men and boys. Scholars note that in response to feminist works, these groups have clung to a new terminology to describe this work, including 'misandry' and 'feminazi'.⁶⁴¹ Importantly, their activism extends beyond semantics. Caldwell et al. note that many of these groups have made strong calls for reform in legislation and policy that addresses intimate partner violence.⁶⁴² In addition, the ideologies that MRAs adhere to often align with those of formal institutions, including right-wing governments and conservative religious organisations. This suggests that prevention efforts must continue to address social structures as a way to counter formalised anti-feminist attempts by men's groups.

Backlash might also manifest in less formal ways, which are more accurately described as resistance. Studies show that some men deny that inequality exists between men and women, or even deny that violence is a gendered problem.⁶⁴³ Or, where men do recognise the negative impacts of gender, they may call for a greater focus on men's problems and the impacts men experience to their health and wellbeing as a result of the pressures and expectations of masculinity.⁶⁴⁴ Further, men's resistance to prevention efforts is reflected in the belief that only some men are the problem and that the majority of men are not violent. In a study analysing the Twitter responses to #HowIWillChange, many men refused to identify with the hashtag because they felt they had been unfairly targeted by #MeToo.⁶⁴⁵ Many of these men aligned themselves more to the #NotAllMen discourse, believing violence to be the problem of only a few men rather than men as a group. Other studies found that men believe responses to sexual harassment have become too 'politically correct' and that feminism has gone too far.⁶⁴⁶ All of these examples illustrate the range of ways in which men may display resistance to prevention work.

5.5.2 Understanding backlash and resistance

The research indicates men experience a range of emotions in relation to efforts to address gender inequality and violence against women. Flood notes that resistance often represents a defence of privilege, but it can also represent the fears and anxieties men feel when there is change or uncertainty, particularly in relation to their social identity and social practices.⁶⁴⁷ As noted in Section 3.2.2, a significant body of work demonstrates how men resist when they feel their manhood and masculinity being threatened or when the traditional gender order is troubled. These men are more likely to deny that women experience discrimination under the current gender system, and less likely to be willing to challenge this. Men actively support and protect gender inequality because it suits them and their social identity.⁶⁴⁸ Efforts to prevent violence against women may be viewed by these men as anti-male or as a collective attack on men.⁶⁴⁹ This may result in emotional responses of discomfort, or even anger and outrage.

Further to this, men might believe that greater gains for women equates to a loss of power and privilege for men. One study found that many men (and women) see the achievement of gender equality as a win-lose result, where gains for women automatically mean losses for men.⁶⁵⁰ Men's fears that they will lose their political, economic and social power can inhibit their engagement in gender equality efforts. Yet, as Pease explains, many men are unable to see that such interventions are simply 'correctives to institutionalised privilege'.⁶⁵¹

Some of this helps explain why prevention efforts are met with increased aggression, violence or sexism. Hearn notes that men's violence is a common way to reaffirm or reclaim masculinity and the power associated with it, even if this threat is perceived rather than real.⁶⁵² A range of studies have found that when masculinity is challenged, men often resort to physical aggression, increased harassment and sexism as ways to restore their manhood and status.⁶⁵³ This is particularly so for men who hold attitudes that are more sexist or hostile towards women.⁶⁵⁴ In Sweden, escalated rates of sexual violence against women have often followed the establishment of formal equality in the law.⁶⁵⁵ This is what has been called the 'boomerang effect', where interventions and efforts to prevent violence against women sparks increased violence and aggression.⁶⁵⁶ Similarly, studies show there are higher rates of violence in societies and settings undergoing rapid economic change, or where the traditional gender patterns and norms are disrupted.⁶⁵⁷

5.5.3 Responding to backlash and resistance

Funk explains that we will never successfully engage all men in prevention work. He suggests that focusing on the goal of engaging all men can distract from more attainable outcomes and requires us to expend resources on men who are completely resistant to change.⁶⁵⁸ His 'continuum of male engagement' (see page 73) demonstrates men's varying relationship to prevention work and efforts to realise gender equality. Men vary in their willingness and/or ability to become involved. Thus, we need different strategies to engage men at the different levels. He suggests we should focus our efforts on the many men who are willing or capable of being engaged.

Nevertheless, prevention efforts should involve strategies to respond to and address overt forms of backlash. Efforts to create a gender-equitable world require huge amounts of change. Therefore, we should expect backlash to emerge within this process.⁶⁵⁹ In fact, such backlash demonstrates that we are doing effective work, since change is often difficult and uncomfortable. However, engaging men who are not yet engaged, and responding to men who are actively opposed, require very different strategies. In his book, Flood outlines a range of suggestions for how to respond to men's anti-equality and anti-feminist backlash. These include:

- offer alternative analyses of the issues these men focus on (for example, sexual violence)
- respond to the issues that men believe are harmful to them
- offer alternative male voices to show that many men think differently to how these men do
- critique and discredit the evidence put forward by these groups
- show these men that anti-feminist efforts are also harmful for men⁶⁶⁰

A recent QUT and VicHealth resource identifies a range of strategies that can help organise and frame prevention initiatives so that these initiatives engage people to understand and support them.⁶⁶¹ Recommendations include: securing support from influential stakeholders, forming strategic partnerships, developing clear and compelling narratives that explain the problem and solution, and drawing on a variety of teaching methods and strategies.

In a more gender-equal society, men will need to 'lose' the benefits and privileges they currently gain or have gained as a result of inequality and violence against women. Flood notes that while it is important to acknowledge this loss, we also need to highlight what men will gain from greater gender equality, and from a slackening of the rigid expectations and pressures of masculinity.⁶⁶² Highlighting these benefits can provide an important avenue for engaging men and securing their support. In fact, many of the negative aspects of men's lives that are identified within the agenda of men's rights activists are also taken up by feminists. Feminism acknowledges and speaks to the pain and harms that men can face. However, unlike men's rights groups, feminists point to gender inequality, structural inequalities and dominant forms of masculinity as the source of this pain. Flood writes:

We need to take up the issues about which men's rights men are vocal, offering an alternative analysis of their character and causes....a recognition of areas of men's pain and even disadvantage is compatible with a feminist understanding (that is, an understanding based on a commitment to gender equality and justice), but it may take some reworking for this compatibility to be realised.⁶⁶³

Thus, the backlash against the feminist movement and against women is grossly misguided, concerned more with discrediting and opposing feminist ideas than solving men's pain. As Flood explains, the concern for men's welfare seems 'shallow at best, dishonest at worst'.⁶⁶⁴ The reality is that while men will need to give up or share power with women to achieve a more gender-equal society, they also have much to gain from such a shift in terms of their own health and wellbeing.

The research shows that significant backlash increasingly occurs in online spaces. Online blogs, podcasts, forums and other social media platforms — what has been loosely termed the 'manosphere' — have become a hive for organised and coordinated backlash.⁶⁶⁵ Some have described this as a shift in tactics, to an increased formal backlash focused on shifting attitudes through cyber-activism rather than through more direct means.⁶⁶⁶ In general, online bullying and hate has emerged as a key issue, with the internet providing a space where non-physical forms of violence occur at a rapid rate. For young people, online disinhibition — a result of the increased anonymity and desensitisation enabled by online spaces — is found to be a key factor for perpetration of online hate.⁶⁶⁷ Furthermore, some studies show that boys are more likely than girls to be perpetrators of cyber-bullying and online hate.⁶⁶⁸ The evidence suggests that efforts to address and respond to backlash must engage with online platforms, to consider their impacts on attitudes and practices of gender, and how they may adversely impact prevention efforts and affect women.

Part 6: Future prevention activities to address masculinities and engage men

6.1 Considerations for policy makers and practitioners

Incorporate masculinities work into existing prevention efforts. Explore and plan how existing prevention work can best be informed by current research on masculinities and violence against women, and develop policies, programs and campaigns that challenge dominant forms and patterns of masculinity. This could include:

- challenging men's rigid attachment to dominant norms of masculinity
- challenging male peer relations and expressions of masculinity that normalise aggression, disrespect and hostility towards women
- promoting more positive, respectful masculinities

Engage men and boys in prevention efforts. The research suggests that well-designed programs and initiatives that effectively engage men and boys can contribute to the reduction and prevention of violence against women and reduce backlash. Policies, programs and campaigns that engage men and boys should form a significant part of the overall approach to preventing violence against women and promoting gender equality.

Implement work across all levels of society, and in key settings. Prevention efforts to address masculinities and engage men and boys should be implemented and delivered at all the different societal levels, including at the individual, community, organisational, systemic and social levels, noting that there is significant interaction between these multiple levels. In addition, prevention work should be implemented in a number of priority settings, where dominant forms of masculinity are most apparent and which provide opportunities for positively influencing men's attitudes and behaviours. Priority settings include, for example, sports settings and male-dominated workplaces, and contexts where there is potential to engage men as fathers.

Address all forms of inequality and discrimination. Acknowledge and address the structural inequalities and social disadvantage that have differential impacts on some groups of men, and the ways in which these intersect with dominant forms of masculinity to influence the patterns and dynamics of men's violence against women. This means developing policy and practice to address the impacts of colonisation and reduce racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, poverty and ageism; address the impacts of these factors on particular groups of men; and improve the lives of men experiencing these forms of discrimination and disadvantage. It also means developing gender equality and prevention initiatives that can effectively engage the full diversity of men across the Australian population.

Build the evidence base. Support and fund further research projects that develop our understanding and capacity to address dominant forms of masculinity, to help prevent violence against women, and to promote alternative forms of masculinity that are more positive and respectful. The focus on masculinities and engaging men in prevention efforts is emerging work, which means there is a need to invest in research and evidence-building, particularly in the Australian context. This includes ensuring that policies, programs and initiatives that seek to address masculinities and engage men and boys undergo rigorous and comprehensive evaluation, to ensure effective principles and guidelines are incorporated into future prevention efforts.

Build partnerships and collaborations. Collaborate and build alliances with research partners and other organisations involved in prevention work addressing masculinities and engaging men, to ensure consistency in how this work is framed and approached, and to share learnings and resources. In particular, it is important to build alliances and maintain a strong dialogue with women's movements and women's rights organisations, in order to work most effectively towards the shared goals of achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women. Further, considering the significant overlap between the prevention of violence against women, other areas of prevention and other social causes, partnerships and collaborations between allied organisations can help to facilitate greater and more sustainable social change.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

6.2.1 Dominant norms of masculinity

As this review highlights, although masculinity varies across time and place there remains a dominant set of norms (ideals) that help to maintain the current gender-unequal system, where men as a group hold power over women as a group, and that help drive violence against women. However, research also shows that particular norms are likely to play a larger role than others in driving gender inequality and violence against women. This suggests that research examining norms of masculinity and their links to violence against women should further assess which specific dimensions of masculinity (norms) might produce a higher or lower likelihood of sexist behaviour and violence against women.⁶⁶⁹ Further, we need a deeper understanding of how these norms cluster together and interact, and also a more nuanced analysis of what these norms mean to different men. Understanding these patterns and links is important because dominant norms and stereotypes are increasingly the focus of prevention work with men and boys.

6.2.2 Male peer relationships

This review found that male peer relationships are intimately linked to dominant patterns of masculinity and are an important aspect of men's lives. Research shows that men and boys often rely on sexist, homophobic and aggressive behaviours, to prove their masculinity and to gain approval from their peers. This helps to foster and maintain a particular culture of masculinity based on aggression and the objectification and harassment of women. In this way, male peer relationships are seen to be a key gendered driver of violence against women. On the other hand, male peer relations might be integral to engaging men and boys in prevention efforts since they are more likely to be influenced by their male peers and other male role models to engage in more positive, respectful masculinities. Further research will provide a deeper understanding of how male peer relations work to maintain dominant forms of masculinity and help drive violence against women, and also how they might encourage more positive outcomes for preventing violence against women. VicHealth is currently producing work to further understand how male peer relations regulate men's drinking behaviours, and the impacts of these behaviours.⁶⁷⁰ This is just one example of current research. However, further studies that examine the links between male peer relationships and men's behaviour are required, particularly in an Australian context.

6.2.3 Intersectionality

Current research highlights the need for a more comprehensive account of the ways in which masculinity intersects with other aspects of identity and with various forms of privilege as well as disadvantage and discrimination (for example, racism, poverty, homophobia and ableism), to produce particular patterns in men's perpetration of violence against women. Research suggests men who do not enjoy the general advantages and privileges that other men do might assert their power through a more rigid attachment to dominant forms of masculinity, which can lead to aggressive behaviours and violence against women. Conversely, men who are privileged may use violence and aggression to maintain the power and privilege they already hold within current systems and structures. Thus, a deeper understanding of these intersections and patterns is vital.

Further, we need a better understanding of how we should engage men who are impacted by structural discrimination and disadvantage, since existing programs and strategies are rarely community-driven or culturally sensitive, and can therefore be ineffective and alienating. To help inform future initiatives, we need more rigorous evaluation of existing programs that do attempt to engage men who experience marginalisation and disadvantage. Overall, we need to build the evidence base for a deeper understanding of how masculinity intersects with privilege and structural inequality and disadvantage, to produce different patterns of violence against women, and to find new ways to effectively apply and embed intersectionality into prevention work that engages men and masculinities.

6.2.4 Male sexuality, masculinity and violence against women

In the recent Man Box studies conducted both internationally and in Australia, hypersexuality — the idea of male sexual entitlement and the expectation that men be sexually active and proficient — is highlighted as a key pillar of masculinity. More importantly, these and other studies have found that hypersexuality is one of the strongest predictors of violent behaviour, in particular, sexual violence against women. Despite this, there has been little research that details how male sexuality and masculinity interact, and how this interaction helps drive sexual violence and harassment. Further, many programs and initiatives designed to encourage more positive and healthier masculinities do not address sexuality and male sexual attitudes and behaviours. This is despite the fact these behaviours are shown to have explicit links to dominant masculine norms and expectations, and to higher likelihood of men engaging in aggressive and violent behaviour. These behaviours might also be directed against those who don't conform to dominant (heterosexual) norms, such as gay men, as well as against women. In fact, research shows that traditional masculinity is a predictor of violence against both women and the LGBTIQ community.⁶⁷¹ Thus, we need to expand our understanding of male sexuality and how it interacts with masculinity, and how this links to sexual harassment and violence against women.

6.2.5 Across the lifespan

The intersection of age and masculinity is rarely addressed in the literature. In fact, the majority of empirical research tends to focus on boys and young men up to the age of 30. Thus, we know much less about the attitudes and behaviours of older men. The most recent NCAS notes that due to higher life expectancies, older men are more engaged in social and economic activity than ever before. This means they continue to be influential on the population as a whole, and are often seen as role models for younger generations.⁶⁷² Similarly, *Change the story* highlights the importance of working across the life course.⁶⁷³ This suggests we need to build the evidence base on masculinities and the prevention of violence against women across the lifespan, to account for the current gaps in our understanding of the problem and to assist in our prevention efforts.

6.2.6 Evaluation of programs that engage men and boys

The research suggests that well-designed programs and initiatives that effectively engage men and boys can contribute to the reduction and prevention of violence against women. While there has been an increasing effort to understand how we can effectively engage men and boys in prevention work, there is still much that we do not know. Thus, we need to keep building the evidence base for how we should engage men and boys. Many programs and initiatives have not been evaluated comprehensively, if at all. Moreover, there is a lack of up-to-date data that measures the outcomes and impacts of these programs, particularly in an Australian context. Evaluations are rarely longitudinal, which limits their ability to draw conclusions that are relevant and effective for improving these programs. Thus, it is fundamentally important that we gain a better understanding of which programs and initiatives work, and which do not, and how we can improve existing programs and/or develop others. More rigorous and extensive evaluation of these programs and initiatives will help to build the evidence base for how we should engage men and boys.

6.2.7 Gender transformative approaches

Current research suggests that employing gender transformative approaches in work addressing men and masculinities is vital. At the same time, there has been a resounding call for further clarification and development of these approaches. A number of challenges have been identified in the application of these frameworks to prevention work that focuses on men and masculinities. In particular, reaching and engaging men and boys in gender transformative ways is challenging, and depends on how equipped different groups of men are to challenge patterns of masculinity, and also on the context and setting these approaches are applied to. This means there is often great difficulty in applying a consistent gender transformative approach to policies, programs and initiatives that address masculinities and engage men and boys to help transform the gendered systems and structures underpinning gender inequality and violence against women. Further research is required to provide greater clarity and guidance for what a gender transformative approach should look like in work that engages men and addresses masculinities; what this means for prevention work; and how to apply this approach in ways that are meaningful and effective.

6.2.8 Emotion and affect

The psychological literature on men and masculinities has placed a significant focus on the shaping of men's emotional patterns by societal expectations and the impacts of this on men's health and wellbeing. However, there has been less research into how this links to men's perpetration of violence against women. This review has highlighted that men are highly emotional but that this emotion is directed in particular ways, often through anger and aggression. Furthermore, men struggle to interact with and express their intimacy and feelings for their male peers in healthy ways. Thus, further research is needed that can provide a deeper understanding and analysis of how these patterns of emotion and bonding might help drive sexist and aggressive behaviour and violence against women. Moreover, we require a more complex account of the role that emotion can play in prevention efforts that engage men, through the use of emotional levers, including empathy.

Further to this, a stronger account of affect is required — that is, the ways in which social norms and attitudes are internalised and how they then translate into behaviour and action. As noted in this review, the majority of research on masculinities and violence against women measures the attitudes held by men, and how these are shaped and informed by social norms and expectations. Less is known about how these are embodied and how they seep into the lived practices and behaviours of men. There is an explanatory gap here that needs further examination and analysis. Research shows there is often a difference between the social expectations for how men should be and men's own personal attitudes.⁶⁷⁴ However, even less is known about how these individual attitudes translate into behaviour and practice.

6.2.9 Backlash, resistance and complicity

We require a deeper understanding of what causes men to actively resist efforts to engage them in this work. Prevention efforts that push for large-scale social change are met with varying responses from men, many of which are emotional and involve anger, fear and discomfort. We need to further understand these reactions and how they compel men to actively resist prevention efforts. This means extending the research on how to effectively recognise and address men's backlash, and examining those spaces and contexts where it occurs most readily and with greater ferocity. However, it is important to acknowledge that men's patterns of resistance sit on a spectrum. There are some men who actively and aggressively oppose prevention efforts, but many more are open to being challenged and engaged. Flood writes, 'We need to know much more about how we shift men's sense of their interests, and how men's interests can and do change.'⁶⁷⁵

6.2.10 The spectrum of violence

Current frameworks such as *Change the story* have successfully drawn attention to the different forms of violence that are directed towards women, and the ways in which these are underpinned by gender inequality. However, much of the evidence examined in this report foregrounds physical forms of violence and, in particular, intimate partner violence. Thus, we need to keep building the evidence base on what these different types of violence entail and their links to gender inequality and dominant forms of masculinity. This is particularly important when addressing less-direct, less-visible forms of violence such as verbal, psychological or spiritual violence. Moreover, there is less research on violence in settings and sites beyond intimate relationships, such as violence that occurs in online spaces. The NCAS highlights that people who have a high level of support for violence in general are less likely to support gender equality.⁶⁷⁶ This suggests the need for a more in-depth understanding of the attitudes men hold towards violence more broadly, and in particular the forms of violence that we justify or excuse, such as in sports and in other institutional settings.

Furthermore, studies show violence that occurs between men is seen as more acceptable than violence directed by men towards women and children. Thus, scholars argue we need to do more to highlight the gendered nature of all forms of violence. Violence is intimately linked to the norms, structures and practices of masculinity. Therefore, efforts to encourage men and boys to disengage from violence (and prevent violence against women) are especially challenging. More research is needed to further understand and explain the links between masculinity and violence in general, what violence means to men, and how violence is promoted and encouraged through specific discourses and in particular settings.

6.2.11 Priority sites and settings

While prevention work should be delivered in all settings across the different levels of society, the research highlights key sites and settings that require further, and more focused, attention. In particular there is a need to extend the research on male-dominated institutions and organisations, such as the workplace, sport and other recreational settings, and also sites where male sexuality is represented in problematic ways — for instance, pornography. Significant work is being carried out with men in the family setting, through many programs and initiatives that address men as fathers.⁶⁷⁷ Further research is needed here to complement and develop this work. Scholars have additionally called for more extensive research on the intersection between men/masculinities and online spaces and new technologies.⁶⁷⁸ The online landscape is a dynamic space that we all access with regularity, anonymity and ease. This makes it a key site for addressing the problem of violence and gender inequality, and also for engaging men and boys. In particular, online gaming has emerged as a key site for young men, and one which requires further research.

6.2.12 Australian-focused studies

Much of the research on men, masculinities and the prevention of violence against women draws on international studies. There is a lack of evidence and data produced within an Australian context. While it's likely there are some similar patterns across different geographical and cultural contexts, there will also be some significant differences. Building this evidence base on the Australian context is important for a deeper analysis of the attitudes and practices of Australian men and boys, and the implications of these attitudes and practices for gender equality work and the prevention of violence against women.

6.2.13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys

While this paper reviews a broad range of evidence to develop a deeper understanding of how dominant masculinities play out across the diverse population of Australian men and how these patterns are linked to violence against women, a specific cultural and historical lens is required for prevention work that focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys. As noted throughout the paper, the literature produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and organisations identifies a number of key points of difference in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It highlights the need to further develop our understanding of the intersecting factors that impact men and masculinities within the particular historical and contemporary context of colonisation. Critical to this ongoing work is the need to acknowledge the foundational and ongoing effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including structural and systemic violence and disempowerment, intergenerational and collective trauma, and the continued destruction/disruption of traditional cultures and practices, as well as families and communities.

As noted in this paper, there is already valuable existing literature and practice knowledge on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys, masculinities and the implications for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys in prevention work. While further Indigenous-led research on this topic is always valuable, the critical need now is for programs to be funded and developed in ways that are informed by this existing Indigenous knowledge. This means for example, programs that are community owned and led, culturally safe, trauma informed, healing focused and holistic, and that aim to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, families and communities.

There is also a need to invest in the evaluation of community owned and led prevention programs and build the evidence base on what works to effectively engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in ways that are culturally safe and healing focused.

Glossary

Backlash — The resistance, hostility or aggression that gender equality or violence prevention strategies are met with by some groups. Backlash can include attempts to discredit arguments about gender equality or the gendered nature of violence, and efforts to preserve male dominance, power or status and to defend existing gender norms and hierarchies. In some cases backlash can lead to a further increase in actual violence.

Biphobia — Prejudice, fear and/or hatred directed towards bisexual people or bisexuality. This includes the systemic and structural discrimination experienced by bisexual people.

Bystander intervention — Bystander approaches focus on the ways in which those who are not themselves direct targets of sexism, abuse or disrespect can identify, intervene and engage others in challenging such attitudes, practices and behaviours. Bystander intervention is a primary prevention approach because it aims to help reduce the social sanctioning or condoning of the attitudes, behaviours and practices that drive violence against women.

Cisgender — A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. The term 'cis' is often used as an abbreviation.

Cisnormativity — Refers to a general perspective that sees cisgender experiences as the only, or central, view of the world. This includes the unquestioning assumption that all people fall into one of two distinct and complementary genders (man and woman), which corresponds to their sex assigned at birth, or what is called the gender binary. It also relates to the systemic and structural privileging of the social models of binary sex and binary gender.

Colonisation — Refers to the historical act of the British invading and claiming the land now called Australia, thereby dispossessing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had previously lived on and been custodians of these lands for thousands of years. It also refers to the ongoing settlement and establishment of British colonies, and later the Australian nation. It is not only a historical act but also an ongoing process, in particular because there has been no treaty or other form of settlement or agreement, and because many contemporary laws, policies and practices fail to recognise the specific status and human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Indigenous peoples; but also because it continues to have significant impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

Complicity — Refers to the participation in or association with an activity, event or outcome. In relation to violence against women, this might refer to men who support and maintain dominant norms, structures and practices of masculinity and an overall system of gender inequality that confers benefits and privileges to them. While these men do not directly inflict violence against women, they might be complicit in upholding a gender system that leads to and helps drive violence against women, and they may not take an active role in challenging or attempting to reform this system.

Dominant forms and patterns of masculinity — Refers more broadly to the particular attitudes, norms, roles, practices and structures that men are expected to conform to, display and participate in, and that confer privilege and benefits to them.

Family violence — A broader term than 'domestic violence', as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also violence between family members. This includes, for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent behaviour and any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful.

Gender — The socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender defines masculinity and femininity. Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.

Gender diverse — People who are gender diverse are those whose gender expression differs from what is socially expected. This includes individuals who identify as agender (having no gender), as bigender (both woman and man) or as non-binary (neither woman nor man). Some non-binary people identify as genderqueer or as having shifting or fluid genders.

Gender essentialism — Refers to the idea that men and women think and behave differently and that this is based on biological and/or psychological differences. Any observed differences between men and women are seen to be innate and natural rather than being shaped and formed by social and environmental factors. Gender essentialism helps to justify the social models of binary sex and binary gender, which exclude and negatively impact people who are trans, gender diverse and intersex.

Gender transformative — Approaches that move beyond ‘gender blind’ or ‘gender specific’ approaches to encourage a critical awareness of, and make explicit challenges to harmful gender roles, practices and norms, to shift the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women.

Hegemonic masculinity — A concept introduced by Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell.⁶⁷⁹ Hegemonic masculinity describes the currently accepted or dominant ways of being a man — that is, the set of ideals and practices that denote the most prized ways of being a man in any given context. Hegemonic masculinity helps to maintain and legitimise gender inequality and men’s overall dominance, privilege and power over women.

Heteronormativity — Refers to a general perspective that sees heterosexual experiences as the only, or central, view of the world, and assumes a linear relationship between sex, gender and sexuality (for example, male, man, heterosexual). This includes the unquestioned assumption that all people fall into one of two distinct and complementary genders (man and woman), which corresponds to their sex assigned at birth. It also assumes that heterosexual is the only ‘normal’ sexual orientation, and that sexual and marital relations are only appropriate between a man and a woman. It additionally relates to the systemic and structural privileging of the social models of binary sex, binary gender and the normalisation of heterosexuality.

Homophobia — Prejudice, fear and/or hatred directed towards homosexual people or homosexuality. This includes the systemic and structural discrimination experienced by homosexual people.

Homosociality — Refers to male bonding or male peer relationships — the social bonds and attachments that men form with other men.

Intersectionality — A theory and approach that recognises and respects that our identities are made up of multiple interrelated attributes (such as race, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identity and socio-economic status), and understands the intersections at which people experience individual, cultural and structural oppression, discrimination, violence and disadvantage — or conversely privilege — based on these attributes.

Intersex — An umbrella term that describes people who have natural variations that differ from conventional ideas about ‘female’ and ‘male’ bodies. These natural variations may include genital, chromosomal and a range of other physical characteristics. Intersex is not about a person’s gender identity.

Manhood (masculinity) — The socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men. These expectations vary between cultures and can change over time. Manhood also refers to the period of being an adult man, as opposed to boyhood or being a boy.

Primary prevention — Whole-of-population approaches and initiatives that address the primary (first or underlying) drivers of violence against women.

Sex — The biological and physical characteristics typically used to define humans as male or female.

Sexual violence — Refers to sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape.

State violence — Describes violence perpetrated by, or under the responsibility of, the state and its agencies, such as violence by police or prison officers.

Transgender — An umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender person may identify specifically as transgender or as male or female, or outside of these categories. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, or in other ways. Also often abbreviated to 'trans'.

Transphobia — Prejudice, fear, discomfort and/or hatred directed towards people who are transgender and/or gender diverse. This includes the systemic and structural discrimination experienced by trans and gender diverse people.

Violence against women — Refers to any act of gender-based violence that is specifically directed against women, and that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial and other forms) that are gender-based.

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