

The Affective Intensities of Gender Transformative Work: An Actionable Framework for Facilitators Working with Boys and Young Men

Men and Masculinities

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Abstract

Facilitating critical discussions with young men about issues of masculinity is not easy work. Gender transformative programs must engage with difficult conversations about issues such as heterosexism, homophobia, and masculine entitlement. The affective force of these issues tends to be downplayed in the pedagogic approaches within these programs, as does the complex facilitation skills required to engage boys and men in these difficult conversations. This paper draws on interview data gathered from a broader study that sought to identify new educative approaches to gender justice in four different sites in the United States. The data were generated through discussions with facilitators and researchers involved in the delivery and evaluation of a gender transformative program for disadvantaged boys and young men. The paper presents four stories that foreground concerns expressed in the interviews about facilitator bias and the feminist delivery of the program. These stories highlight the affective intensities involved in gender transformative work with young men. The paper brings together important work in the area of critical

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pedagogies, affect, and feminist theory to offer an actionable framework to support facilitators and participants to critically engage with the affective intensities of gender transformative work.

Keywords

gender transformative work, masculinities, affect and emotion, critical pedagogies, critical affective literacy

Introduction

In 2019 the American company Gillette (who specialize in men's razors) launched a video entitled: *We Believe: The Best Men Can Be* (Gillette 2019). In this short video, there are a number of powerful visual vignettes capturing instances of sexual harassment, masculine entitlement at work, and boys fighting boys. The #MeToo movement is presented as signifying a turning point in gender transformation for men—as the voice over states: “to hold other men accountable, to say the right thing, to act the right way . . . because the boys watching today will be the men of tomorrow.” The key intention of the video is to call men to action to challenge the harmful masculine norms that lead to violence and sexism. The public backlash against this advertisement has been overwhelming, with over 1.5 million “dislikes” recorded on the YouTube site hosting the video (Gillette 2019), compared with 808,000 “likes.” In particular, viewers perceive it as insulting and blaming of boys and men; as presenting all men as toxic and as “virtue-signaling” political correctness. Many men have vowed to boycott the company and welcome its insolvency (Gillette 2019; Stepman 2019). This backlash captures the emotional intensities of examining difficult and troubling gender knowledge (i.e., associated with hegemonic expressions of masculinity as power, control, violence, and heterosexism). It is a backlash that brings to light how intense emotions are tied up with gendered messages about diverse masculinities, and men's responsibilities to call out examples of actions in daily life that are harmful. In this paper, we focus on these intensities of emotion within a program that seeks to engage adolescent boys and young men in reflecting on the impacts of harmful gender norms.

The power and politics of movements such as #MeToo have placed renewed scrutiny on the social construction of masculinity. Amid the gender polarizing of the current moment, it is important to continue to examine programs designed to engage men and boys in gender justice. Heightened awareness about, and concerns to redress, sexual harassment and assault has led to a burgeoning of demand for programs designed to educate for gender respect. Such programs are highly varied in their ideology, approach, and audience.

The gender transformative program that is the focus of this paper (that we will refer to as BTM; Boys To Men) is based on a Freirean model of critical and

democratic pedagogy, with the key aim of promoting positive and respectful gender relations. It utilizes an 18-hour small-group discussion curriculum, delivered over a three–six week time period by trained community members. BTM is designed to support young men and boys to gain critical awareness of the restrictive ideas about gender and masculinity within their social worlds that shape their identities and behaviors and contribute to negative social and health outcomes. Through exploring topics such as gender, power and relationships, the social construction of masculinity, emotions, sexual consent, and gendered violence, BTM encourages young men to challenge and find alternatives to restrictive masculinities.

Like other such programs, BTM tends to target young men and boys from marginalized (racial and class) backgrounds, given the importance of resource support for under-privileged groups. Research in this space expresses concern about this focus—for example, that it unduly places expectations for gender transformation with disadvantaged, rather than advantaged, males and implies that the gendered behavior of advantaged males is less problematic than their disadvantaged peers (see Gibbs et al. 2015). The focus on marginalized men and boys in the BTM program and in this paper is not intended to reproduce these expectations/perceptions. The foregrounded issues and approach are relevant to consider in gender transformative work with men and boys from a range of racial and class backgrounds.

The program's curriculum resources are comprehensive in their content and provide training and step-by-step instructions for facilitators. BTM seeks to engage and train facilitators from the community (e.g. youth development workers, sports coaches) who are respected by the young men participating in the program and able to connect with them in meaningful and sustainable ways. In this respect, most facilitators of the program are men, and many are from race and class backgrounds similar to the program participants. Such alignment of identity is important. Shared experiences of masculinity, class, and race (all critical to identity) can engender relations of connection, trust and empathy (see Reeser and Gottzén 2018). If unexamined, however, such alignment may be problematic in that it essentializes notions of identity and voice and may reproduce rather than disrupt gendered assumptions and behaviors (see Flood 2015). It remains significant in programs like BTM because it is seen as fostering an inclusive climate to support the exploration of sensitive conversations about identity. There is some evidence to suggest that all-male groups, especially those where cultural connections are prioritized, might be productive in this respect. However, other evidence indicates the efficacy, indeed imperative, of women being involved in such programs, given the significance (for gender transformation) of men listening to women's stories of harmful masculinities (Flood 2015, 2019).

The program emphasizes an inclusive learning climate and trains facilitators to convey openness and to use respectful questioning. In the curriculum materials for the program (guidance for facilitators), facilitators are instructed to be aware of their position of power and to present content neutrally—to be unbiased and exclude their own assumptions, feelings, and values in their delivery of the program. The intention

here is to avoid closing down the conversation which can occur when facilitator relations are inequitable and disempowering for participants and when judgment or blame is evident. This is an important intention. However, as much research (particularly in the area of identity politics and feminism) has explicated, no position is neutral or free from bias. Rather than facilitators and educators attempting to exclude and control bias in their pedagogical endeavors for gender transformation, this research continues to argue the imperative of transparency and ongoing critical reflection about the gendered assumptions, feelings and values that inform this work (see Haraway 1998). In working with a feminist agenda, being clear and transparent about this agenda in programs like BTM, and training facilitators in this, is critical (Flood 2019).

Training for BTM facilitators varies but tends to involve an initial period of familiarization with the program's materials and activities, with opportunities to practice activities and learn from feedback (three days). Subsequent facilitator training involves mentorship where novice facilitators shadow and learn from more experienced facilitators and engage in observation and co-facilitation. This is an iterative process, with opportunities for debriefing, reflecting on and evaluating practice through critical feedback from participants, mentors, and observer-trainers.

This paper draws on interview data generated through discussions with senior facilitators and researchers involved in the delivery and evaluation of a gender transformative program for disadvantaged boys and young men in the United States. The paper presents four stories that foreground concerns about facilitator bias and the feminist delivery of the program, as expressed in the interviews by senior facilitators and researchers. These stories bring to light the affective intensities involved in gender transformative work with young men. The paper brings together important work in the area of critical pedagogies, affect, and feminist theory to offer an actionable framework to support facilitators and participants to critically engage with the affective intensities of gender transformative work.

Critical Affective Pedagogies and Gender Transformation

Influenced by the work of scholars such as Freire (1970), critical pedagogy is about radical social transformation. It is a form of teaching and learning that is explicit in problematizing and working to eradicate oppressive social structures (Kincheloe 2005; McLaren 2003). For Giroux (2003, 6), such pedagogy requires that educators “think and act against the grain” to recognize the political nature of education, the importance of linking education to social change and “connecting critical learning to the experiences and histories that students bring to the classroom.” It seeks to equip students with the language of critique and the rhetoric of empowerment to become transformative agents who recognize and challenge injustice (Zembylas 2013). Such pedagogy engages with the Freirian (1970) notion of *Conscientizacao* (critical consciousness). Critical consciousness is defined as “coming to a consciousness of

oppression and a commitment to end that oppression” (Weiler 1991, 454). As Enns and Forrest (2005, 6) explain:

Critical consciousness is the process by which individuals recognise the systems of oppression in which they exist, articulate their roles and places in these systems, and develop concrete strategies to empower themselves and others to engage in social action.

These ideas of critical pedagogy were reflected in the BTM curriculum and facilitation materials. The gender transformative emphasis also reflected some of the key ideals of feminist pedagogy around democratizing classroom relations and centering the voices and perspectives of students through pedagogies that are student-led and focused on the following: collaboration and dialogue; emotional and personal learning; self-awareness and personal growth; and positioning the classroom as a site for challenging and transforming injustices, especially those associated with patriarchy, heterosexism, and homophobia (Enns and Sinacore 2005; hooks 1994; McCusker 2017).

Key scholars have drawn attention to the limits of critical pedagogy as, in particular, being too firmly grounded in binary pairings of the oppressor/oppressed, master/slave, and power/freedom (Jansen in Zembylas 2013; Albrecht-Crane 2005); too driven by rationalist and linguistic/textual analysis; potentially implicated in serving exclusionary and conservative ends through, for example, narrow ideas of empowerment in the educator-student relationship (e.g., teachers can scaffold critical pedagogy processes in ways that are disempowering for learners); and failing to adequately critique its intentions in relation to social transformation (Anwaruddin 2016; Ellsworth 1992; Yoon 2005). Such shortcomings are reflected in learner resistance or rejection of critical perspectives, their continued expression of oppressive views because their privileges are being threatened or their apathy for social change (Amsler 2011; Zembylas 2013). Conscientization may expose relations of oppression, but such exposure will not necessarily lead to a desire or hope for changing them (Amsler 2011). These limitations to critical pedagogy are attributed to a lack of sufficient emphasis on the complexity of emotions and affect (Zembylas 2013). Zembylas (2013), for example, argues that critical pedagogy tends to overlook the strong emotions that arise through the difficult and troubling knowledge that is necessarily its focus. Zembylas contends that critical pedagogy downplays the affective force of this knowledge for individuals and groups, and the emotional effort involved in facilitating an exploration of this knowledge. Zembylas (2013, 2014) argues the significance of “pedagogic discomfort” here; that such discomfort is an unavoidable part of critical pedagogy, given its aim to identify, challenge, and unsettle taken-for-granted and deeply embedded views, emotions, and actions. Indeed, such discomfort is a necessary and valuable pedagogical approach in social justice education and will arise, especially when individuals who ascribe to

hegemonic culture confront their own privilege and its complicity in reproducing social inequalities.

For Amsler (2011), the desire for empowerment and resistance cannot be taken for granted as a “natural resource” for critical pedagogy; rather, the affective or emotional tensions around issues of empowerment and resistance must be placed at the heart of critical pedagogy. Such tensions are a key focus in recent scholarship that draws on insights from the so-called affective turn in the humanities and social sciences to offer models of critical affective pedagogy/literacy (see Anwaruddin 2016; Zembylas 2013). The affective turn, according to Zembylas (2014, 4), “marks a shift in thought in critical theory through an exploration of the complex interrelations of discursive practices, the human body, social and cultural forces, and individually experienced but historically situated emotions and affects.” Affect can be defined in multiple ways and draws on different genealogies of theory. For the purpose of this paper, it is defined as a category that encompasses emotion, and feeling and “includes impulses [and] desires . . . that get historically constructed in a range of ways” (Cvetkovich 2012, 4). Affects are always embedded in acts and practices, and constitute an integral part of the practical activities with which bodies relate to other subjects and objects (Reckwitz 2012). For Ahmed (2004) “emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have.” They do not move from inside out (the psychodynamic approach), or from outside in (the social constructionist approach) but rather circulate and move. Ahmed (2004, 10), argues that it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that boundaries are made: the “I” and “we” are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others (2004, 10).

Resonating with these ideas, Anwaruddin (2016) offers an “actionable framework” for Critical Affective Literacy (CAL) to support educators to enrich their critical pedagogies to explore the intensities of affect that arise from the difficult and troubling knowledge that such pedagogies examine. There are four pedagogical principles that are briefly described here but will later be drawn on in more depth to analyze the four stories of facilitation created from interviews with participants of the BTM study. The principles (paraphrased from Anwaruddin 2016, 390–394) are:

Principle 1: Examining Why We Feel What We Feel

This principle asks us to examine not just what we feel in particular situations, but why we feel what we feel. It asks us to focus on what emotions do (as well as what they are).

Principle 2: Striving to Enter a Relation of Affective Equivalence

This principle invites us to imagine standing in the shoes of others. It asks us to consider what standing in the shoes of others might mean in terms of understanding

their suffering, and how different representations can impact on how we respond to this suffering.

Principle 3: Interrogating the Production and Circulation of Objects of Emotion in Everyday Politics

This principle asks us to consider how particular objects of emotion (which may be people, places, events, and labels) have come to be understood and conceptualized through the process of everyday politics.

Principle 4: Focusing on the Performativity of Emotions to Achieve Social Justice

This principle invites us to contemplate the necessary conditions for enabling our critical and emancipatory utterances (what we say) to become performative/enacted (what we do).

These principles recognize, as Hemmings (2012, 15) argues, that ‘in order to know differently we have to feel differently’; that knowing and feeling differently are strongly interrelated. In conjunction with the ethos of feminist pedagogy—that is, democratizing classroom relations; centering the voices and perspectives of students; collaboration and dialogue; and emotional and personal learning—these principles can be drawn on to examine difficult and troubling gender knowledge. They can support educators and students to learn together in their examination of how this knowledge is socially, politically, and emotionally produced and maintained as forms of inclusion and exclusion; how it produces strong personal and emotional affects; and how these affects can create new meanings and relations (Zembylas 2014).

Research Context and Processes

The data presented in this paper were drawn from a broader study that sought to identify new educative approaches to gender justice in four different sites, one of which was an organization administering the BTM program cited earlier. This organization was selected for the study given its strong reputation in the USA as a leader in the field of engaging boys and men in gender justice. With the aim of finding out more about the program, the lead author interviewed 10 key people directly involved in the leadership or evaluation of the program. At the time of data collection, six of these interviewees were involved in an external evaluation of the program (led by a research team at a large public university not affiliated with the authors of this paper) designed to produce evidence of its impact to enable it to be scaled up and more broadly disseminated across the USA. The four other interviewees were managing or facilitating BTM through an urban youth center. The program had been operating in a number of economically and socially disadvantaged

communities (at local youth and community centers) across two states in the USA with small groups of young men between the ages of 12 years and 18 years (recruited from public schools as voluntary participants). The interviews with the 10 participants (aged in their twenties, four females and six males from a range of racial backgrounds) were loosely structured and sought to explore their experiences of the program and their views about the opportunities and challenges for gender justice work in the present sociopolitical climate; the gender transformative role and capacities of programs like the BTM; and the role of facilitation in realizing such capacities. The interviews were held at the workplaces of the participants (the youth center and university) and generally lasted around 60 minutes. The significance of the role of the facilitator and how facilitation was enacted in the effective implementation of the BTM were key issues raised by all interviewees and thus became important areas of discussion.

In light of the aims of the program to engage young men in gender transformation, this paper presents four stories of facilitation. The voices of four interviewees are featured: Theo, Miles, Dominic and Tania (pseudonyms). Theo is a young African-American man who is an experienced facilitator of the BTM program through the urban youth center. Miles and Tania are young white researchers involved in the evaluation of the program conducted through the university. These researchers were also involved in program facilitation. Dominic (who did not identify his race) is attached to the university research team but is involved in facilitation rather than research. The analysis of the interview data was a two-stage process. The first stage of data analysis was focused on foregrounding the key concerns expressed across the group (all 10 interviewees) about the complexity of delivering the BTM curriculum and the quality of facilitation that some of them observed. These concerns were associated with the “biases” that facilitators brought to their delivery of the curriculum that potentially undermined the gender transformative potential of the program (in the words of Dominic). There were also concerns about the program’s feminist approach. While most of the interviewees noted the importance of this approach, there was uncertainty expressed about what it might look like. Miles, for instance, grappled with the notion of “being non-judgemental” [when] “the whole point of the program is to say that things are good [or] bad” in terms of gender transformation.

The second stage of the data analysis was concerned with identifying stories within the data that exemplified these concerns around feminist approaches to facilitation. These stories bring to light the discomfort and emotional intensities of gender transformative work, and how facilitation skills are implicated. Working through such tensions requires that facilitators engage in critical self-reflection and nimble responses to emotionally intense discussions. The principles of the CAL framework (identified earlier) were drawn on here in the data analysis to highlight how this process might be enabled and what it might look like.

Stories of Facilitation

Story 1: A Battle for Power

A few respondents noted that sometimes with older novice facilitators, there was “a battle of who is in charge of the room” where they did not “allow the young men to be young men” and where there was a “conflict of authority” (Dominic). These older novice facilitators sometimes, according to Miles, took on a lecturing style, a “pulpit to say things that they know about life and women.” This authoritarian style played out in different ways but invariably created resistance from the young men where their challenging or refuting was met with dismissals. As a researcher observing novice facilitators in these situations, Miles noted, “you have just lost the kid [and] there is no way that kid is going to listen to what any of us says.” A particular incident relayed by Tania was an example of such power battles where one of the novice facilitators “unleashed on the boys, yelling at them and being very aggressive,” which produced a climate of resistance and fear.

Story 2: Reluctance to Explore Certain Gender Issues

For some novice facilitators, there was a reluctance to explore certain gender issues. Tania spoke here of the attitude of one facilitator who expressed reluctance to use one of the “supplemental” exercises in the BTM program to scaffold conversations about gender diversity, called the “gender unicorn”. She explained: “we have a bunch of supplementals that we use . . . we do use the gender unicorn one because some of the boys actually are really interested by it . . . [The novice facilitator] refused to use the gender unicorn exercise because it was ‘gay’”. Dominic attributed this reluctance to explore gender issues to some facilitators’ own attitudes of homophobia, their “rigid ideas” about masculinity and their discomfort talking about homosexuality. He noted that scaffolding conversations about these issues was extremely “challenging.”

Story 3: Defensive Masculinities

Miles relayed a story that occurred during one of the sessions about a Bill Cosby “meme” “going around” that had caught the attention of the young men during a session. Bill Cosby is a famous African-American comedian who was jailed for sexual assault in 2018. His case was dominant at the time of data collection, with various distasteful memes depicting his predatory behavior circulating online. Some of the young men, according to Miles, were laughing about the case, and several had expressed the belief that “maybe some of those women” accusing Bill Cosby of sexual assault “were lying” (according to Dominic) or were accusing Cosby because they “wanted money” (according to Miles). Miles explained that such reactions were a “quick defense”. He saw the facilitator’s role in this scenario as moving the boys’ thought processes beyond this point: “like, the goal is to meet them at this point so

that you can be the experience in their life that brings them to where you want them to go and not just say that, ‘This is where you should be so why aren’t you there yet?’” With this goal in mind, Miles further elaborated:

[W]e were able to talk to them, you know, talk about the things that you know, “Why would somebody make a false allegation?” What somebody has to go through when they make an allegation like what their life goes through when they go through a trial and socially what their life goes through.

Miles spoke here of the “patience” and “grace” involved in understanding where the boys were at given their life circumstances and influences. This approach, as he noted, was more likely to lead to transforming these attitudes, as he explained:

Do you listen to the kind of teacher that tells you that “you’re wrong” and tells you that “you are not a good person or you just don’t get it,” or makes you feel like you are a villain? Or do you listen to the teacher that supports you and says, “I understand why you think the way that you do but let’s consider it this way and why considering it this way is important.”

Story 4: The Issue of Sexual Consent

Another particularly powerful story related to the issue of sexual consent—an area of the curriculum that many facilitators found difficult to deliver. The aims of this aspect of the curriculum are to support male participants to understand the gender dynamics that may exist around giving consent and accepting when consent is not given. Theo provided an account of his approach to teaching about consent. Noting agreement from one of his participants that a woman removing her clothes constitutes consent for sex, he asked the group the following:

I said, “Let me ask you this question: who has access to your body?” The room got quiet. I said, “Let me ask it again: who has access to your body?” They just started to light like, there was a light bulb that went on. They are like, “Well, I do.” I was like, “Okay, your body. So, who has access to your partner’s body?” They said, “She does.”

So, with that being said, I had to go back around and let them know, I was like: “only you have access to your body. It’s a privilege for someone to give you access to their body. And if at any given time you decide you don’t want to— [that] this is not what you want—you have every right to not do it.” And that was a light bulb moment for them.

Drawing on the Principles of Critical Affective Literacy for Gender Transformation

These stories bring to light the complex facilitation skills required to support critical discussions that foster transformative learning about gender and power. They highlight the pedagogic discomfort and affective intensities that arise in relation to exploring difficult gendered knowledge (such as masculine authority, homosexuality, and sexual misconduct). In particular, they highlight the significance of facilitators' capacities to engage critically with their own understandings, beliefs, and emotional investments in gender, power, and masculinity in their attempts to enact the feminist pedagogies and realize the gender transformative aims of the BTM. This is a process where facilitators and participants are on a journey of, as Tania explained, growing and learning together. The following section refers to these stories with the intention of providing insight into how this process might be fostered through a feminist-informed CAL.

Principle One: Examining Why we Feel What we Feel

This principle of CAL asks us to examine not just what we feel in particular situations but also why we feel what we feel (Anwaruddin 2016). As noted earlier, this is about examining what emotions do (as well as what they are (Ahmed 2004)). Stories 1 and 2 are particularly illustrative of what (gendered) emotions can do. In Story 1, facilitator investments in masculinities of power, control, and domination create a "battle" over "who is in charge of the room." Emotions of aggression circulate to create an affective atmosphere of tension, fear, and resistance (Ahmed 2004). In Story 2, facilitator investments in "rigid ideas" about masculinity and, in particular, heterosexism and homophobia generate an aversion to and discomfort with exploring issues of homosexuality. Such emotions as they are steeped in traditionally masculine modes of relating reinforce inequitable gender relations. The stories bring to light the relationality and power of emotions; their capacity to move us toward or away from particular ideas and objects (Ahmed 2004). In both stories, the emotions turn the facilitators and boys away—that is, they prevent or shut down important gender transformative conversations. They create an affective atmosphere that is inconsistent with the respectful and safe environment requisite for boys and young men to feel comfortable to discuss the sensitive and difficult issues of the BTM program (Liljestrom 2016).

Story 2, in particular, highlights the discomfort of gender transformative pedagogies. As noted earlier, the discomfort arising from an unsettling of taken-for-granted views and emotions is an unavoidable but valuable pedagogic approach in social justice education (Zembylas 2013). For the facilitator in Story 2, leading and scaffolding conversations about gender and homosexuality are beyond his comfort levels, while for the facilitators in Story 1, leading in yielding and conciliatory ways seems beyond their comfort levels. These reactions show how difficult it can be to

shift emotional attachments to, or investments in, particular constructions of gender (even while acting as a facilitator in a program with a transformative gender agenda) and how those emotions can derail a gender-transformative learning environment (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012).

In these two scenarios, how might more democratic and feminist-informed pedagogies be encouraged that support emotional and personal learning, self-awareness and personal growth? A feminist-informed CAL approach to this principle would ask the following questions of facilitators: What aspects of gender transformative curriculum content incite particular strong emotions? (e.g., with the delivery of challenging content such as homosexuality and sexual consent); What situations of facilitation incite particular strong emotions? (e.g., when managing boys' challenging behaviors); What are these emotions? Why and how are these emotions felt? What do they do? How might they be used by skilled facilitators to support critical personal learning?

Principle Two: Striving to Enter a Relation of Affective Equivalence

This principle of CAL invites us to imagine standing in the shoes of others. What does “standing in the shoes of others” mean? How are we to understand the sufferings of others when we try to stand in their shoes? Cultivating empathy for gender transformation or justice is important (Flood 2019). However, feminist and pro-feminist research has urged educators to approach this concept with caution (Kukar 2016). Hemmings (2012, 152), for example, distinguishes between (what she terms as) “bad” and “good” forms of empathy; where the former produces feelings of pity and sentimentality for the other and the latter seeks to transform hierarchical relations. Significant here is how the other is represented and defined. As Butler (2010) argues, our responsiveness to the suffering of others is conditioned by how their lives are presented to us—that is, some representations of suffering are legitimized and “grievable” while others are not (Butler 2010; Anwaruddin 2016; Zembylas 2014).

Stories 3 and 4 draw attention to group facilitation that strives to support boys and young men to enter a relation of affective equivalence through the ways in which issues of sexual misconduct and consent are presented. In both these stories, participants are invited to “stand in the shoes” of the young women who have been subject to sexual assault and misconduct. In both stories, the facilitators invite consideration of the feelings of these women; their suffering is represented as legitimate and grievable (Butler 2010). In Story 3, in response to the charge that the women in the Bill Cosby case are lying or want money, Miles asks the boys to consider why this might be the case. He encourages them to see the unlikeliness of this charge, given the negative social and personal impacts that the women will encounter in bringing their experiences to the public's attention. In Story 4, similarly, the boys are invited to consider sexual consent from the perspective of young women. Theo's questions around bodily access encourage the boys to recognize and value the bodily autonomy of their sexual partners—that is, their autonomy to permit

or not permit access to their bodies at any time regardless of whether they have removed their clothes.

In these examples, the affective atmosphere reflects the goals of feminist pedagogy—the democratizing of classroom relations through teaching and learning that respects and empathizes with students’ views. In this space, as Miles noted, the boys and young men are more likely to listen and respond positively because there is support and understanding about where they are at and a meeting of them at this point. The approach that Miles takes up in Story 3—that is, listening, supporting and understanding the boys’ heterosexist views rather than condemning these views—reflects the strategic empathy that is significant in promoting compassion. Miles uses empathetic emotions in strategic and critical ways. He empathizes with the troubled knowledge the boys carry with them, even though it is disturbing to him, but gently expands this knowledge through thoughtful questioning about the experiences of women and girls. This is a valuable pedagogical tool that opens up affective spaces that might eventually disrupt the emotional roots of troubled knowledge. As Zembylas (2013, 186) explains, “undermining the emotional roots of troubled knowledge through strategic empathy ultimately aims at helping [learners] [transform] their troubled views into compassionate and socially just perspectives.”

In these stories, unlike Stories 1 and 2, gender transformative conversations are opened up. Through thoughtful questioning, the facilitators create an affective atmosphere that is respectful, safe, and conducive to the group exploring sensitive and difficult issues, with a goal of participants gaining critical consciousness insights. The facilitators’ efforts to engage the boys in an exercise of affective equivalence with the young women support a move beyond feeling sadness or pity for their suffering—where women are the object of the boys’ feelings, to feeling their suffering and considering the harm it entails (Ahmed 2004; Anwaruddin 2016). Such efforts (especially when offered from a position of strategic empathy) may encourage compassion and transformative empathy (Hemmings 2012)—that is, that unsettles rather than reinforces the inequitable relations of masculine defensiveness and entitlement in these stories. They may also, however, discourage compassion and incite resistance. As much masculinities research points out (see Flood 2019; Pease 2010), defensiveness and resistance are common responses when young men hear women’s stories of suffering, but particularly when they are confronted with their complicity in this suffering. It is thus important not to assume that empathy (i.e., imagining standing in the shoes of others) is always pro-social or that it will always lead to pro-social outcomes (Kukar 2016). Given these complexities, there remains ongoing debate about the extent to which empathy is teachable—many feminists argue that we can never really know the other and that it is far more important for those who are seeking to empathize to engage in critical self-reflection on the limits of their self and “other” knowledge (see Boler 1997; Hemmings 2012); to recognize, as Ellsworth has argued (1992), that our knowledge of the other is always partial, interested, and potentially oppressive.

Thus, key questions for facilitators seeking to support this gender transformative CAL principle would be: What are the limits and advantages to a pedagogy of empathy (e.g., How might it lead to an unsettling of power relations rather than to pity or resistance?); How might pedagogies of empathy be used to enhance participants' striving of affective equivalence, and how might they be counterproductive in presuming to know the other and their suffering? What role does empathy pedagogy and practice by the facilitator play in generating intention for positive action? How might a critical reflection on the limitations of our own knowledge (of self and other) enrich our connections with and support for "others"? How might facilitators learn to highlight different representations of the "other" as a key facilitation skill, in order to impact on participants' recognition of legitimate and grievable suffering?

Principle Three: Interrogating the Production and Circulation of Objects of Emotion in Everyday Politics

This principle of CAL involves pedagogies that identify the politics of affectivity—that is how emotions, such as anger and fear, are created and circulated (Anwaruddin 2016). The everyday politics of gender are imbued with affect. As a key component of identity, masculinity is an object of deep emotion. Particular versions of masculinity—for example, "toxic masculinity"—are often explicitly produced through and by specific emotions (see Zarkov 2007). The term "toxic masculinity" has proliferated in social and media discourse recently—masculinity as an object of toxicity and danger is (re)produced in such discourse through an affective politics where strong emotions such as defiance, fear, and anger shape how we think, feel, and know boys and men. Such affective politics are an effective orienting device that can "manipulate the populace" (Anwaruddin 2016; Zarkov 2007). This is an orienting device that works in highly differentiated ways, and it has been used to demonize and blame groups of boys and men based on class, race, ethnicity, and religion. Such politics have not been helpful—they have caused explicit harm and have alienated many boys and men. As well recognized in masculinities research, masculinity is not synonymous with toxicity. *Masculinities*, as constructed through social, emotional, and bodily relations, are complex, multiple, contingent, and contextual (see Connell 2005; Flood 2015, 2019; Hickey-Moody and Laurie 2019).

All of the stories provide opportunities to explore this idea of gender, and masculinities in particular, as objects of emotion produced through everyday politics. Such an approach to CAL would involve exploring the historical and social processes and politics that have produced versions of masculinity, whether they be associated with the battle for power (in Story 1), heterosexism and homophobia (in Story 2), or sexual misconduct (in Stories 3 and 4). Key questions for facilitators seeking to support a gender transformative approach to this principle would be: How and why are gendered messages (for example, messages about masculinity in media) circulated in order to generate a specific emotional response? In recognizing one's

own emotional response to a gendered message, how can one recognize when and how it is coming from within versus produced by others? How can a facilitator use such insights to analyze the production of emotional content to examine and critique the intersection of gender, class, race and sexuality as emotionally fraught roots of identity? How, when, and why are certain emotions applied to or associated with certain groups of men and boys? How and why do certain individuals learn to critique the generated emotional content of culture around them? What group exercises work to help them learn this skill? (Anwaruddin 2016; Ahmed 2004)?

Principle Four: Focusing on the Performativity of Emotions to Achieve Social Justice

This principle of CAL focuses on the concept of performativity—as holding important implications for a cycle of reflection-action praxis (Freire 1970). Anwaruddin (2016) asks, “How can our utterances become performative?” In other words, how can what we say become what we do? Masculinities research has long recognized the powerful role emotions play in transforming our words into action. This research draws attention to the significance of addressing the emotional bases of this entitlement (Flood 2019; Pease 2012). As Pease (2012, 138) argues:

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

The emotional discomfort that boys and men experience in relation to examining this “unearned” advantage can (as noted earlier) produce alienation and resistance (Pease 2010; Flood 2019). However, it can also produce a sense of responsibility and activism. New alliances around positive masculinities are made possible in collective and trusting environments where boys and men can experience a mutuality of vulnerability (i.e., all men and boys are subject to and struggle with living up to idealized and often harmful masculine norms). Such mutuality can be the starting point for acknowledging the collective burden of difficult and troubling knowledge about gender and masculinity carried by all men and boys. For Reeser and Gottzén (2018, 146; de Boise 2018), the intensities of emotion that young men share around these vulnerabilities can create “unexpected masculinities or unexpected relationalities between men.” They highlight how such shared experiences can be channeled to create connection, solidarity, and intimacy. The performativity (or enactment) of emotion to achieve social justice is not this simple however. The acknowledgment of shared vulnerability needs to be accompanied by boys’ and men’s acknowledgment of their shared complicity in reproducing gendered knowledge—and experiencing the discomfort arising from this acknowledgment.

In programs like BTM, such connection and solidarity are often mobilized to support boys and men to engage in activist activities with feminist groups (Flood 2019). At a minimum, it is important that this engagement encourage young men to acknowledge and reflect on their own emotions, motivations, and behaviors, and to make personal commitments to continue to reflect and act in ways that embody the kind of man they wish to be, and to convey respect and honor for women's decisions and autonomy.

This is facilitated within the BTM curriculum in an activity in which the young men create their own templates for masculinity. Here, facilitators support the young men to "build their own template" around the sort of men they want to be that they can hold themselves and others accountable to such as (as Dominic explained) "being respectful to others, being a loyal friend, and being a faithful and loving partner." Important here, as Dominic noted, is supporting the young men to continually "come back to" this template when thinking through the many challenging and complex issues and situations they are confronted with as men. As Dominic described:

So we highlight those principles and we kind of hold them accountable over the course. So with the romantic partner [their template states] "I want to be faithful; I want to be loyal; I want to be loving." So we ask them, "Well, are you now?" "Well, you know, I have cheated on my girl. I have done this/that." "Well, that's not who you say that you want to be. So moving forward, this is the template that you have to operate in," you know . . . This is who you say you want to be." So in becoming a better man, when you come against a situation where you have to make a decision, make sure that it lines up with who you say you want to be.

This is a good example of a strategy that supports this CAL principle—that is, how utterances (what we say we want) might become performative (what we do). However, as Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) remind us, passionate feelings (expressed in this example as loyalty and love) do not guarantee activism to transform structures of oppression and injustice nor do they assure action to redress inequity. Emotion remains, however "a significant component in the production or prevention of greater justice . . . any understanding of social justice requires a fundamental recognition of the integral role of emotions in reifying or disrupting injustices (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012, 43). Programs such as BTM can explicitly call on and train program participants to notice others' emotions, motivations, and behaviors as performative of gendered expectations, as part of a portfolio of CAL skills. Going further, such programs can build explicit curriculum components that train young men in ways to be sociopolitically active and to act individually and collectively as feminist allies to redress inequities and transform structures of injustice.

Key questions for facilitators seeking to support this principle of CAL are: What content and group facilitation conditions are most conducive to generating both

reflection and action by the participants in the group? How can facilitators channel the emotional intensities arising from difficult conversations about gender with men and boys to create connection, solidarity and action as feminist allies? How might these connections produce new ways of (individual and collective) knowing, feeling, being, and acting that reflect social justice?

Conclusion

Gender transformative work is highly challenging. Such work with men and boys is necessarily discomfiting as it engages with the difficult and troubling knowledge of gender injustices such as masculine entitlement and domination, homophobia, and heterosexism. The stories in this paper have sought to highlight the affective force of this knowledge. Intensities of emotion were evident for facilitators of the BTM program in relation to the power battles of masculine authority; the reluctance to address homosexuality; defensive masculinities associated with sexual misconduct, and presumptions of bodily access in sexual relations. The paper argued the significance of greater attention to these intensities in pedagogic approaches within gender transformative programs like BTM designed to support young men and boys to identify and challenge harmful gender norms. This attention is imperative, given that adverse emotional responses can, as the Gillette advertisement (that opened this paper) aptly illustrated, turn men and boys away from gender transformative conversations (Ahmed 2004).

The significance of educator or facilitator critical self-reflection in doing gender transformative work is well recognized. This reflection can, of course, take many forms but it acknowledges, as Tania's earlier comments indicate, that facilitators and participants are on a journey of growing and learning together. The stories in this paper and, in particular, the concerns about bias and the uncertainties about what the program's feminist approach might look like point to the significance of greater support for facilitators in these sorts of programs. Such support will assist facilitators and participants to critically reflect on their own emotional learning as a component of their individual and collective learning about gender and to recognize how such feelings, assumptions, and values shape their understandings of themselves and others. As this paper has illustrated, key here is examining the strong emotions arising when addressing difficult conversations about gender.

This paper has offered an actionable framework that might assist facilitators and participants in this endeavor. The framework builds on and augments the important platform of critical pedagogy that tends to inform programs like BTM to recognize the powerful role of affect in the process of gender transformation. The four principles of the CAL model support facilitators to enrich their gender transformative work to explore the intensities of affect that arise when examining difficult and troubling gender knowledge. Drawing on these principles, the analysis of the stories in this paper brought to light the intensities of emotion and feeling embedded in the acts and contexts of facilitation that can open up or close down important gender

transformative conversations and lead to critical consciousness insights. Given the power of emotions to make a difference to how we know, feel, and act in gendered ways, frameworks that support a critical engagement with affect will be crucial in moving this work forward.

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