Building Cultures of Respect and Safety in University Colleges

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Abstract

University colleges have a vital role to play in building cultures of respect and safety on campus. What are the risk factors for sexual violence and harassment in colleges – the factors that make perpetration and victimisation more likely? Why are some colleges safer than others? What strategies are effective in preventing and reducing violence and abuse among students? How can we foster positive cultures in colleges, and how do these fit within a whole-of-institution approach to prevention? And how do we engage male students and staff, in particular, in prevention?

Text

University colleges have a vital role to play in building cultures of respect and safety on campus. Colleges can prevent and reduce sexual and domestic violence among their residents, and can contribute to a safe and respectful campus culture.

But to realise that positive role, colleges must do three things.

1) First, know the extent of the problem, of sexual and domestic violence, and the character of the problem;
2) Second, know what is causing the problem – the drivers of sexual and domestic violence;
3) Third, know how to prevent and reduce the problem. What kinds of strategies will make a difference?

We are going to explore these three things this morning. Let's start with the extent of the problem.

The extent of the problem

I'm sure you have all heard the data from the second National Student Safety Survey, conducted by Universities Australia and released in March 2022.

Overall prevalence:

- 1 in 6 students, 16.1%, had experienced sexual harassment since starting university. 1 in 12, 8.1%, had experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months.
- 1 in 20 students, 4.5%, had experienced sexual assault since starting university, and 1 in 90, 1.1%, had experienced sexual assault in the past 12 months (Heywood, Myers, Powell, Meikle, & Nguyen, 2022).

University residences

I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but the Australian data tells us that these problems are worse for students who live in university accommodation.

Sexual harassment: Students who live in student accommodation or residences are more likely to experience sexual harassment.

- Since starting at university, one quarter (24.0%) of students living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual harassment, compared with 13.0% of students living on their own.
- One in five (19%) students living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months.

Sexual assault:

Among students who had experienced sexual assault, the most common locations reported for this were in student accommodation or residences, with one quarter of incidents (27.3%) having taken place here (Heywood et al., 2022).

Students who live in student accommodation or residences are more likely than other students to experience sexual assault:

- One in eleven students (8.8%) currently living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual assault in a university context, with lower rates among students living in their own place, living by themselves, or with their parents, guardian or other family.
- One in twenty students (6.0%) living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months, compared with less than one percent of students living on their own with others, with their parents, guardian or other family, or living by themselves.

Perpetration

Look at the headline reporting on this data: "One in six university students sexually harassed, one in 20 sexually assaulted". What does this *not* tell us? And look at the picture too. What, or who, is missing here?

What is missing is the *perpetrators*. What is missing is the individuals who perpetrated this sexual harassment, who perpetrated these sexual assaults. Is it: One in six university students have sexually harassed another student. One in 20 have sexually assaulted another student?

<u>Reframing sexual assault and harassment as the perpetrators' problem</u>

Domestic and sexual violence is framed often in ways that make the perpetrator disappear, as if the victim or survivor were attacked by an unseen force. This framing is evident in media accounts, community accounts, and even in the violence prevention field itself.

Let us take an example: John, a student at your university, rapes Emma. What happened? 'John raped Emma' becomes 'Emma was raped by John' becomes 'Emma was raped'. By this point, John, the perpetrator, his actions and his role have disappeared.

Institutions typically report how many people were assaulted or harassed last year, not how many people assaulted or harassed others. The language is passive, moving the focus away from those responsible for the egregious behaviour.

This kind of framing of sexual and domestic matters in three ways (Flood & Dembele, 2021).

Perpetrator accountability: First, this language removes perpetrators' accountability—for their choices and actions. Perpetrators' agency and responsibility for the impact of their violence is hidden, reducing societal obligation for them to be held to account.

Focusing attention primarily on efforts to aid the victims of violence situates victims as if they are the 'problem' that needs 'fixing'. It orients attention towards the victims' responsibility to avoid victimisation, rather than the perpetrators' responsibility not to use violence.

However, as survivor advocate, Lula Dembele, has put it, 'violence is a problem for victims but not a victim's problem. Instead, using domestic and sexual violence is the perpetrators' problem'.

Community responsibility: Second, a passive framing removes responsibility from the communities surrounding these individuals. We lose the opportunity to ask questions about why the perpetrator chose to behave this way or identify how other people could have intervened.

Drivers of perpetration: Third, this language limits attention to the drivers of perpetration. The language we use means that we are less likely to ask questions about the social conditions that drive people's perpetration of violence.

I will come back to this in a moment.

The extent of perpetration

Returning to the Universities Australia survey, it asked only about victimisation, not perpetration. And in Australia we have very little data on patterns of violence perpetration, patterns of people's *use* of violence.

However, there is very good data from other, similar countries on the use of violence. And it tells us that significant proportions of men (and small proportions of women) have perpetrated violence, abuse, and harassment.

Significant proportions of men (and small proportions of women) have perpetrated violence, abuse, and harassment

Various studies on American campuses ask men if they have committed acts that meet the standard legal definition of attempted or completed rape or sexual assault, or if they have committed various sexually coercive and aggressive acts. Significant minorities say yes.

There were 78 studies, among over 25,000 male university students, over 2000 to 2017 that asked about sexual violence perpetration, included male participants, among Canadian or American college students, and reported lifetime prevalence findings. And these 78 studies were the focus of a recent systematic review.

According to this systematic review;

- 29.3% of men on average at universities in the USA and Canada have perpetrated sexual violence in their lifetimes (Anderson, Silver, Ciampaglia, Vitale, & Delahanty, 2021).
- About one in twenty male university students, 19%, have perpetrated sexual coercion (defined as any type of sexual intercourse obtained via verbal tactics such as verbal pressuring behavior, expressions of anger, threats to the relationship, and so on).
- About one in fifteen, 6.5%, have perpetrated rape (defined as any type of sexual intercourse obtained via incapacitation, physical force, or threats of physical force) (Anderson et al., 2021).

This kind of research has not been done in Australia. But we know that 16.1% of students have experienced sexual harassment since starting university, and 4.5% have experienced sexual assault since starting university (Heywood et al., 2022). So it is possible that similar proportions of students – 4.5% for sexual assault, 16% for sexual harassment – have *perpetrated* these forms of harm.

I said that, to prevent and reduce sexual and domestic violence, the first thing we must do is to know the extent of the problem and the character of the problem. I have three further brief points.

We need to know about the impacts of these behaviours

I won't go into the impact among students of suffering sexual harassment and sexual assault. But we know, from a wealth of data, that sexual harassment and sexual assault have significant impacts on students' physical and emotional wellbeing. *Including* on their academic performance, their likelihood of completing their studies, and so on.

We need to know also about domestic violence / intimate partner violence

Second, Australian data on violence and abuse among university students has neglected domestic violence or intimate partner violence. We know very little about the extent of domestic or dating violence among students, whether in terms of victimisation or perpetration.

This is especially troubling when we know that domestic and sexual violence often *co-occur*. For example, if a male student on campus sometimes coerces his girlfriend into sex, we know that he is more likely than other males also to be using physical violence against her, to be emotionally and verbally abusive, and so on.

We need to know about the dynamics of these behaviours

We need to know about the typical dynamics of these behaviours. For example, most sexual assaults are by someone known to the victim. Most sexual assaults take place in a familiar location: the victim's university residence, her boyfriend's dorm room, a friend's place, and so on.

It is crucial also to know what is causing the problem – the drivers of sexual and domestic violence.

The drivers of sexual and domestic violence on campus

What are the causes of violence perpetration? Why do some people and not others use violence? Why are rates of violence perpetration far higher in some settings, communities, and countries than others?

The social-ecological model

There are risk factors for perpetration and victimisation at the societal, community, relationship, and individual levels

The most common explanatory framework for answering such questions is the social-ecological model, a framework for identifying and addressing the risk factors for violence that operate at different levels of the social order. It embodies the widespread recognition that perpetration and victimisation are influenced by factors at the societal, community, relationship, and individual levels. The ecological model highlights that risk factors for violence – that increase the likelihood of perpetration and victimisation – can be found at multiple levels of society (Heise, 1998). The model also assumes that:

- Structural and cultural factors or forces are as important as individual and relational factors in shaping domestic and sexual violence.
- The causes of violence are probabilistic rather than deterministic: factors operating at different levels combine to establish the likelihood of abuse occurring, and different patterns of factors and pathways may converge to cause abuse under different circumstances (Heise, 2011).

Applications of the ecological model too often have focused on the smallest levels of the ecological framework, addressing individual and relationship level factors and neglecting larger-level factors such as social structures and institutions (such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, social networks and communities) and the larger society and culture (Basile, 2003). In other words, violence prevention and reduction efforts often have focused more on asking why some individuals become perpetrators and less on asking what it is about communities and societies that helps to create and perpetuate perpetrators and facilitate violence perpetration (Basile, 2003). Nevertheless, the ecological model provides a valuable framework for identifying drivers of domestic and sexual violence across multiple levels of society, from micro to macro.

Perpetrators are made, not born

Let's bring this back to more everyday language.

Perpetrators are *made*, not born. When an individual uses violence, in some ways this is the unsurprising outcome of widespread social conditions. For example, when a male student in a residential college pressures his girlfriend into sex, his use of violence may be the predictable result of lessons about manhood he and other boys absorbed as they grew up, the sexist peer cultures in which he participated, and the gender inequalities woven into his and other men's everyday lives.

If we want to stop creating perpetrators, we must change the social conditions and settings that produce them. That is what defines primary prevention.

We know that a wide variety of factors shape perpetration and victimisation. But today I will focus on three. Three risk-factors that are a) important in explaining perpetration, and b) modifiable at the university college or residence level – factors you can influence.

1) Violence-supportive attitudes

Think about the young people you see every day on your campus, and particularly about the young men. If they are typical of young men their age, then sizable proportions think things, believe things, which make it more likely that they will *use* violence, that they will tolerate or excuse violence, that they will respond poorly to victims and survivors, that they will fail to hold others accountable for their violence, and so on.

Significant proportions of young men have violence-supportive and sexist attitudes.

From national Australian research, we know that significant proportions of young men aged 16-24 have violence-supportive and sexist attitudes.

Attitudes excusing violence

	Males 16-24	Females 16-24
Rape results from men not able to control their need for sex.	43	36
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	10	9
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person regrets it	33*	20

Attitudes minimising violence and blaming the victim

	Males 16-24	Females 16-24
Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case	56*	47
Women rarely make false claims of rape	54	58
A lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets	46*	33
If a women doesn't physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape	8	9
If a women is raped while drunk/affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	21	15
Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'	22	17
If a women goes to a room alone with a man at a party, it is her fault if she is raped	9	8

Attitudes supporting gender inequality

	Males 16-24	Females 16-24
On the whole men make better political leaders than women	29*	19
Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia.	17*	10
Men should take control in relationships and be head of the household.	27*	17
Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship.	38*	31

(Note that these findings are from the 2013 National Community Attitudes Survey, and while national data from the most recent NCAS was released in 2018, findings for 16-24 year-olds in particular were not available.)

Violence-supportive and hostile masculine attitudes are a consistent predictor of men's perpetration of sexual and domestic violence

Violence-supportive attitudes are a consistent predictor of the perpetration of domestic and sexual violence. A large volume of scholarship demonstrates that men are more likely to use violence against women and girls if they subscribe to attitudes that condone, minimise, excuse, or justify that violence.

- In a meta-analysis of studies over 2000-2021 of sexual assault perpetration by male university students in the US, based on 25 studies, the strongest risk markers for perpetration included measures directly related to sexist masculinity, including peer

approval of sexual assault, rape myth acceptance, hostility towards women, and sexist beliefs (Spencer et al., 2022).

2) Sexist and violence-supportive peers

A second key influence on men's perpetration of sexual violence is what the scholarship calls "peer support". Men are more likely to be sexually aggressive if they have sexually aggressive peers, that is, male friends who themselves tolerate or perpetrate sexual aggression. At least two processes shape this: peer reinforcement of sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviors, and self-selection into violence-supportive peer groups and settings (Dean & Swartout, 2021).

Specific peer groups, such as fraternities and athletic teams in universities, may foster a hypermasculine culture in which men feel pressure or entitlement to use coercion and force for sex (Godenzi, Schwartz, & Dekeseredy, 2001). In this sense, men may learn to use sexual violence in part by interacting with male peers who promote or justify sexual violence perpetration. Boys and men who perceive they will gain status or acceptance among male peers by having sex may use coercive or aggressive tactics to obtain sex to realise these gains (Dunn, Pearlman, Montgomery, & Orchowski, 2021).

Peer approval of sexual assault is a strong risk factor for perpetration, according to two meta-analyses of sexual violence perpetration in universities

- In a meta-analysis of sexual violence perpetration in universities, peer approval of sexual violence was shown to increase the odds of SV perpetration (Steele, Martin, Yakubovich, Humphreys, & Nye, 2020). Individuals showed a higher risk of perpetrating sexual violence if their peer groups (in this case fraternities) condoned this behavior or if their peers approved of sexual violence.
    - Indeed, factors such as group membership and perceived peer approval of sexual violence may have greater influence on sexual violence perpetration than personal beliefs. In this meta-analysis hostile masculinity and rape myth acceptance did not strongly predict perpetration, and fraternity membership and peer approval of sexual violence were more decisive predictors (Steele et al., 2020).
- In a second meta-analysis, this time of studies over 2000-2021 of sexual assault perpetration by male university students in the US and based on 25 studies, peer approval of sexual assault was one of the strongest risk markers for perpetration (Spencer et al., 2022).

In short, male peer support for violence is an important predictor of men's perpetration of sexual and physical abuse. If a man is attached to male peers who abuse women, if he has mates who condone or excuse violence against women, if he has friends who provide information or guidance for example that women owe him sex or he should respond with force to girlfriends' challenges to his authority, he is much more likely to use violence himself.

3) Settings and contexts

Risk factors for violence perpetration also can be found at the level of settings and institutional contexts. There are three contexts in which most empirical research has been done: universities, sport, and the military.

Let's focus, of course, on universities. Nearly all this research comes from the USA, and much of it is focused on all-male residential colleges or fraternities.

Men in all-male university residences (fraternities) have higher rates of sexual violence perpetration than other males.

There is a consistent association between men's membership of all-male university residences (fraternities) and their likelihood of sexual violence perpetration:

- Fraternity membership, in a meta-analysis of university men's perpetration of sexual violence, was associated with an increased likelihood of sexual violence perpetration (Steele et al., 2020). (Note that not all studies find such associations. For example, Gidycz *et al.* (2007) did not find any relationship between fraternity membership or athletic participation and sexual assault perpetration, although they could not test for whether the social norms of these settings were violence-supportive or not (Gidycz et al., 2007, p. 91).)

These patterns may be shaped by both group socialisation and self-selection

I said before that two processes shape this assocation between fraternity membership and sexual assault perpetration. First, there is *group socialisation*, where peers reinforce sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviors.

Second, there is *self-selection* into violence-supportive peer groups and settings (Dean & Swartout, 2021). There is some evidence that the male students who want to join fraternities or do join fraternities have higher levels of self-reported proclivity to perpetrate sexual violence and greater support for rape myths than other men (Palmer, McMahon, & Fissel, 2021; Seabrook, McMahon, & O'Connor, 2018).

Why do some campuses and some residences have higher levels of harassment and violence than others?

So why do some campuses and some residences have higher levels of harassment and violence than others? In simple terms, because the risk factors for violence are worse there, or there are more of them. What kinds of risk factors?

Violence-supportive peer cultures

There are violence-supportive peer cultures on and around campus: in some all-male residential colleges, university sporting clubs and codes, and in young people's informal peer circles.

The risks of men's sexual violence against women are higher in some contexts on and around campus than others. For example, rates of sexual violence appear to be higher in male campus fraternities involving greater gender segregation, less non-sexual male-female interaction, high alcohol consumption, use of pornography, and local cultures of sexism, sexual boasting and sexual harassment.

University campuses and particularly university residences may involved increased risks of sexual and domestic violence because of other factors too, such as:

'Hookup' and 'party' cultures that involve sexist social norms

E.g., social groups, parties, and bars and pubs that promote casual sex/hook-ups, but also that have attitudes and norms that feed into sexual violence, such as acceptance of rape myths, hostile attitudes toward women, and beliefs in traditional masculinity

Alcohol availability (Perpetrators may use or encourage alcohol consumption strategically or opportunistically)

Not about the drug or substance itself, but how it is used and the meanings given to it. E.g.

alcohol is used in a variety of ways by perpetrators in social interactions and settings in

> order to perpetrate sexual assault. These included: taking advantage of the social use of alcohol to enable and facilitate the assaults; as a method of increasing perpetrator confidence; excusing their perpetrating behaviour after the assault; and enabling manipulation of the effects of alcohol for the purposes of reinterpreting the assault or a woman's memories of it. (McDonald, Carrington, Flood, & Choden, 2021)

Preventing and reducing sexual and domestic violence on campus

The third thing university colleges must know is how to prevent and reduce the problem.

I won't talk about how we should respond to victim-survivors of sexual harassment and assault. I won't discuss how we should hold perpetrators accountable. Want to focus, instead, on *primary* prevention: on how we make initial perpetration and victimisation less likely.

A key strategy for primary prevention is *education.*

Education for violence prevention: Criteria for effective practice

So what are the key elements of effective practice in violence prevention education? There are five elements for a minimum standard here.

Note that I cover these only briefly here, but in the final page of the slides, I list resources providing detailed guidance on effective practice.

(1) A whole-of-institution approach

Whatever means a university adopts to educate its students about violence, these must be embedded in a whole-of-institution approach. A whole-of-institution approach requires the adoption of comprehensive and multipronged intervention strategies to prevent and reduce violence.

(2) Long-term vision, approach, and funding

Second, a long term approach involves sustainable resourcing, adequate and appropriate staffing for prevention work, and ongoing engagement of and collaboration with key stakeholders.

(3) Effective curriculum delivery

Third, violence prevention curricula will only be effective if based in appropriate forms of teaching and learning.

So if you are running or hosting educational sessions for the students in your residence, you want to make sure that they do well on four dimensions of practice: (a) curriculum content, (b) teaching and learning methods, (c) curriculum structure, and (d) educators.

Curriculum content

Program curricula should directly address the factors known to drive violence, including violence-supportive and sexist attitudes and norms, gendered power relations and inequalities, and a host of other social and cultural factors. They must address *both* domestic and sexual violence.

Teaching and learning methods

Effective programs are interactive, participatory, and include small-group learning. Face-to-face education should include participatory discussion, role plays, critical reflection, and behavioural rehearsal. In short, education must involve active learning.

Curriculum structure

Education programs must have sufficient duration to produce change. Programs with greater amounts of contact with students have larger impacts on student outcomes.

Brief, one-session programs are seen as unlikely to achieve lasting change in violent attitudes or behaviours (DeGue, 2014, p. 8). Looking at brief, one-session educational programs among university students, as a recent review concludes, "none have demonstrated lasting effects on risk factors or behavior" (DeGue, 2014, p. 8).

Educators

Violence prevention programs should be delivered by skilled and trained staff – by educators with both content expertise and educational skills. There are advantages in having university staff teach violence prevention education, although there also are advantages in drawing on external community educators.

Some program rely on peer educators: on students teaching students. But one review found that whether professionals or others implemented the intervention had little influence on impacts, while another found that professional presenters were more successful than either graduate students or peer presenters.

(4) Relevant and tailored practice

The fourth criterion for effective violence prevention education is relevant and tailored practice.

Good practice programs are relevant to the communities and contexts in which they are delivered. They are informed by knowledge of their target group or population and their local contexts.

(5) Evaluation and continual improvement

Finally, good practice programs involve a comprehensive process of evaluation which is integrated into program design and implementation.

Education for violence prevention: Is it effective?

Violence prevention education can be an effective strategy of violence prevention and reduction. If done well (and this is a significant 'if'), such programs can produce declines in factors associated with violence such as attitudes and beliefs. University students who have attended education programs focused on sexual assault prevention show less adherence to rape myths, express less rape-supportive attitudes, and/or report greater victim empathy than those in control groups.

The evidence base for educational programs' impact on actual perpetration and victimisation is weaker. For a start, most interventions have not been evaluated. When they are, few studies collect both pre- and post-intervention data (before and after the program), measure actual violent behaviour as an outcome, use control or comparison groups, or collect longer-term data. Impact evaluations also show that not all programs are effective: some have mixed effects, and some even have had negative effects.

Only a few university-based group interventions can show evidence of reductions in violence perpetration and/or victimisation. These include a multi-session program among men in a university residence (Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011), a four-by-three-hour sexual assault resistance program among female students (Charlene Y. Senn et al., 2015; Charlene Y Senn et al., 2017), a mixed-sex, multi-session program among first-year students (Rothman & Silverman, 2007), and other interventions (Ellsberg et al., 2015).

Bystander intervention programs

One important stream of education focuses on bystander intervention: on engaging students as active bystanders, who will speak up or act when they see violent or violence-supportive behaviours and situations.

There is a growing evidence base to show that, like other violence prevention programs, bystander intervention programs can produce positive change in students' attitudes and behaviours.

This evidence comes almost entirely from the US and UK. In Australia, very very few programs have had any kind of robust evaluation of impact, including prominent programs such as MATE Bystander. I have seen the people running the MATE Bystander program say that the program has been evaluated and shows positive impacts. But this evaluation relied only on post-workshop data, asking participants after the sessions if the sessions had had a positive effect. This cannot be used to make robust claims about impact.

Online education

A key challenge in university-based violence prevention is how to reach large student populations. Online delivery has obvious advantages over in-person interventions, including lower cost and greater reach.

Online violence prevention programs do show some positive evaluations. For example

- The US program RealConsent comprises six 30-minute media-based and interactive modules. In a study among US male students, at six-month follow-up participants showed a range of positive attitudinal and behavioural changes compared to a control group (Salazar, Vivolo-Kantor, Hardin, & Berkowitz, 2014). Individuals who had taken part in the RealConsent program engaged in less sexual violence perpetration and intervened more often than controls, and also reported a range of positive attitudinal changes.

- On the other hand, a far shorter intervention, the 20-minute intervention TakeCARE, had no positive impact on university students' feelings of efficacy in engaging in positive bystander behaviour or their actual engagement (Kleinsasser, Jouriles, McDonald, & Rosenfield, 2015).

Whether violence prevention is face-to-face or online, the same criteria apply. Programs ideally are interactive, they teach skills, and they are of sufficient duration and intensity to make change.

Prevention education among college residents

There are a small number of robust impact evaluations of violence prevention programs among college residents. And again, these show that well-designed interventions can produce positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours associated with domestic or sexual violence (Beres, Treharne, & Stojanov, 2019; Gidycz et al., 2011; Stojanov et al., 2021; Toy, 2016)

For example;

- Male first-year students in university residence halls in the US participated in a 1.5-hour prevention program, and a 1-hour booster session four months later, all face-to-face. The program included various components including empathy induction, norms correction (the presentation of campus-wide and participant data on men's discomfort with the inappropriate behaviour and language of other men), a discussion of consent, and bystander intervention. The program showed positive impacts on participants' labelling of particular scenarios as rape, perceptions of other men's likelihood to intervene in an inappropriate dating situation, associations with sexually aggressive peers, and

engagement in sexual aggression, compared to a control group, but no impact on males' rape myth acceptance, hypergender ideology (agreement with stereotypical gender roles), perceptions that their friends would disapprove of aggressive behaviour, or their own reported likelihood of intervening in inappropriate dating situations (Gidycz et al., 2011).

- The Bringing in The Bystander program was piloted in three residential colleges at a New Zealand university, with participants volunteering to take part. The program consists either of a shorter condensed version (90 minutes in one session) or a longer comprehensive version (4.5 hours across two sessions), and this evaluation used the longer one. Participants did showe an increase in bystander efficacy, but no increase in their application of bystander behaviour.

Other prevention strategies on campus

Universities can adopt other education-focused strategies which will complement and strengthen face-to-face and online education. Again, none of these alone will be sufficient to make significant or lasting change in violence-related attitudes or behaviours:

Student orientation: Universities can build education into student orientation, providing educational material for new students, including prevention materials in student orientation and campus tours, and so on.

Educational events: Universities can host events such as speakers' panels, film screenings, special campus weeks, forums, etc. Note however that one-off media interventions such as showing an educational film are ineffective at producing substantial or lasting change.

Communications and social marketing: Universities can run communications and social marketing campaigns. Such campaigns typically have greater impact if they have greater intensity and duration and are complemented by community-based strategies.

Advocacy campaigns: Universities can support or resource campus-based advocacy groups, student unions, or other entities to run campaigns raising awareness among students on campus, including e.g. women's collectives, students' sexual assault advocacy groups, men's anti-rape networks, and advocacy by male academic staff.

Codes of conduct: Codes of student conduct can help to shape social norms on campus. They may include policies on affirmative consent, in which consent to sexual activity must be freely given by all parties involved.

Conclusion

There is a compelling rationale for implementing violence prevention initiatives in the universities context. In the first instance, universities are settings in which both victimisation and perpetration occur.

In addition, the predictors or drivers of violence against women are evident in universities, including violence-supportive attitudes and violence-supportive peer cultures

Universities must take action to prevent and reduce violence also because they have a clear duty of care towards staff and students. Students have the right to participate safely and equitably in higher education.

More positively, universities are very well placed to play valuable roles in the prevention and reduction of sexual violence. Campus-based violence prevention education, when done well, has been shown to work. While colleges must be ready to support victims and survivors of violence, and to hold perpetrators of violence accountable, they must also take steps to prevent or lessen the likelihood of violence occurring in the first place.

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(Note that some citations have been omitted from the body of this piece.)

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Building Cultures of Respect and Safety in University Colleges

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1

University colleges have a vital role to play

- University colleges have a vital role to play in building cultures of respect and safety on campus
- But to realise that positive role, colleges must:
  1) Know the extent and character of the problem, of sexual and domestic violence;
  2) Know what is causing the problem – the drivers of sexual and domestic violence;
  3) Know how to prevent and reduce the problem

2

The extent of the problem on campus

- Sexual harassment
  - 1 in 6 students, 16.1%, have experienced sexual harassment since starting university
  - 1 in 12, 8.1%, have experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months
- Sexual assault
  - 1 in 20 students, 4.5%, have experienced sexual assault since starting university
  - 1 in 90, 1.1%, have experienced sexual assault in the past 12 months

3

The extent of the problem in residences

- Students who live in student accommodation or residences are more likely to experience sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- *Sexual harassment:*
  - Since starting at university, one quarter (24.0%) of students living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual harassment, compared with 13.0% of students living on their own.
  - One in five (19%) students living in student accommodation or residences have experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months.

4

The extent of the problem in residences

- *Sexual assault:*
  - Among students who had experienced sexual assault, the most common locations reported for this were in student accommodation or residences.
    - One quarter of incidents (27.3%) took place here.
  - One in 11 students (8.8%) currently living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual assault in a university context
    - Compared to lower rates among students living in their own place, living by themselves, or with their parents, guardian or other family
  - One in 20 students (6.0%) living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months
    - Compared with less than 1% of students living on their own with others, with their parents, guardian or other family, or living by themselves

5

But what about the perpetrators?

One in six university students sexually harassed, one in 20 sexually assaulted

Jordan Baker, Wendy Tuohy ⋮⋮ 23/03/2022

6

Perpetrators and perpetration

- What is missing is the individuals who perpetrated the incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault
- Sexual and domestic violence often are framed in passive, perpetrator-free language:
  - 'John raped Emma' becomes 'Emma was raped by John' becomes 'Emma was raped'

7

We must pay attention to perpetrators and perpetration

- Not naming the agents of violence matters in three ways:
  - We do not hold perpetrators accountable
    - "Violence is a problem for victims, but not a victim's problem." *Lula Dembele*
  - We do not hold communities responsible
  - We do not address the drivers of perpetration
    - Perpetrators are made, not born
    - If we want to stop making perpetrators, we have to change the social conditions and settings which produce them.

8

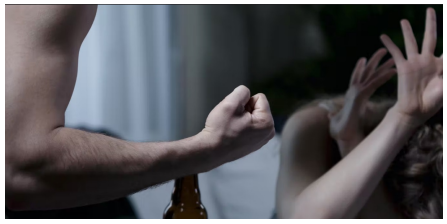
The extent of perpetration in universities

- Significant proportions of men (and small proportions of women) have perpetrated violence, abuse, and harassment
- A systematic review of 78 studies, among over 25,000 male university students in the US and Canada, over 2000 to 2017, finds that:
  - 29.3% of men on average at universities have perpetrated sexual violence in their lifetimes
  - About 1 in 20 male university students, 19%, have perpetrated sexual coercion (defined as any type of sexual intercourse obtained via verbal tactics such as verbal pressuring behaviour, expressions of anger, threats to the relationship, and so on).
  - About 1 in 15, 6.5%, have perpetrated rape (defined as any type of sexual intercourse obtained via incapacitation, physical force, or threats of physical force)
- What proportion of students (and staff) on Australian campuses have perpetrated sexual harassment or sexual assault?

9

The extent and character of the problem

- We need to know about:
  - The extent of victimisation
  - The extent of perpetration
  - The impacts of these behaviours
  - Not only sexual harassment and sexual violence, but also domestic violence / intimate partner violence
  - The dynamics of these behaviours



10

The drivers of sexual and domestic violence on campus

- The social-ecological model
  - There are risk factors for perpetration and victimisation at the societal, community, relationship, and individual levels
  - These levels are interconnected
  - Structural and cultural factors are as important as individual and relational factors
  - The causes of violence are probabilistic rather than deterministic

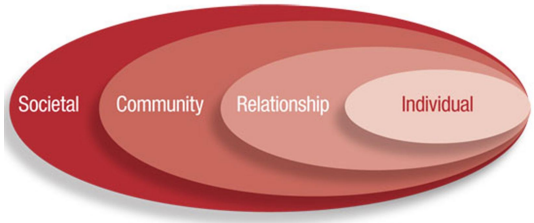


Figure 1.2. The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention

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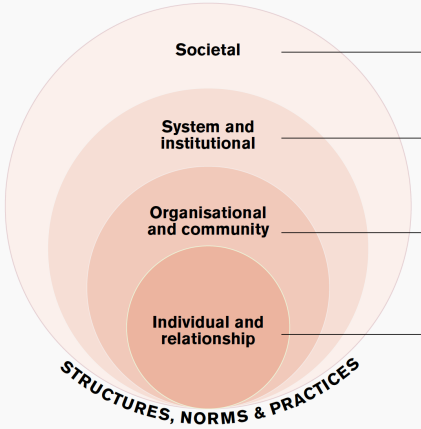
The social-ecological model

Figure 5
The socio-ecological model of violence against women

See alternate text for Figure 5 on page 130.



Examples of structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of the social ecology.
Dominant social norms supporting rigid roles and stereotyping, or condoning, excusing and downplaying violence against women.
Failure of systems, institutions and policies to promote women's economic, legal and societal autonomy, or to adequately address violence against women.
Organisation and community norms, structures and practices supporting or failing to address gender inequality, stereotyping, discrimination and violence.
Individual adherence to rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality, social learning of violence against women, male dominance and controlling behaviours in relationships.

Source: Our Watch, *Change the Story - a shared framework*, 2nd edition, 2021

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Primary prevention

- Aims to change the social conditions that support and promote domestic and sexual violence
  - To prevent initial perpetration and victimisation.
- Addresses the drivers of various forms of interpersonal violence
- Is aimed at changing structures, norms, and practices

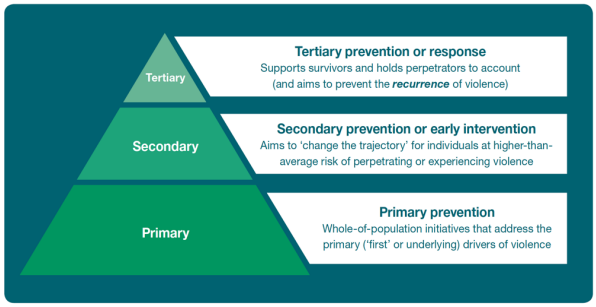

Figure 2 The relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women

Screenshot

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1) Violence-supportive attitudes

- Significant proportions of young men and, to a lesser extent, young women, have violence-supportive and sexist attitudes
- Attitudes excusing violence:

	Males 16-24	Females 16-24
Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex	43	36
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	10	9
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person regrets it	33*	20

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Attitudes minimising violence and blaming the victim

	Males 16-24	Females 16-24
Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case	56*	47
Women rarely make false claims of rape	54	58
A lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets	46*	33
If a women doesn't physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape	8	9
If a women is raped while drunk/affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	21	15
Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'	22	17
If a women goes to a room alone with a man at a party, it is her fault if she is raped	9	8

15

Attitudes supporting gender inequality

	Males 16-24	Females 16-24
On the whole men make better political leaders than women	29*	19
Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia	17*	10
Men should take control in relationships and be head of the household	27*	17
Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship	38*	31

(Harris *et al.* 2015)

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1) Violence-supportive attitudes

- Violence-supportive and hostile masculine attitudes are a consistent predictor of men's perpetration of sexual and domestic violence
- In a meta-analysis of studies over 2000-2021 of sexual assault perpetration by male university students, the strongest risk markers for perpetration included measures directly related to sexist masculinity, including:
  - Peer approval of sexual assault
  - Rape myth acceptance
  - Hostility towards women, and
  - Sexist beliefs

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2) Sexist and violence-supportive peers

- Men are more likely to be sexually aggressive if they have sexually aggressive peers: male friends who themselves tolerate or perpetrate sexual aggression
- Processes:
  - Peer reinforcement of sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviours
  - Self-selection into violence-supportive peer groups and settings
- Peer approval of sexual assault is a strong risk factor for perpetration, according to two meta-analyses of sexual violence perpetration in universities

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3) Settings and contexts

- Some campuses and some residences have higher levels of harassment and violence than others
- Example: fraternities (US all-male university residences)
  - Men in fraternities have higher rates of sexual violence perpetration than other male university students
  - Men in fraternities have more violence-supportive attitudes than other men
  - These patterns may be shaped by both group socialisation and self-selection

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Campus and residence risk factors

- The risks of men's sexual violence against women are higher in some contexts than others.
  - E.g., in contexts with gender segregation, high alcohol consumption, use of pornography, and local cultures of sexism, sexual boasting and sexual harassment
- Further risk factors include:
  - Violence-supportive peer cultures
  - 'Hookup' and 'party' cultures that involve sexist social norms
  - Alcohol availability (Perpetrators may use or encourage alcohol consumption strategically or opportunistically)

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Violence prevention education

- Teaching and learning strategies aimed at the primary prevention of domestic and/or sexual violence
  - Also called: respectful relationships education, healthy relationships education, consent education
- One of the most widely used, and evaluated, strategies
  - 100s of evaluations of university-based sexual violence prevention programs
  - But there are no evaluations of university programs in Australia

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Effective practice in violence prevention education

1. A whole-of-institution approach
2. A long-term vision and funding
3. Effective curriculum delivery
4. Relevant and tailored practice
5. Evaluation

22

1. A whole-of-institution approach

- Comprehensive and multipronged intervention strategies which aim to bring about systemic, sustainable change
- An approach that operates across:
  - Curriculum, teaching and learning
  - University policy and practices
  - University culture, ethos and environment
  - Partnerships and services

2. A long-term vision and funding

- Including resourcing, staffing, and senior-level leadership

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3. Effective curriculum delivery

a) Curriculum content: Programs must address:
- the factors known to drive violence
- both physical *and* sexual violence
- the specific dynamics and determinants of each form of violence

b) Teaching and learning methods
- Interactive, participatory, and include small-group learning

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3. Effective curriculum delivery *cont'd*

c) Curriculum structure: Good practice programs have sufficient duration and intensity to produce change.

- Duration:
  - One-session programs are unlikely to make substantial and lasting changes
  - Lengthier, multi-session programs have greater impacts

d) Educators: Should be trained and skilled

- May be university staff, community educators, or peer educators

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4. Relevant and tailored practice

- Good practice programs are informed by knowledge of their audiences and local contexts and tailored for particular campus populations.

5. Evaluation and improvement

- A comprehensive process of evaluation

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Is violence prevention education effective?

- Yes, if done well
- Evaluation:
  - Few interventions have been evaluated
  - Few evaluations collect both pre- and post-intervention data (before and after the program), measure actual violent behaviour as an outcome, use control or comparison groups, or collect longer-term data
  - Evaluations show mixed impacts
- Violence prevention education can produce positive change in:
  - violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs
  - actual victimisation and perpetration

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Is violence prevention education effective?

- Bystander intervention programs
  - like other violence prevention programs, can produce positive change in students' attitudes and behaviours
  - In Australia, few programs have had any kind of robust evaluation of impact, including prominent programs such as MATE Bystander
- Online programs
  - Online delivery has important advantages over in-person interventions
  - Some programs, especially longer ones, show positive impacts
  - The same criteria apply as for face-to-face education…
  - Online programs ideally are interactive, they teach skills, and they are of sufficient duration and intensity to make change

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Violence prevention education

- Prevention education among college residents
- Other prevention strategies on campus
  - Student orientation
  - Educational events: speakers' panels, film screenings, special campus weeks, forums, etc.
  - Communications and social marketing
  - Advocacy campaigns (women's collectives, students' sexual assault advocacy groups, men's anti-rape networks, male allies)
  - Codes of conduct

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So…

- It *is* possible to shift the attitudes, behaviours, and inequalities which feed into violence, abuse, and harassment.
- *If* our efforts are well-designed (and that is a big if), then we *can* make change.

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Resources

- Key guides to campus-based prevention: https://xyonline.net/content/university-and-campus-based-prevention-sexual-and-domestic-violence-xy-collection
- Bibliography: violence prevention on campuses and at university: https://xyonline.net/books/bibliography/27-violence-and-responses-violence/u-violence-prevention/campus
- Best practice in consent education: https://xyonline.net/content/best-practice-consent-education
- Respectful Relationships Education: Effective practice: http://xyonline.net/content/respectful-relationships-education-violence-prevention-and-respectful-relationships-education
- Engaging men in prevention: https://xyonline.net/content/engaging-men-violence-prevention-key-resources
- Engaging Male Students and Staff on Campus in Violence Prevention (Presentation, 2019): https://xyonline.net/content/engaging-male-students-and-staff-campus-violence-prevention

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