

Putting perpetrators in the picture: Mapping the extent and character of violence perpetration in Australia

Dr Michael Flood and Lula Dembele

Citation: Flood, M., and Dembele, L. (2020). Putting perpetrators in the picture: Mapping the extent and character of violence perpetration in Australia. *STOP Domestic Violence Conference*, Gold Coast, December 2-4 2020

What is the problem?

- It is time to reframe the problem of domestic violence as the perpetrators' problem
- There are limitations to:
 - How domestic violence is described or framed;
 - The data we have on domestic violence;
 - And how prevention and reduction efforts are guided

How domestic violence is framed

- Passive, perpetrator-free language:
 - "A man killed a woman" becomes "A woman was killed by a man" becomes "A woman was killed"
 - "John raped Mary" becomes "Mary was raped by John" becomes "Mary was raped"
 - "Preventing violence before it occurs"

How domestic violence is framed

- 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.



How domestic violence is measured

- We report on how many women were assaulted last year, not on how many men assaulted women last year.
- Existing data on domestic and family violence focuses on victimisation

How domestic violence is prevented and reduced

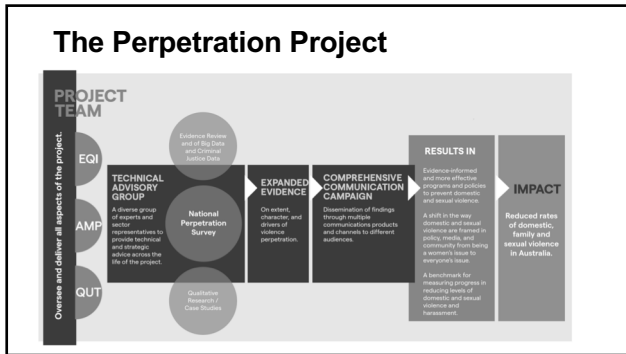
- If we don't know how many people are perpetrating domestic and sexual violence and how they are perpetrating it, how can we prevent it?
- If we don't know the conditions, contexts, and drivers for the perpetration of violence, how can we prevent it?

Mapping perpetration

- The Perpetration Project: A national research project on the perpetration of violence in intimate, domestic and family settings in Australia
- Includes:
 - A national Perpetration Survey.
 - Analysis of existing survey and criminal justice data
 - Analysis of forms of 'big' data

What we do and don't know about perpetration

- There is:
 - Growing international scholarship on what proportions of men, and sometimes women, use violence
 - Evidence that data on perpetration can be gathered effectively and ethically
 - Growing knowledge about perpetrators and risk factors for perpetration
 - Shifts in criminal data collection
 - Evidence of contrasts in men's and women's perpetration of domestic violence
- But little is known about:
 - Risks for perpetration of different forms of violence
 - Female and same-sex perpetrators
 - Other issues



Putting perpetrators in the picture

- As part of naming violence and abuse, it is important to name those who perpetrate the violence
- Framing domestic violence as only a victim's problem may reflect a societal discomfort
 - Just how many men among us have behaved in violent, abusive, or coercive ways?
 - "It is the men we know, like and love who use abuse and violence."
Lula Dembele
- Framing violence as a perpetrator's problem may be where the hard work really begins