The Significance of Culture in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence in Universities

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Abstract

In this chapter, we argue that gender-based violence within university communities across the UK stems from intersecting issues of sexism and other forms of discrimination in wider society. We argue that cultures of institutionalised sexism in our universities facilitate the persistence of gender-based violence (hereafter GBV) on our campuses. This chapter will demonstrate how *Equally Safe in Higher Education* - developed in Scotland - adopted a whole campus approach to GBV prevention and intervention which was unequivocally and proudly, grounded in feminist analysis, research and practice. Finally, the chapter provides evidence which confirms the importance of this approach and of contextualising the wide spectrum of GBV within the cultural context of the institution in institutional prevention strategies.

Introduction

In 2018 the authors (Donaldson et al, 2018) discussed the different political framings of violence against women and gender-based violence taken by the four nations of the UK (England being synonymous with the UK Government approach). In this chapter we demonstrate that the gendered analysis taken by the Scottish government has led to a radically different policy framework and a development of understanding strongly informed by the third sector feminist anti-male violence movements in Scotland.

Violence Against Women as a Policy Issue

During the 1970s and 1980s, preventing violence against women (VAW) became a progressive social policy issue in the UK, Europe and the US as a result of feminism and women's social activism (Htun and Weldon, 2012). This drew public and political attention to the physical and sexual abuse of women (Dobash el al., 1992) and deepened knowledge of women's lived and common experiences of violence, and offered directions for prevention strategies (Walby, 2011; Walby et al., 2014). Feminist research looked beyond individual pathology and scrutinised men's violence in its wider social and historical context. Definitions of violence derived directly from women's lived experience were developed whereby forms of violence against women were reconceptualised as gendered phenomena and reframed within a matrix of embedded public and private social controls which maintained women's historic social subordination (Hanmer, 1978, 1996; Littlejohn, 1978). In the twenty-first century VAW has been described as a 'concrete manifestation of inequality between the sexes' (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005: 1282) which presents a significant impediment to women's equality. There is also recognition that most women experience more than one form and that the negative and cumulative impact can reach beyond the home, across social space, and throughout the lifespan (Scottish Government, 2009).

Research on VAW policy development worldwide has shown that the most effective strategies are those which adopt an ecological perspective to instruct action across society at macro and micro levels and which intersect with vertical and horizontal axes of power across public and private space (Heise, 1998; Samarasekera and Horton, 2015; Stockdale and Nadler, 2012). Hearn and McKie (2008) suggest a three point gender framework for examining VAW policy development which includes: a gendered definition and analysis of violence and abuse in all its forms; a recognition of the social norms and material conditions which facilitate the exercise of male power and privilege; and acknowledgement of the varied locations and contexts where such violence occurs (Hearn and McKie, 2008). The extent to which VAW

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policy developments in the UK since the late 1990s have adhered to this conceptualisation in current UK frameworks varies and can be contextualised within the constitutional changes which have taken place in the UK since 1998. Within the four UK home nations, only Wales and Scotland have adopted a gendered framework in their approach to VAW prevention (McCullough et al, 2017).

Whilst violence against women and girls is a global issue it is conceptualised and responded to in a variety of ways dependent on the cultural and political context. Here, in Scotland, we pride ourselves on being a more radical nation than the UK as a whole, voting against Brexit, campaigning for independence from the tyranny of Westminster, conceptualising poverty as a social problem needing a societal response and having a gendered, and feminist, understanding of violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including that happening on campus or directed towards or perpetrated by university staff and students. This has been the framework for our policy response to all forms of VAW.

For 2019-2020, Police Scotland recorded 62,907 reported incidents of domestic abuse with the majority (82%) having a male perpetrator and female victim. In 2018-19 alone, there were 13,547 recorded reports of sexual crimes including sexual assault and rape/attempted rape (Scottish Government, 2019). In 2018 the Scottish Government (2018) estimated the annual financial cost of domestic abuse to be £1.6 billion with a further £4 billion spent annually on wider violence against women and girls each. Despite what is arguably a more progressive, feminist informed conceptual understanding, and associated legal framework and policy response, levels of VAW are comparable to that of the wider UK. This, we would argue, is due to the wider framework of inequality in which gender norms and sex based inequalities still persist and are manifest across all our social, cultural, economic and political domains (Engender, 2020).

What makes Scotland stand out from its nation counterparts is our unequivocal stance on the causes of violence against women. In Scotland, the government understands that violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of inequality between women and men and that prevention work must involve tackling the underpinning social, political and economic inequalities between women and men (Scottish Government, 2018). A snapshot of civic, economic and political society demonstrates that men disproportionally hold leadership and management positions. On a global scale it is estimated that women comprise a quarter of all senior positions (Grant Thornton, 2018) and at a local level, in Scotland, women hold less than a third (27 per cent) of all "positions of power, authority and influence" (Engender, 2017). Where women do make seniority (across the UK, men comprise 73 per cent of CEOs

and senior officials and 70% of managers and directors), there remains a pay gap (ONS, 2018). Indeed, within the Scottish Higher Education sector in 2016-2017, only 23 per cent of all Principals in Scottish Universities were women (Engender, 2017).

Patriarchal gender norms condition and encourage men to be leaders and financial breadwinners so, in practice, men dominate senior positions at work and do less unpaid labouring at home; the uneven split in household responsibilities means men have greater long-term financial and career prospects (Arun et al, 2004). Gender norms foster male privilege and men may feel challenged by women who deviate from them, whether or not they actively seek to oppress women (Connell, 1995; 1998). 'Gender disruption' (Risman, 1998), where women have higher economic statuses than their male partners, does not necessarily disrupt the gender hierarchy: it may simply loosen the link between money and power, leaving men's dominant 'breadwinner' status intact (Tichenor, 2005). Women consistently face more challenges in their work lives than men (Gregory, 2003) and are paid less across all occupations in the UK (ONS, 2018). When women are in promoted posts they may be respected to lesser degrees than comparable men and women may be penalised or receive less credit for work if they do not behave in accordance with prescribed gender norms (see Lup, 2018). Relatedly, despite it being in breach of legislation (see section 18 of the UK Equalities Act 2010), employers may be reluctant to employ or promote women because of the perceived extent of their household responsibilities. For example, pregnant women still encounter discriminatory practice limiting both career prospects and progression (Masser et al., 2007; Petit, 2007). The result is a workplace hierarchy in which women occupy only a quarter of senior positions worldwide and are over-represented at the bottom (Grant Thornton, 2018). Whilst this chapter focuses primarily on sex based inequalities, it is important to recognise that these discriminations are exacerbated for particular groups of women, including women of colour and women with disabilities (Crenshaw, 1991).

The Scotland Act 1998 gave the new Scottish Parliament power to encourage equal opportunities and to ensure the observation of equal opportunity requirements and also the power to impose duties on Scottish public authorities and cross border public bodies operating in Scotland. Devolution facilitated the development of political systems and structures in the new governments which supported the equal representation of women. This was seized upon by feminist and women's organisations, politicians and trade unionists in Scotland. The introduction of quotas and other measures to support the increased participation of women in the new political structures resulted in what has been described as the 'feminisation' of politics, whereby women's increased participation also promoted the advancement of issues affecting women's lives in the political agenda (Lovenduski, 2012; Mackay and McAllister, 2012).

Violence Against Women Policy in Scotland

The changing gender landscape in the political life of Scotland and Wales has been credited with achieving a new emphasis on the mainstreaming of equality and in the development of national policies on domestic abuse and VAW in both countries (Ball and Charles, 2006; Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001; Mackay, 2010). The role of feminist campaigning and service providers such as the established national networks of Women's Aid and Rape Crisis centres have also had a significant impact on the development of VAW policy in Scotland through closer access to the policy makers and the development of successful lobbying strategies. Consistent and careful management of the tension between crime prevention focused strategies, survivor-informed approaches, and clearly linked strategies to structural gender inequality has resulted in the gendered framework being adopted in Scotland (and Wales).

The Scottish Government's statutory obligations in relation to gender equality derive from the UK Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and the more specific requirements of the Gender Equality Duty 2007 (Engender, 2014). Through its policy and funding frameworks, the Scottish Government aims to achieve gender equality in society and to address deep-rooted structural inequalities which prevent women and girls thriving as equal citizens. In *Equally Safe*, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Convention of Local Authorities (COSLA), provide a policy framework which incorporates the UN's gendered definition of VAW, supports the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, utilises a human rights approach, and a gendered analysis of abuse to emphasise the inter-play between gendered power relations and inequalities (Scottish Government, 2020). By conceptualising VAW as 'gendered' and both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, the Scottish Government highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girl's structural inequality and vulnerability to violence (Scottish Government, 2016: 10). *Equally Safe*'s gendered analysis thus institutionalises a national approach across the country which has been recognised as a progressive (Coy et al., 2008; Coy and Kelly, 2009). The approach stresses partnership working and outlines medium and long-term goals for achieving gender equality through primary, secondary and tertiary prevention emphasising, trauma-informed support for victims-survivors and a robust criminal justice response to perpetrators. Since 2017, the Scottish Government has invested £19.5m through its *Equally Safe* strategy in central funding for specialist domestic abuse and rape crisis services, national helplines, GBV prevention, research, and reforming the justice system. In 2016, funding was provided to a team (Melanie McCarry, Anni Donaldson and Roisin McGoldrick) at the

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University of Strathclyde to create the national *Equally Safe in Higher Education* (ESHE) Toolkit to support a whole campus approach to GBV prevention in Scottish universities echoing the approach outlined in *Equally Safe*.

ESHE Toolkit

The ESHE Toolkit looked beyond individualist explanations for sexual violence and GBV and its prevention (Donaldson et al, 2018; McCarry et al, 2018). It was grounded in feminist definitions derived from women's experiences, contextualised within feminist analyses of gender inequality and of the wider cultural context of male violence against women. The ESHE Toolkit provides guidance on addressing GBV responses, GBV prevention, GBV intervention and curriculum and knowledge exchange. In terms of language, whilst the Scottish Government use 'violence against women' a decision was made to use 'gender-based violence (GBV)' in the Toolkit to assuage the institution that we were also concerned with abuse directed towards male staff and students, non-binary people, and abuse perpetrated by women and/or non-binary people. The development of the Toolkit was very much a collaborative enterprise and we established an advisory group of experts including academics, practitioners and policy makers. We involved, for example, Police Scotland, Glasgow City Council, Rape Crisis, Glasgow Women's Support Project amongst others. This holistic approach ensured expertise on all aspects of work and including a wide range of university representatives including student wellbeing, campus security, disability services, student unions, staff unions, HR and senior managers and meant that our work was embedded in the institution (in structure at least). In addition to the ESHE Toolkit, there was a sister Research Toolkit that provided all the resources and guidance needed to collect data in an institution. Both Toolkits were freely available from the ESHE website and the team were available to help implement and support the data collection (Donaldson et al, 2018; McCarry et al, 2018).

Following the publication of the Toolkit in 2018, the remit of the ESHE project was expanded to include the Further Education sector, when the Scottish Government established the Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities Ministerial Working Group, of which the team are founder members and ESHE became *Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities* (ESCU). The Ministerial Working Group oversees the longer-term implementation of the ESHE Toolkit and ensures the sector's continued commitment to actions included in the Equally Safe Delivery Plan (Scottish Government 2020). A further significant milestone was achieved in 2018 when the Scottish Government Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training placed a requirement on Scottish universities and colleges

to implement the ESHE Toolkit and to report their progress to the Scottish Funding Council in their annual Outcome Agreements (Scottish Funding Council, 2020). ESHE/ESCU offered a unique opportunity to pioneer vital work which was fully informed by feminist approaches to VAW/GBV prevention and research in Scotland. The ESHE Toolkit project was also ambitious in its aim of drawing Scottish universities, for the first time, into the national GBV prevention strategy and to the Equally Safe Delivery Plan.

ESHE Research Toolkit

The Research Toolkit was developed to provide Scottish Higher Education Institutions with the means to build an evidence base of GBV on campus with the intention of using this to develop and tailor prevention strategies (McCarry et al, 2018). Included in the Toolkit was detailed guidance on research governance, participant recruitment, data collection tools and data management and analysis. To develop a robust evidence base, a mixed method approach to data collection was suggested and the tools for interviews, focus groups and surveys were provided.

The survey included in the Toolkit was the product of a rigorous three year pilot process and informed by leading national and international academic experts and practitioners in gender-based violence (as discussed above). Using Kelly's (1987) continuum of violence framework, the survey aimed to capture different manifestations on GBV as well as the wider cultural context of the institution (Kelly, 1987). This was the first project in Scotland (and possibly the UK) to investigate this continuum in the higher education context. The survey comprised five sections: campus safety; attitudes to, and experiences of, emotional abuse, physical violence, stalking, sexual harassment and sexual violence; impact of abuse; report and support pathways for victims/survivors; as well as broader issues regarding the gendered cultural context of the institution. The section on experiences of emotional abuse, physical violence, stalking, sexual harassment and sexual violence contained 26 questions that were adapted from validated scales (McCarry et al, 2018). Building on international research (e.g. Fenton and Jones, 2017; Jones et al., 2020) highlighting the characteristic of university cultures that scaffold GBV, two sets of questions on lad culture and gender inequality were included in the cultural context section of the survey.

Analysis of this facilitated what Liz Kelly (2007; 2016) terms the 'conducive context' of abusive spaces, which in this case in the university campus. The conducive context refers to social messages and discourse that normalise harmful practices and are maintained by gendered power structures of universities (Connell, 2019). Queries on 'lad culture' were derived from the definition provided by Phipps and Young (2015): as "a 'pack' mentality that

can be seen in activities such as sport and alcohol consumption, and 'banter' that was frequently sexist, misogynist, and homophobic". Gender inequality was described in the survey as "where people are treated differently and unequally based on their gender. This might refer to a difference in pay between men and women or an unequal distribution of men and women in different roles or at different levels."

Research Findings

The research team approached Universities across Scotland with an invitation to participate with full support and access to all materials. In total only four universities participated with the condition that findings would be reported anonymously. This participation rate was disappointing, and the data cannot be regarded as representative of the sector, but does also indicate the reticence of the sector to expose its practice to scrutiny or invite change: reasons for not participating ranged from resource and timing issues to ethics committees refusing to give approval, despite evidence demonstrating research on this topic poses little to no risk of harm (e.g. Jaffe et al., 2015). Therefore, in the presentation of the data, none of the four participating universities are identified and all findings are aggregated. A total of 1,272 staff members and 2,268 students completed the survey and 18 staff and 73 students took part in an interview or focus group. For brevity's sake, only the main findings are presented. Survey participants reported the GBV they had been subjected to in their lifetime (since aged 16) and in the last 12 months. Most staff (93%) and student (93%) reported being subjected to at least one form GBV during their lifetime and six in ten staff (60%) and eight in ten students (80%) reported being subjected to at least one form of GBV in the last 12 months. There were some key statistically significant differences between men and women. More female staff (61%) than male staff (57%) and significantly more female students (84%) than male students (70%) were subjected to GBV in the previous 12 months[1]. These gendered differences were reflected in interviews with female students and staff.

Female students described being subjected to a continuum of GBV behaviours. For instance, one female student described the emotional and physical violence she had been subjected to:

> *I had an emotionally and physically abusive boyfriend, he would strangle me. … I was at University but my then boyfriend wasn't and this was ongoing behaviour from*

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[1] Female and male refers to participants' gender, as reported in the survey.

him for a while, at least two years and the behaviours were much worse towards the end.

Another female student was subjected to stalking:

I've also got different exam rooms now for all of my exams because, although she [female student who is stalking her] won't be there, they can't explicitly stop her from coming on to campus. Because exam rooms and times, and locations and everything were all given out before any of this happened, obviously she has access to them.

In interviews with staff, the impact of the cultural context, including the formal and informal hierarchy was explored when discussing GBV[2]. Interviewees referred to the ways in which the cultural context of the university: (1) contributes towards the prevalence of GBV; (2) prevents reporting; and (3) 'protects' perpetrators. The following excerpt from a female administrative worker refers to a six-year period in which she was subject to systematic sexual assault, verbal abuse and physical harassment from a male line manager:

In here, in this office, there was one particular person, a letch, leering - the number of times that he had an obvious erection, and stood too close behind me, shoving it in me, tickling and all the rest of it.

The next quotation refers to an incident where a male professor used his seniority to intimidate and silence those he victimised:

I did have a personal situation quite a few years ago, probably about 10 years ago, maybe slightly more, where a professor in our department was very inappropriate with me, but again, I dealt with that myself… Although I was taken very by surprise, it was just him and I in my office when it happened, and I was taken very by surprise and as you kind of do, and because as well I'm an admin person, he's a professor and you feel that kind of, I've got to be careful, kind of thing.

This issue of seniority arose in a number of the interviews:

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[2] Whilst the following interview data are from the pilot, they are consistent with themes from the main study.

If I say that I'm not comfortable, what are the repercussions of that, because I have a senior member of staff in front of me… You just question things in your head, you think - because my response to that in a different setting, like if I was out at a nightclub or a pub, I would bite back and put people in their place a little bit more in a social setting. I wouldn't put up with that kind of stuff. But in work you have this professional persona, you want to not cause any difficulty for yourself as much as possible.

Interviewees discussed how hierarchy prevented them from responding to or reporting experiences due to concerns about negative career impact. For example, the excerpt below demonstrates how the cultural context can create an environment in which victims can come forward to disclose, or in this case, can prevent this from happening:

I feel my job is quite secure now, and yeah, I think that's basically - I've been here long enough that I know people, so I feel comfortable saying, and I know what tone I can use that will elicit a good response from them… I'm comfortable enough that I know the people I interact with mostly on a daily basis. I know them well enough to be able to say, you know, I'll not get kick-back from it, but that's always a concern, and certainly was when I first started when I was just a PhD student, and then an early-career researcher. That was definitely something, you kind of had to stop yourself and be like, maybe not. I'll not say anything. I'll let that one slide.

She referred to contract precarity as a barrier to female staff being able to challenge the behaviour of senior male staff: '*I know other female colleagues who haven't called people out on it because they're like, 'actually, that's the person who's going to have to renew our contract in six months' time''*. Interviewees also demonstrated ways in which hierarchy protects senior male perpetrators:

If it had been another member of staff or a researcher, I would have immediately gone to my immediate boss who's a professor, but because this was another professor, I felt very uncomfortable in doing so, so decided not to.

These findings support a conclusion that gender inequality in academia creates a conducive context for the occurrence of a spectrum of GBV which is symptomatic of cultural

resistance to gender equality and to prevention. Further supporting unequal gender relations of university campuses is 'lad culture' which is traditionally associated with certain male student populations, such as rugby group and their sexist 'banter' (Phipps, 2017) as described by a female student:

> *Just the sort of boys that think with the mentality of 'boys will be boys', that they can get away with doing what they like. Very misogynistic. Getting into the more sociology side, but a more hegemonic masculinity. Just being a lad's lad, and not having a lot of respect for women in general.*

The link between sexist 'banter' and increased tolerance for sexism and GBV perpetration is long evidenced (Angelone et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2015; Renzetti, Lynch and DeWall, 2018), which in turn makes the survey finding highly concerning. In the survey, 60% of student respondents and 45% of staff respondents reported that 'lad culture' exists in their institutions and 32% of staff and 44% of students reported that they had personally been subjected to 'lad culture'.

Challenges and Opportunities

Campaigns focussed on preventing GBV on UK campuses in 2014/2015 emerged in the context of the *#MeToo* and *#TimesUp* movements. Research by NUS in 2011, previously cited, revealed what women students were subjected to, and protests against universities' poor response to campus sexual violence grew apace. Despite Covid-19 restrictions limiting university campus activity, GBV has not vanished from UK campuses and there has been a resurgence of impatience with the lack of progress in prevention and in effective responses. A report on a student survey about GBV on a Scottish campus argued that the institutional campaign was 'performative' (see also Phipps and McDonnell, 2021) and recommended an approach to GBV prevention 'with education in mind, to take on the toxic culture of coercive behaviour which is widespread in the University student community' (Reclaim Stirling 2021). The report also noted the need 'to stamp out toxic "lad culture" within male dominated sports teams' (Reclaim Stirling, 2021). The murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Ness in 2021 created another upsurge in campaigning against male violence against women. Websites for survivors of sexual abuse such as *Everyone's Invited*[3] included, among the thousands of posts

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[33] https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/

they received, claims of rape being perpetrated on Scottish university campuses (The Times, 2021).

Recent research carried out by the Scottish *#EmilyTest* Charity among staff and student groups at Scottish universities and colleges found there was 'a need to cover the spectrum of GBV, broadening focus from rape', and that 'GBV is also sometimes intertwined with institutionalised bullying cultures in education' (EmilyTest, 2021). These findings echo aspects of ESHE research showing that the harms of GBV continue to affect, (mainly) women students and staff on Scottish campuses and be carried out by (mainly) men within cultures which remain highly sexist in character. It is also clear that institutional approaches should address their prevention and response efforts to the full spectrum of GBV, to provide leadership which will ultimately eliminate those aspects of campus cultures which continue to sustain conducive contexts where discrimination, gender inequality and GBV continue to thrive. That conducive cultures facilitate the perpetration of GBV is evident. Approaches to GBV prevention and intervention which sidestep this are likely to provide short-term solutions which fail to address the root of the problem. As Scotland's university and college sector look to the future however, there are signs for optimism.

Preventing GBV on Scottish campuses is now recognised as a priority within *Equally Safe*. The ESHE Toolkit's feminist analysis and theoretical framework provides institutions with a clear, consistent national framework for prevention, as they meet the Scottish Funding Council's requirements and report annually on progress. Implementation involves the development of partnership approaches, thus drawing institutions into local area VAW partnerships involving collaborations with the specialist VAW sector who bring the voices of victims-survivors to this work and with public sector bodies and the criminal justice system. Finally, building on the key principles, definitions and aims of the ESHE Toolkit, the 'EmilyTest Charter' has been established. This will provide Scottish universities and colleges with a schema of internal and external markers and a national accountability framework which will gauge their progress in implementing whole-campus approaches to preventing and responding to the full spectrum of GBV (EmilyTest, 2021).

Summary of Key Points.

In this chapter, we argue that gender-based violence within university communities across the UK stems from intersecting issues of sexism and other forms of discrimination in wider society. We argue that cultures of institutionalised sexism in our universities facilitate the persistence of gender-based violence (hereafter GBV) on our campuses.

- The different political framings of violence against women and gender-based violence taken by the four nations of the UK is significant and impacts the various policy responses and frameworks.

- In Scotland a gendered analysis is taken in which violence against women and gender-based violence is regarded as both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.

- Research on VAW policy development worldwide has shown that the most effective strategies are those which adopt an ecological perspective to instruct action across society at macro and micro levels and which intersect with vertical and horizontal axes of power across public and private space.

- The Scotland Act 1998 gave the new Scottish Parliament power to encourage equal opportunities and to ensure the observation of equal opportunity requirements and also the power to impose duties on Scottish public authorities and cross border public bodies operating in Scotland. Devolution facilitated the development of political systems and structures in the new governments which supported the equal representation of women.

- Since 2017, the Scottish Government has invested £19.5m through its *Equally Safe* strategy in central funding for specialist domestic abuse and rape crisis services, national helplines, GBV prevention, research, and reforming the justice system.

- In 2016, funding was provided to the Strathclyde team to create the national *Equally Safe in Higher Education* (ESHE) Toolkit to support a whole campus approach to GBV prevention in Scottish universities echoing the approach outlined in *Equally Safe*.

- The Toolkit provides guidance on addressing GBV responses, prevention, intervention and curriculum and knowledge exchange.

- The conducive context refers to social messages and discourse that normalise harmful practices and are maintained by gendered power structures of universities.

- The research findings support the significance of the 'conducive context' in both perpetration and response and support a conclusion that gender inequality in academia creates a conducive context for the occurrence of a spectrum of GBV which is symptomatic of cultural resistance to gender equality and to prevention.

Annotated References

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https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/1newwebsite/departmentsubject/socialwork/documents/eshe/Equally_Safe_Doc_2_pgs_inc_ISBN.pdf

The Toolkit Guidance is predicated on the vision and aim of *Equally Safe* which provides a framework and reference point for preventing GBV in Scottish Higher Education Institutions. *Equally Safe* is endorsed by a wide range of statutory, public and third sector agencies all of whom play key roles in the oversight and delivery of the strategy at a national level through the Equally Safe National Delivery Plan (Scottish Government 2017). This Guidance reflects Equally Safe's four priorities:

- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.

- Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.

- Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women and girls.

- Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response. (Scottish Government 2016)

The *Equally Safe in Higher Education* (ESHE) Toolkit was developed to provide Scottish Higher Educations Institutions (HEIs) with an approach to preventing GBV that will create a step change in how universities approach issues of inclusivity and equality. By acknowledging the need to address GBV at an institutional level, the ESHE Toolkit aligns itself with the Scottish Government and the United Nations in their recognition that GBV is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality.

The ESHE Toolkit and Guidance provides a framework informed by *Equally Safe* which can be used as a reference point for those Scottish HEIs developing their GBV prevention strategies and for those whose strategies are more advanced. This Guidance aims to:

- Introduce the ESHE Toolkit.

- Provide a framework for developing an effective, strategic and collaborative approach to preventing GBV on Scottish campuses based on the twin priorities of Prevention and Intervention.

- Support Scottish HEIs and their partners to integrate prevention activities into their strategic plans.

- Help build a consistent national approach across the Scottish sector based on a strategic evidence-based approach which incorporates four key work-streams:
    - o GBV Response

- o GBV Prevention
- o GBV Intervention
- o Curriculum and Knowledge Exchange.
- Enable Scottish HEIs to contribute to local and national coordinated approaches to GBV prevention.

The Toolkit also incorporates a section on our theoretical framework and offers an opportunity for Scottish HEIs to reflect on current practice and procedures using the following framework:

- Key principles of a strategic, evidence-based approach to GBV prevention in Scottish HEIs;
- Key features of a strategic approach to GBV prevention in Scottish HEIs;
- Key work-streams for implementing a strategic approach to GBV prevention in Scottish HEIs
- A checklist to help identify gaps or areas for further/future development in GBV prevention in Scottish HEIs;
- Direction to relevant areas of the Toolkit containing further information, resources, templates and samples which can be adapted to individual campus settings.

Fenton, R., & Jones, C. (2017). An exploratory study on the beliefs about gender-based violence held by incoming undergraduates in England. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence, 1*(2). https://doi.org/10.1332/239868017X15090095609822

There is a paucity of knowledge about beliefs regarding gender-based violence among UK university students and how receptive they are to help change university culture by participating in prevention programmes. Deeper understandings about university students are needed in order to ground effective prevention programmes such as bystander intervention. As the first study of its kind in the UK, this exploratory study expanded our understandings of the attitudes and beliefs about both sexual violence and domestic violence and abuse (DVA) held by students upon entry to university, which may underpin the cultural context in which gender-based violence occurs and is sustained in university settings.

This article used findings from the first cross-sectional study in the UK that measured beliefs, including rape and domestic violence and abuse (DVA) myth acceptance, and readiness for change. A survey was given to 381 incoming undergraduate students attending a university. The findings suggest that men endorse rape and DVA myths more than women.

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Rape myths were associated with DVA myths and further analyses indicated that the subscales *He didn't mean to* and *It wasn't really rape* predicted DVA myths. Denial of the problem of sexual violence and DVA was predicted by myth endorsement but assuming responsibility for change was not.

These findings provided insight into the particular myths held by incoming undergraduates and how they operated together to scaffold gender-based violence in university settings. Rape and DVA myths need to be targeted in the development of effective prevention programmes in universities. Universities have reached a critical juncture in needing to tackle gender-based violence in their institutions effectively. This paper makes an important contribution to the growing research base about the current contextual culture in universities which tolerates gender-based violence thus maintaining and reproducing gender inequality, rendering women fearful of disclosure, and perpetrators free to act with impunity.

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