# Addressing Domestic Abuse in University Student Populations

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# Student Voices: Physical Violence

- *"All of the first four* [pushed, slapped, shoved or had hair pulled; something thrown at you; kicked, bitten, hit with a fist; choked, dragged, strangled or burnt] *have happened to me whilst living with my ex- boyfriend during my 1st and 2nd year of uni, but I considered being choked the most dangerous. He also threatened me."* (NUS, 2011: 16)

# Student Voices: Financial Control

- *"My ex-boyfriend used to steal all my money saying 'you borrowed it anyway' (student loan)... He would spend my money on alcohol for himself, and order takeaways for himself, that I would have to pay for. He would scream and scream until I gave him money, and threatened to get me evicted from my home."* (NUS, 2011: 14)

# Student Voices: Stalking and Obsessive Behaviour

- *"My ex-boyfriend frequently called me to meet up with him alone and would blow up when I refused to do so. He was obsessive and followed my movements, and sent me extravagant presents that would lead to a big argument if I confronted him about this being unacceptable behaviour, or told him to back off."* (NUS, 2011: 15)

# Student Voices: Impact

- *"It is playing a massive part in my life. I won't go out alone after dark anymore, which, as a part-time student, is seriously affecting my studies and personal and social choices. It is also affecting me financially as I will take any possible precautions so as not to be alone in my local area in the dark. I'm taking anti-anxiety medication for the first time because of it and I feel like it's slowly destroying me."* (NUS, 2011: 28)

# DOMESTIC ABUSE AMONG THE STUDENT POPULATION, IS IT A PROBLEM THAT DESERVES HEIGHTENED ATTENTION?

# Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

- Consistent findings from British Crime Survey/ Crime Survey for England and Wales that:
  - Women make up the greatest number of victims
  - Younger women are more victimised than older women

# Age and Domestic Abuse

Figure 6: Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by age and sex

Year ending March 2017 Crime Survey for England and Wales
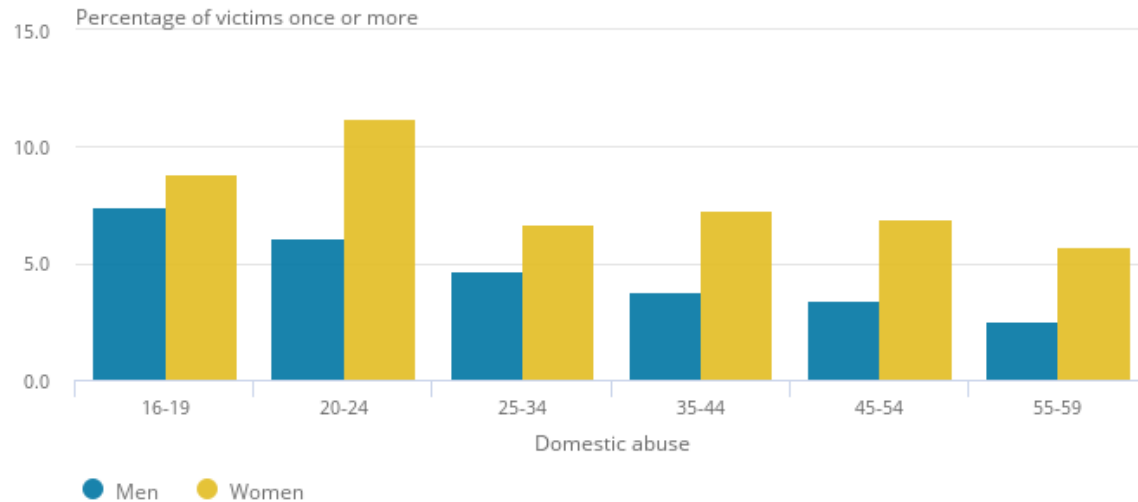


Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

# NUS Report: Hidden Marks

- 1st edition published in 2010.

- Surveyed 2058 women students on 'harassment, financial control, control over their course and institution choices, stalking, violence, and sexual assault' (NUS, 2011: 3).

- Report available at: https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/ NUS_hidden_marks_report_2nd_edition_web .pdf

# Prevalence

- 'Over two thirds of respondents (68 per cent) have experienced some kind of verbal or non-verbal harassment in and around their institution. This kind of behaviour – which includes groping, flashing and unwanted sexual comments – has become almost 'everyday' for some women students.' (2011: 3)

# Perpetrators

- 'The majority of perpetrators of stalking, sexual assault and physical violence were already known to the victim.' (2011: 3)

- 'Students were the majority of perpetrators in most categories, the majority of whom were studying at the same institution as the respondent. The exception to this rule was in the category of physical violence where just under half of offenders were students (48 per cent).' (2011: 3)

# Reporting

- 'Reporting levels were low across all categories surveyed. Respondents were most likely to report stalking to somebody at the institution (21 per cent), and victims of serious physical violence were most likely to report the incident to the police (17 per cent).' (2011: 4)
- 'The most common reason overall for not reporting was that students did not feel that what had happened was serious enough to report.' (2011: 4)

# Consequences

- 'Respondents reported a range of different consequences of violence, stalking and sexual assault on their health, experience of learning, confidence and relationships, with the most common consequence in any category being deterioration of mental health'. (2011: 4).

# WHAT ARE UNIVERSITIES DOING ABOUT IT?

# What Universities are doing

- The Home Office, the Government Equalities Office, the Department of Health and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills wrote to all Vice Chancellors in March 2015 strongly encouraging them to develop initiatives that promote safety and discourage a climate of violence in universities.

- The approach suggested included the implementation of the Intervention Initiative programme, developed by the University of the West of England (UWE) with funding from Public Health England.

# What Universities are doing

- The Intervention Initiative is a bystander education programme 'for the prevention of sexual coercion and domestic abuse in university settings, through empowering students to act as pro-social citizens' (Fenton et al, 2014).

- It frames the solutions for sexual and domestic violence within the community, and encourages both men and women to actively change the culture that facilitates any form of harassment (Fenton et al, 2016: 13, 25).

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

# Theoretical Background

- **Social norms approach**: individuals are more likely to intervene in a situation if they think that the values that they are reasserting are shared by the community (Berkowitz, 2010:3).

- **Pluralistic ignorance:** individuals tend to over-estimate problematic or risky behaviour in others and adapt their behaviour accordingly, not contradicting overtly what they believe to be the values supported by the community (Miller and Prentice, 1994: 543; Berkowitz, 2010:3, 4).

# Theoretical Background

- The consistency of the findings in research studies supports the use of a bystander intervention programme that dispels sexual and domestic violence myths and the overestimation of unhealthy behaviour among peers (Bannyard et al, 2004; Brown & Messman-Moore, 2009; Fabiano et al, 2003; Loh et al, 2005; Miller and Prentice, 1994; Stein, 2007; Kramer and Stover, 2015; Alegría-Flores et al, 2017: 1116).

# WHAT IS CCCU DOING?

# What CCCU is doing

# Intervention Initiative Pilot Programme

- Implemented between January and March 2017 with a group of Applied Criminology students.
- The programme was facilitated by staff from the domestic violence charity Rising Sun, using materials developed by the UWE.
- The programme consisted of eight one-hour sessions delivered on a weekly basis.
- A research project was built around the pilot (funding from SLCJC RKE and Student Experience).

# *Population makeup*

| Age Group | M | F |
|---|---|---|
| 18-21 | 2 | 15 |
| 22-25 | 0 | 2 |
| 26-29 | 1 | 1 |
| 30-34 | 1 | 0 |
| 35-40 | 1 | 0 |
| 41 and above | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 7 | 21 |

Table 1: Age breakdown of participants

# *Engagement with the Programme*

| Number of sessions attended | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | 3 | 7 |
| 7 | 2 | 6 |
| 6 | 0 | 3 |
| 5 | 1 | 4 |
| 4 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 7 | 21 |

Table 2: Number of sessions attended by participants

# Preliminary Results

- Social behaviour, gender and rape myths
- Domestic abuse and inter-partner violence
- Gender roles and 'lad culture'

- Relevance for peer influence, perception of problematic behaviour, ability and willingness to intervene.

# Social behaviour, gender and rape myths

- The programme seems to have had a positive impact on respondents' perception of 'victim blaming', that is, victims' contribution for their own victimisation.

- Already displaying high levels of awareness of myths and positive social behaviour – small changes as result of the programme.

- Males were more affected by the programme overall in this respect than females.

- Greatest changes were in relation to violence in relationships and rape:

*'a woman is much more likely to be raped by a stranger than by her boyfriend'*

- 13 respondents increased their level of disagreement between Q1 and Q2 (9 females and 4 males).

- Also relevant changes in relation to sexual harassment:

*'A lot of women find wolf whistling and catcalling flattering rather than offensive'*

- 12 respondents changed their scores between Q1 and Q2; 5 females and 3 males increased their level of disagreement with the statement, and 3 females and 1 male decreased.

# Domestic abuse and inter-partner violence

- Respondents identified as DA physical violence, as well as controlling and coercive behaviour (eg, telling someone what to do, what to wear, who to see).

- After the programme, greater acknowledgment of controlling and coercive behaviour. Specifically in relation to:

  - *'Yelling at someone'*,

  - '*Checking someone's whereabouts with their permission*' and

  - '*Checking someone's phone, email and/or social media accounts with their permission*'.

# Gender roles and 'lad culture'

- Eight females and 1 male increased their level of agreement with the statement *'Gender roles when it comes to sexuality are socially constructed'*.

- When asked about their level of agreement with the statement *'there are expectations to act according to gender roles when it comes to sexuality'*, 6 females and 3 males increased their level of agreement with the statement.

- When asked about their level of agreement with the statement:

**'lad culture can lead to the sexual victimisation of women'**,

- 6 females and 2 males increased their level of agreement with the statement, with the male going from 'Disagree' to 'Agree'.

# FUTURE?

# Expect Respect Bystander Training:

- *Over the three sessions you will learn what sexual and domestic violence is, how to spot the warning signs and what steps to take to safely intervene.*

- *You can chose from three training sessions, each made up of 3 x 1 ½ hours on :*
  - *8th February, 15th February and 22nd February (3-4.30 in RH1.13)*
  - *6th March, 13th March and 20th March (3-4.30 in RH1.14)*
  - *17th April, 24th April, 1st May (11-12.30 in Ef05)*

- *The training sessions will contribute to the Christ Church Extra Award.*

- *To book a place and for further information please email hannah.sherbrock-cox@canterbury.ac.uk*

# Future?

- Targeted programmes
- Reach as many students as possible
- Explore the role of peers
- Continue with data analysis
- Assessment of new iterations of the programme.

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