



---

# Understanding the impact of gender-based violence on access to and participation in higher education

Penny Jane Burke  
Julia Coffey  
Felicity Cocuzzoli  
Stephanie L. Hardacre  
Jean Parker  
Georgina Ramsay  
Julia Shaw



Penny Jane Burke<sup>1</sup>, Julia Coffey<sup>1</sup>, Felicity Cocuzzoli<sup>1</sup>, Stephanie L. Hardacre<sup>1</sup>, Jean Parker<sup>1</sup>, Georgina Ramsay<sup>2</sup>, Julia Shaw<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University of Newcastle, Australia

<sup>2</sup>University of Delaware

#### Suggested citation:

Burke, P. J., Coffey, J., Cocuzzoli, F., Hardacre, S. L., Parker, J., Ramsay, G., & Shaw, J. (2022). *Understanding the impact of gendered-based violence on access to and participation in higher education*. Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, University of Newcastle, Australia.

Throughout this report we use the term “victim-survivor” to refer to students who have experienced gender-based violence. We acknowledge that each part of this term, and the elements together, contain contested meanings that may not fit with the self-identification of the students who contributed to this research. Despite this, we use the term victim to connote the experience of having been subject to, and continuing to live with, violence and abuse in the context of unequal (sometimes grossly unequal) gendered power relations. We use the term survivor to acknowledge the strength and resilience of our participants and to bring attention to the non-linear experiences of surviving GBV.

This report refers to multiple forms of gender-based violence and the impacts of those experiences. Individual experiences of violence are not detailed within this report.

A list of support services is provided on page 65 should you wish to talk to somebody about distress or trauma.

This research publication was prepared and published on Awabakal, Darkinjung, Gadigal, Wonnarua and Worimi lands. We acknowledge the unceded lands on which we work and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The artwork was produced by participants in the Claim Our Place workshops as part of this Study. They collaboratively planned the cover and produced individual elements. These elements were collated by Anna Rolfe at the University Galleries.

## Contents

Executive Summary	03
Introduction	07
Literature Review	09
Theorising gender-based violence and the higher education context	17
Methodology and methods	22
Findings: Understanding the impact of gender-based violence on university experience and participation	26
Claim Our Place workshops	43
Conclusions and recommendations	47
References	52
Appendices	57

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the participants for their courage and generosity in sharing their experiences and recommendations. We thank Bernadette Mears and Interrelate for their generous commitment to student and researcher support throughout the study. We also thank Campus Care and the University of Newcastle Psychology Clinic for their engagement.



© This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License.

ISBN: 978-0-7259-0457-9

### Research team

**Professor Penny Jane Burke** is Global Innovation Chair of Equity and Director of the Centre of Excellence in Equity in Higher Education at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Dedicated to developing methodological, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that enable critical and feminist praxis, generating time-space for the reframing of equity in higher education, she has published widely across gender and social justice in higher education and lifelong learning. Penny is currently co-editor of the Bloomsbury Gender and Education book series, Global Chair of Social Innovation at University of Bath and an Honorary Professor at University of Exeter.

**Dr Julia Coffey** is a senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her feminist sociological research focuses on gender, affect, youth and the body with particular interests in gendered body work practices. She has authored a number of books, most recently *Everyday Embodiment: Rethinking Youth Body Image* (2021, Palgrave Macmillan). Her other books include *Body Work: Youth, Gender and Health* (2016, Routledge), co-edited collection *Learning Bodies: The Body in Youth and Childhood Studies* (2016, Springer), co-authored *Youth Sociology* (2020, Red Globe Press).

**Felicity Cocuzzoli** (Kennedy) is a visual artist and social scientist, who has worked with women, children and communities across government and not for profit roles for more than thirty years. A proud Wiradjuri descendant, Felicity's work with the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education is centred on the application of creative methodologies for equity praxis. Felicity works with a range of academic and community partners across creative research and practice-based initiatives for women with lived experiences of gender-based violence, that are culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed.

**Dr Stephanie Hardacre** is a postdoctoral research fellow working within the Research School of Psychology at the Australian National University. In the past, her research looked at how leader gender shaped the capacity of male and female leaders to mobilise individuals for gender equality as a common cause. More recently, Stephanie has been working on an ARC-funded project investigating online strategies for improving the social connectedness and mental wellbeing of working-class university students. She is also part of a team at the University of Newcastle's Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, exploring the impact of gender-based violence on students' access to and participation in higher education. Stephanie has published in the areas of gender equality, leadership, and social change.

**Dr Jean Parker** is a research assistant in the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE) at the University of Newcastle. Her work centres on the political economy of higher education, neoliberalism and the Australian welfare state, and class and inequality. Jean has published on Australia's policy response to the global financial crisis of 2008, financialisation and housing, and inequity in Australian higher education.

**Georgina Ramsay** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delaware. She is a political and legal anthropologist whose work focuses on displacement and bordering regimes. She is currently the Co-Editor of the journal, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*.

**Julia Shaw** is the Research Coordinator at the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education. She has a degree in Art History and Theory and a Masters in Policy Studies.

# Executive Summary



## Executive Summary

This research provides new knowledge about how gender-based violence (GBV) experienced across a lifetime impacts on students' access to and participation in higher education. The global prevalence of GBV has led the United Nations (UN) to describe it as a "shadow pandemic" which has only intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women, 2020b). On a national scale, GBV is a critical problem across society, representing a cost to the Australian economy estimated at \$21.7 billion annually (PwC, 2015) and with significant negative effects on well-being (for example: Brown et al., 2015; Moulding, 2015). Existing scholarship has begun to uncover the extent and nature of GBV on Australian campuses. However, no previous research has examined the question of equity in higher education through the prism of students who have suffered GBV across their lifetimes. This project aims to fill that gap by examining the experience of entering and participating in higher education for students who are currently, or have previously, experienced GBV.

The mixed-method project explored the following questions:

- 1 How do current students who are victim-survivors of gender-based violence experience higher education?
- 2 What are students' lived experiences of higher education in the context of prior, present and/or ongoing experiences of gender-based violence?
- 3 How do experiences of gender-based violence impact on participation and sense of belonging at university?
- 4 How might universities better understand and/or respond to gender-based violence in the context of commitments to gender equity?

In this research we take a sociological perspective of GBV that understands GBV as related to the broader socio-cultural context of gendered inequalities (Fraser, 2013). The study used qualitative methods including in-depth interviews (n=24) and Claim Our Place arts-based participatory workshops (n=11) to explore these questions. A questionnaire completed prior to interviews asked participants demographic questions and contextual questions regarding their prior experiences of GBV. This meant that interviews were able to avoid focussing on the traumatic experiences of GBV, and instead explore the current experience and significance of participation in higher education for victim-survivors.



## Key findings

In order to gain a sense of the ‘continuum of experiences’ of GBV (Kelly, 1988), a questionnaire was designed to understand the different forms of GBV that student victim-survivors experienced in their lifetime. This GBV continuum might include for example domestic violence, sexual assault or verbal sexist abuse. The GBV continuum is significant in understanding the relationship between all acts of GBV to wider gender injustice, including the more taken-for-granted incidents of sexism, at one end of the continuum, or extreme forms of violence at the other (Anitha & Lewis, 2018). The questionnaire revealed that all participants had experienced psychological and emotional violence, most commonly in the home. The three most common forms of GBV included psychological/emotional violence (n=24), verbal violence (n=23), verbal sexual harassment (n=23), and non-verbal sexual harassment (n=23). Significantly, 21 students had experienced at least one form of GBV while in an intimate relationship, with the most common form experienced in this context being psychological/emotional (n=20), followed by verbal (n=17) and sexual personal boundaries violence (n=15). Participants’ most recent experience of GBV ranged from occurring in the past week to more than 11+ years ago, with the past 2–4 years being the most common timeframe.

Key findings are presented through the following themes:

- **Diverse journeys to higher education.** Participants reached university through a range of pathways. Alternative entry pathways emerged as particularly significant in facilitating access for this cohort. GBV experienced across the lifecourse significantly impacted the confidence, sense of capability and life chances, aspirations and plans of students. Intimate partner violence in particular was described as highly damaging and causing numerous challenges for participating in higher education.
- **Sense of purpose.** Participants articulated a broader sense of purpose in attending university beyond employability and job-readiness. Participants highlighted the significance of university in their aspirations to find secure employment and in the search for a ‘better life’, including creating positive change for other women experiencing GBV in their communities.

- **Ongoing impacts of GBV.** GBV experiences have an enduring impact that shapes experiences of higher education. Significant effects of GBV include persistent stress and anxiety, isolation, profound loss of self-esteem and feelings of shame as well as an undermined sense of confidence and capability. Past experiences of GBV have long lasting impacts (for example, shame and heightened anxiety). These impacts are often invisible, particularly when the weight of responsibility is on individuals to conform to institutionalised university expectations.
- **Belonging.** Participants described both the centrality of study to their sense of identity, and the struggles associated with feeling ‘different’ to other students or like an ‘outsider’ due to their experiences of GBV. Some participants described a strong sense of connection with peer groups and student communities on campus, whilst others described yearning to find this sense of connection and belonging.
- **Challenges navigating university systems and norms.** Participants described the impacts of GBV as making it difficult to fulfil university norms and expectations. Participants detailed uneven experiences of student support across their studies, where some cultural environments were more enabling than others. Participants felt that their experiences of gender-based violence were not understood or recognisable within existing systems.
- **Claim Our Place art-making workshops** were piloted with the aim to create a space of well-being, belonging, self-discovery, and to reframe students’ experiences through the lens of gender justice. Participants expressed that the workshops provided valued opportunities to connect with other student victim-survivors. The program strengthened students’ sense of courage, strength and safety.

## Recommendations

### Cultural

- 1 Efforts need to be made to challenge the misrepresentation of experiences of GBV and the complex gendered inequalities that this produces.
- 2 Greater understanding of the sensitivities around disclosure and creating appropriate frameworks for the recognition of the impact of GBV is needed. This must avoid harmful practices of disclosure that retraumatise and/or produce pathologising constructions of the individual student.
- 3 Greater advocacy and fostering of awareness needs to be adopted to challenge GBV with education and awareness raising, which should form a key higher education intervention.

### Educational

- 4 Universities should provide educational programs for staff and students that address and challenge GBV in all of its forms and complexities (similar to consent provision but broader in scope). This should attend to the institutionalised, systemic and/or individual forms of sexism and misogyny, to build cultural awareness.
- 5 Greater acknowledgement and understanding is needed of the role and capacity of higher education to act as an agent of change, supported through high quality professional development and learning.



### Collaborative

- 6 Greater collaboration of universities with external agencies is needed to build expertise of the specific challenges student victim-survivors face.
- 7 Sustained inter-agency collaboration with universities is required to generate support that includes prevention, crisis support and enables post-crisis pathways to higher education.

### Leadership

- 8 The role of higher education in challenging GBV requires a broader understanding of gender equity at the level of cultural change, including zero tolerance of institutionalised forms of misogyny.
- 9 An explicit commitment from institutional leadership to mobilising higher education to help challenge all forms of GBV would be a valuable step towards creating change.

### Practical

- 10 University counselling and student support services need additional training and expertise in how to effectively and appropriately respond to students seeking help for GBV-related issues, whether incidents occurred on or off campus.
- 11 Campus safety should be improved with particular attention to increased lighting and security.
- 12 University scholarships are recommended to provide financial assistance and recognise the significant barriers GBV victim-survivors face in accessing higher education.
- 13 The application process for scholarships, or any other forms of support, should be carefully designed to address the sensitivities of disclosure.
- 14 A navigational framework designed to enable student victim-survivors of GBV to successfully navigate complex higher education systems and transition processes is recommended.
- 15 In order to foster a sense of belonging, universities should facilitate spaces of support and connection for student victim-survivors of GBV, such as the workshops provided for this pilot.
- 16 Attention to the relationship between flexible and responsive time structures and inclusive pedagogical, curricular, assessment and support frameworks and practices is needed.

# Introduction



## Introduction

This mixed-methods pilot study reveals the significant challenges related to the experience of gender-based violence (GBV) that impact on students' access to and participation in higher education. For many participants, the experience of GBV was associated with loss of family and/or community support, material poverty and homelessness, profound loss of self-esteem and a continuing sense of shame and isolation. These impacts create significant obstacles and challenges in accessing, participating and succeeding in higher education.

Our findings show appropriate pedagogical and support strategies and expertise are not currently in place in the university to enable student success for those with experiences of GBV. Further, the pilot data reveal that students' experiences of institutionalised cultures of gender inequities, for example as related to unequal patterns of cultural value (Fraser, 1997), exacerbate post-traumatic experiences of GBV. The study suggests that the journeys to higher education for those who have experienced GBV are messy, non-linear and complex; impacted by personal circumstances and structural, spatial, temporal inequalities. Importantly, the evidence collected suggests that experiences of GBV have ongoing effects that significantly impinge on student engagement. These preliminary findings point to the need for further study in order to build a rigorous evidence base to inform equity in higher education policy and practice for this important group of students.



# Literature Review



## Literature Review

The extent of gendered-based violence (GBV) has been described as a global pandemic, with significant implications for access and participation in higher education. Increasingly, high-profile international efforts are being put into place through bodies such as the United Nations (UN). For example, the Spotlight Initiative brings the UN together with the European Union to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (UN Women, 2020a). Gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, has intensified since the onslaught of COVID-19 due to many women being trapped at home with their abusers and struggling to access services that are suffering from cuts and restrictions (UN Women, 2020b). In relation to these concerns, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality, universities are challenged to understand and respond to the significance of GBV in the context of higher education. This has been an under-researched area (Wagner & Magnusson, 2005) and has received little attention in higher education policy terms, aside from the issue of GBV on campus (see, for example: Heywood et al., 2022; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017).

There is a general trend in research that explores GBV in higher education contexts to conflate this focus with violence that occurs on campus or which is directly related to the university context (Heywood et al., 2022). The ways in which GBV that occurs in external settings from the institution then impacts on student experience is underexplored. However, experiences of GBV for students, academics and university staff in any context affects the ways in which they then participate in and experience higher education. Recent policy initiatives in the higher education sector in Australia have recognised the significant impact that GBV at home can have on paid staff by advocating for, and securing, employee access to dedicated leave to support staff during situations of domestic violence (Moloney, 2014). Yet there is less recognition of the ways in which student experience is impacted on by situations of GBV at home, except to recognise violence as a basis from which to apply for special consideration when adverse circumstances affect a student's capacity to complete coursework and assessment items. Furthermore, the ways in which student experiences of GBV are recognised and addressed by universities is at institutional discretion. For example, La Trobe University has domestic violence explicitly outlined as a basis from which to claim special circumstances in regards to student assessment work, while the University of Newcastle does not.

Considering the impact of GBV at home on the capacity for students to complete assessment work is important; but the ways in which this recognition is embedded

in university policy is at institutional discretion, applies primarily to circumstances of acute violence and requires students to disclose abuse. Yet the underreporting of domestic violence and the difficulties that confront victim-survivors in disclosing their experiences is well documented in scholarly literature (for an overview, see: Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

Similarly, the international body of scholarship that relates to GBV and higher education, broadly, lacks perspectives that consider how violent experiences that occur outside of campus settings impact on experiences of higher education. There are two major bodies of research in this area: firstly, documenting the experiences of sexual and gender-based violence that occur primarily in on-campus settings and ways that such experiences are negotiated, addressed, and can be prevented (for example: Heywood et al., 2022; Phipps & Smith, 2012; AHRC, 2017); secondly, pertaining to the ways in which course activities can provoke disclosures of violent experiences within higher education settings and the ways that staff in particular respond to these disclosures (for example: Wagner & Manusson, 2005; Reilly & D'Amico, 2011). Subsequently, there is a tendency in this body of literature that examines GBV in higher education contexts to assume that student experience is isolated to those activities that occur 'on campus', with less consideration of the impact of violence that occurs outside of campus on the experience of higher education. As such, the latter is the focus of the current research.

### Prevalence of GBV in Australia

In 2016, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) conducted a national survey of 30,000 university students across Australia's 39 universities to investigate the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities. The resulting *Change the Course Report* (AHRC, 2017) revealed that 51 per cent of students had been sexually harassed at least once in 2016. A significant proportion of that harassment occurred in university settings, with 26 per cent of students experiencing sexual harassment in a university setting in 2016. These settings included university campus, at university employment, attending a university-endorsed off-campus event, or travelling to and from campus. The report found that women experienced sexual assault and harassment at much higher levels than men, being almost twice as likely to experience harassment in 2016 and almost three times as likely to experience assault in 2015 or 2016. Men also made up the majority of perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault (AHRC, 2017).

A survey of 44,000 students conducted in 2021 by Universities Australia found that 16 per cent of students had been sexually harassed in a university context since they started their degrees and 8 percent in the previous 12 months (Heywood et al., 2022). The Report's authors note that the extent on online learning in the two years before the survey was conducted likely reduced experiences of harassment and assault experienced "in a university context" – which was the focus of the survey (Heywood et al., 2022, p.4). However the study replicated the 2016 survey's findings that 53 per cent of female students had experienced sexual harassment in their lifetimes (Heywood et al., 2022, p.4)

Outside of university settings, research shows that women aged between 18 and 24 years experience sexual violence at more than twice the national rate, with one in five women experiencing sexual violence since the age of 15 compared to one in twenty-two men experiencing the same (Cox, 2015). A 2012 prevalence study by the AHRC found that roughly one in five people 15 and over have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years, women (25 per cent) were more likely to be sexually harassed in the workplace than men (16 per cent), and men and women are more likely to be sexually harassed and assaulted by a male perpetrator (p.1).

Significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has only served to exacerbate existing levels of domestic violence and abuse experienced by Australian women (Boxall et al., 2020). A survey conducted in May 2020 indicated that two-thirds of women reported levels of physical or sexual violence by a cohabiting partner having either started or escalating in the three months prior (that is, commencing with the onset of the pandemic; Boxall et al., 2020). Many women indicated that safety concerns were a barrier to them seeking help.

The AHRC (2017) reports that particular groups, such as young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and people with a disability may experience higher rates of sexual assault and sexual harassment than the general Australian population. The 2021 Universities Australia survey found that nearly 80 percent of gender diverse students including transgender and non-binary students had experienced sexual harassment in a university context (Heywood et al., 2022).

### LGBTQIA+ populations

Queer communities (encompassing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual communities) have been found to experience similar (Ison, 2019) or even greater (Reuter et al., 2015) levels of intimate partner violence compared to cisgender heterosexual communities. Scheer and Baams (2019) found that transgender and non-conforming young adults reported higher incidence of intimate partner violence compared to their cisgender sexual minority counterparts, while the *TranZnation* report (Couch et al., as cited by AHRC, 2017) found that 10 per cent of Australian and New Zealand transgender respondents had experienced sexual assault or rape. Intimate partner violence within queer communities has been shown to result in similar harmful psychological, social and physical impacts for victim-survivors as those within heterosexual communities (Barrett, 2015). Yet there are also multiple additional ways that the social and structural marginalisation of queer communities results in unique vulnerabilities related to intimate partner violence that are not experienced by heterosexuals (Barrett, 2015). These include decreased help-seeking efforts from police, social services and healthcare professionals due to fears such services will be heterocentric and lacking specific knowledge pertaining to LGBT communities, or due to finding domestic violence shelters and police less helpful compared to support services such as counsellors. Beyond intimate partner violence, sexual orientation or expression is also a known factor that makes students vulnerable to experiencing violence on university campuses (Renn, 2010).

### Indigenous populations

Compared to non-Indigenous women, Indigenous women are 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence, 35 times more likely to require hospitalisation as a consequence, and 11 times more likely to die as a result of such violence (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2009; Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, 2015). In 2018–19, 16 per cent of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over in Australia had experienced, or had been threatened with, physical violence at least once in the past year (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2020). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence (2000) reported that dispossession, cultural fragmentation and marginalisation are key factors in

this crisis. Structural and systematic disadvantage caused by colonial oppression such as loss of identity, loss of land and traditional culture, and breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal law are central to understanding these patterns of higher incidence of victimhood (Korff, 2021).

### Individuals living with a disability

Violence against women with disabilities in Australia is an endemic yet largely invisible issue (Dowse et al., 2016). Two meta-analyses have demonstrated that adults and children with disabilities were significantly more likely than those without disabilities to experience interpersonal violence (Hughes et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2012). Krnjacki et al. (2016) conducted a large population-based study of Australian adults comparing rates of various types of interpersonal violence among those living with and without disabilities. They found that those with disabilities were significantly more likely to experience all forms of interpersonal violence in both the past year and since 15 years of age. These forms of violence included physical, sexual, intimate partner violence and stalking/harassment. Additionally, while men with disabilities were more likely to experience physical violence, women with disabilities were more likely to experience sexual and partner violence (Krnjacki et al., 2016). Meanwhile, analysis of data from the Australian 2012 Personal Safety Survey shows that among those with disabilities under the age of 50, 62 per cent had experienced a form of violence since the age of 15, and women with disabilities had experienced sexual violence at a rate three times more than that of women without disabilities (Dowse et al., 2016). Importantly though, this survey only samples women residing in private dwellings, excluding women with disabilities living in care settings.

### The impacts of GBV on victim-survivors and family

#### Emotional health: Mental health and general wellbeing

The causal relationship between sexual assault and poor mental health is well-established (Jordan et al., 2010; Potter et al., 2018; Vázquez et al., 2012). There are similar strong observed links between domestic and family violence and mental health (Wood et al., 2020). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the most common mental health condition arising from sexual violence, although research demonstrates that almost half of victim-survivors

will go on to experience anxiety or depression, with almost one in five attempting suicide (Jordan et al., 2010). In the first nationwide survey of its kind into women students' experiences of sexual violence, Phipps and Smith (2012) found that women in further and higher education in the UK who had experienced sexual violence reported an impact of these incidents on their relationships (63 per cent), mental health and wellbeing (49 per cent), physical health (12 per cent), finances (8 per cent), paid work (7 per cent), and studies (25 per cent). Similarly, an online survey of American undergraduate women who had experienced sexual assault between 18–24 years of age while at college showed 72.8 per cent reported experiencing mental health complications as a consequence of their assault (Potter et al., 2018). Moreover, an anonymous survey among women students attending a university campus in Southwest USA revealed significant (though small) positive correlations between the severity of psychological, sexual, and cyber forms of intimate partner violence and the extent of PTSD and depression symptoms (Wood et al., 2020). Meanwhile, a nationally representative cross-sectional study based on the 2007 Australian National Mental Health and Well-being Survey discovered that GBV was significantly associated with mental health disorder and psychosocial dysfunction and disability (Rees et al., 2011). Namely, for women who had experienced 3 or 4 forms of GBV in their lifetime, the rates for experiencing mental disorders were 77.3 per cent, for anxiety disorders 52.5 per cent, for PTSD 56.2 per cent, for substance use disorder 47.1 per cent, and for suicide attempts 34.7 per cent.

Importantly, an anonymous survey designed to assess sexual health resources at 28 college campuses across the University of Minnesota (USA) discovered that students at colleges with more sexual violence resources experienced lower incidence of mental health conditions compared to students attending colleges with fewer resources (Eisenberg et al., 2016). This demonstrates that institutions can contribute to the wellbeing of victim-survivors of sexual assault by implementing and advertising post-assault resources to ensure the creation of a supportive environment for victim-survivors by connecting them with appropriate services.

Domestic violence is considered a key pathway to homelessness and is a growing issue within Australia. This encompasses both the typical definition of homelessness but also extends to inappropriate living conditions, such as living out of one's car. The primary trigger leading to homelessness among domestic violence sufferers is concern regarding the safety of them (and/or their children) (Tually et al., 2008). Tually et al. (2008) highlight the potential for education as an empowerment strategy for domestic violence victim-survivors and consider it key to preventing such violence in the first place. This point connects to the key research question of our study – how experiences of GBV impact on women's access and participation in higher education.

### The impacts of GBV on accessing and participating in higher education

The literature illustrates the way in which experiences of GBV, especially those impacting adolescents and young women, can create life-long disadvantage. GBV is shown to be an obstacle to participation in higher education. Furthermore, GBV experiences among young women can reduce life-long earnings and increase the chance of long-term poverty.



A retrospective, longitudinal survey study of single mothers receiving welfare in an urban county of Michigan (USA) who were transitioning to work, demonstrated that experiences of adolescent intimate partner violence shape women's economic trajectories due to resultant educational deficits (Adams et al., 2013). Namely, victim-survivors of adolescent intimate partner violence "earned significantly less and experienced significantly less growth in earnings over time as a consequence of lower educational attainment when compared with demographically similar women who had not experienced intimate partner violence during adolescence" (Adams et al., 2013, p. 3295). These negative implications for women's adulthood earnings were primarily due to educational harm caused by an abusive partner, including stifling of educational and career goals (Collin-Vézina et al., 2006); decreased school attachment, lower average grades and higher expectations of dropping out of secondary school (Banyard & Cross, 2008); physical and psychological impacts impeding academic outcomes (Glass et al., 2003); and potential for reproductive violence resulting in unwanted pregnancy damaging educational achievements (Miller et al., 2010). These findings illustrate that adolescent intimate partner violence can result in significant educational disadvantage and pursuant economic implications for victim-survivors, and highlights the need for intervention strategies that support their education and career development (Adams et al., 2013).

In a US study, focus groups involving women victim-survivors of domestic abuse demonstrated the potential of higher education to assist women to achieve self-sufficiency after suffering domestic violence (Brandwein & Filiano, 2000). Brandwein and Filiano (2000) found that without further education, women who had suffered abuse were limited to low paying work which left them living below the poverty level. Ultimately, without the benefit of education and formal qualifications, the effects of leaving a violent partnership can be devastating and leave women without the ability to survive economically (Brandwein & Filiano, 2000). Further emphasising the importance of higher education, analysis of the 1993 wave of an ongoing national survey following 5,000 American families examined the relationships between women's education, marital status and economic wellbeing (Pandey & Zhan, 2007). Their findings suggest that women with children who have a four-year college degree experience substantially reduced economic vulnerability due to having significantly higher work income, property values, child support income and lower welfare income compared to women with or without a high school diploma (Pandey & Zhan, 2007).

A small body of literature documents the experiences of women attending university after experiencing violence in their home lives. However, it is worth noting that this field of research is limited, both in Australia and internationally. What research exists looks at the experience of violence directed at women. While this focus rightly reflects the fact that most victims are women, it is important to also capture the experience of men and gender-diverse people as victims of intimate partner violence. For example, Hahn and Postmus (2014) point out that the emotional and socio-economic effects of family breakdown as a result of violence can make accessing education difficult. They argue that the obstacles that result from violence at home, as they relate specifically to higher education access and participation, could be further explored in academic literature (Hahn & Postmus, 2014).

Whilst violence is not the direct topic of focus in research by Norton et al. (1998), their study on how long-term relationships for mature-age students are impacted on when one partner begins participating in higher education suggests that a significant number of long-term relationships feel strain in this context. Women in particular experienced entering higher education as potentially threatening their personal relationships, whereas men did not (see also Pascall & Cox, 1993). This was primarily due to women's studies leading to experiences of hostility from their male partners (Norton et al., 1998). These findings indicate that the impact of higher education on personal relationships are often shaped by gender injustices. Namely, the strain associated with the hostility that women are more likely to be subject to from male partners upon entering higher education could potentially make women vulnerable to experiencing violence after they enter higher education.

Beyond accessing higher education, victim-survivors' experiences of GBV often continue to impact on and disrupt their participation in higher education. In research by Wagner and Manusson (2005) in a Canadian context, the journal entries of first-year social work students were examined. It was found that women who had previously experienced violence struggled to negotiate the demands of academic coursework whilst coping with memories of past abuse. Furthermore, research by Jordan et al. (2014) in a US context illustrated how experiences of violence that occur whilst a student is in college (university) severely impact on grades and academic performance. In this sense, GBV needs to be considered a barrier to higher education retention, and recognised as such in institutional policy (Jordan

et al., 2014). Wagner and Manusson (2005) suggest university students' dual status as 'survivors' needs substantial further investigation.

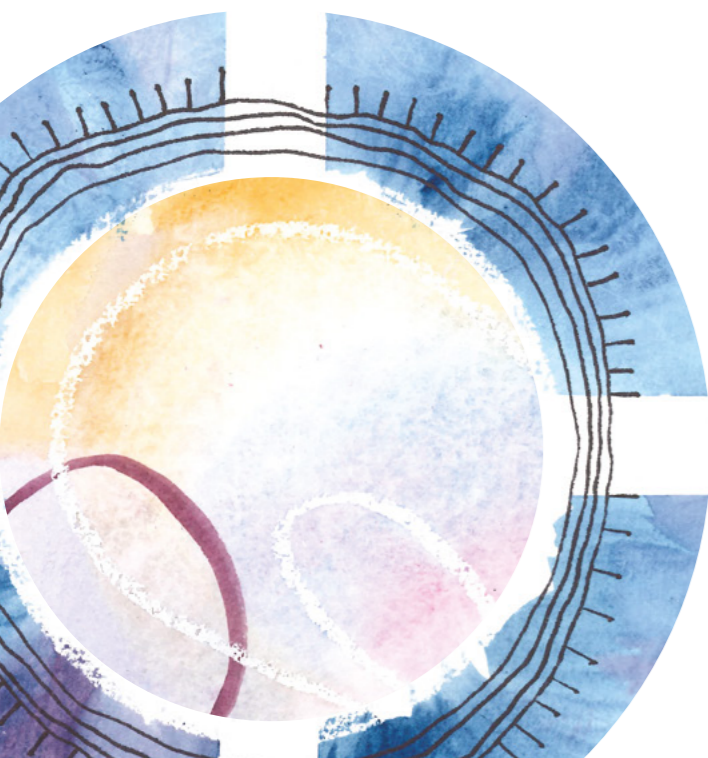
A study by Reilly and D'Amico (2011) in a US context recognises that women who have experienced trauma from either childhood abuse or intimate partner violence face unique challenges when studying in higher education contexts and often relate differently to university study. They describe how "abuse victims" can feel more isolated at university than those who have not experienced trauma. Indeed, when in a crisis situation, women often move away from their violent circumstances therefore leading to increased isolation and disruption to their participation in higher education. Reilly and D'Amico's (2011) research explores how the use of mentoring programs at university for women who have experienced violence can offer a practical way to counter feelings of isolation, fears of failure, and a sense of disconnection to the higher education environment. Overall, the impact of violence on women in higher education settings needs to be recognised more widely, and taken into account in institutional contexts.

### International students

Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008) examined differences in the notion of security among international students in a series of in-depth interviews. They found that being in an unfamiliar culture affects students' sense and level of security, and that understanding the cultural particularities of these needs is necessary to meeting them. International students were more likely to experience discrimination and potentially harassment in the university setting, which has implications for increased risk of exposure to violence (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008). In contrast to these findings, Paltridge et al. (2010) discovered via interviews with international students living in different settings in Australia that those living in on-campus university accommodation felt physically secure and experienced a reduced threat level to their social security. The authors suggested improving access to secure university accommodation as a way to prevent violence against international students. More recently, in a study investigating the impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns on young hospitality workers in Australia, Coffey et al. (2020) found that the pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities related to gender, migrant status and economic vulnerability for young women international students.

### Student disclosures of violent experiences within higher education contexts

A significant body of research in relation to violence in higher education refers to students disclosing personal and traumatic experiences of violence in higher education contexts. Broadly, this research provides strategies for how to manage disclosures, and suggests that institutional support mechanisms need to be in place to support both staff and students who are affected by disclosures. This body of literature shows that disclosures of violent experiences are common, and occur across faculties (Richards, Branch & Hayes, 2013). These studies suggest that having appropriate strategies for mediating the possibility of violent disclosures in learning environments are imperative (Cares, Hirschel & Williams, 2014; Bertram & Crowley, 2012; Branch, Hayes & Richard, 2011). There is potential for victim-survivors of violent experiences to be retraumatised through their coursework at university (Mummert, Policastro & Payne, 2014). Teaching domestic violence themes and topics demands particular sensitivity and the availability of support for students (Murphy-Geiss, 2008). The studies highlight the need for strategies and frameworks in universities at the institutional level to support students who have experienced gender-based violence. They state the need for strategies and procedures to be developed and made known for staff, students, and peers involved in disclosures.



### The role that higher education plays in alleviating the impacts of GBV

Higher education has been shown to play a significant role in alleviating the impacts of experiences of GBV. Work by Hahn and Postmus (2014) explores how women who have experienced violence at home then approach and experience higher education. Their study of “impoverished intimate partner violence survivors” (p. 79) describes how, after previously experiencing intimate partner violence, women who go on to higher education report raised self-esteem, a feeling of empowerment and a better sense of wellbeing. Higher education participation was described by Hahn and Postmus’ participants as a way to change their “self-concept” by raising their self-esteem. Hahn and Postmus (2014) argue that women should be supported to attend higher education first when leaving circumstances of violence (rather than “work-first”), because women report developing greater self-esteem through engaging with education than they do with employment. This is a key point that will be discussed below in the findings from our own study.

In addition, research by Wetterson et al. (2004) with women who have experienced domestic violence currently living in a refuge, illustrates that women in these circumstances have a strong desire to pursue higher education because it is considered to be a way to “accomplish something”. These studies suggest that participation in higher education can actually result in a “reimagining” of identity for GBV victim-survivors. A PhD dissertation by Underwood (2019) explored the subjectivities that female victim-survivors of domestic violence construct whilst pursuing higher education. Underwood (2019) found that higher education experience and participation is significant in reshaping identity construction, with women constructing themselves as “independent” and a “good student”.

In other research that relates to how GBV impacts on higher education access and participation, experiences of violence are often peripheral to the primary focus of the studies which instead, and importantly, explore the gendered inequality that women face in settings of higher education. For example, in a study of Queensland students, 20 per cent of the research sample (of 55 women) described an experience of domestic violence, and almost 11 per cent had experienced rape outside of a context of domestic violence (Baker, 2008).

Finally, preliminary research suggests that higher education can provide a way for victim-survivors to move beyond the significant disadvantages that can stem from leaving a violent domestic circumstance. In a report examining issues of gender, family violence and homelessness in the context of Melbourne, Tually et al. (2008) position education as an “empowerment strategy” for women who have been affected by domestic and family violence. They suggest that accessing education should be considered part of the institutional response to women who experience violence because this boosts the self-esteem of women in the shorter term and provides avenues for economic independence in the longer term. Indeed, Brandwein and Filiano (2000) describe how access to further education is important if women are to overcome the disadvantages that can be a product of violence at home. The data from this US context described how the majority of women were limited to low-paying work following family breakdown as a result of domestic violence. In another US example, Chang et al. (2006) identify participation in higher education to be a significant step to “move toward safety” after being in a situation of violence at home.

In these examples, access and participation in higher education is positioned as a significant way through which women who have experienced violence at home can achieve individual self-sufficiency. However, the strongly neoliberal understanding of individual self-sufficiency present in some of the literature can be criticised for overlooking the structural and collective nature of GBV. One example of the neoliberal vision for higher education as a path to self-sufficiency is Tually et al. (2008), where little interest is taken to what the experience of higher education is actually like for women who have left a domestic violence circumstance. Further, in many of the existing studies education, as personal development, is positioned as neutral and inherently good. Overall, this linkage between higher education and perceived increase in opportunity and “self-sufficiency” for women who have experienced violence at home requires further exploration to bring to light the complex contexts that shape student victim-survivors’ experiences of and engagement with higher education. Indeed, as a powerful institution that profoundly shapes experience, identity and practice in complex ways, higher education is an important site of analysis, including to understand its role, responsibility and relationship to GBV. As we will suggest below, higher educational institutions are both sites which reproduce GBV, and which can be used to challenge it.



# Theorising gender-based violence and the higher education context



## Theorising gender-based violence and the higher education context

In this research we take a sociological perspective of gender-based violence (GBV) that understands GBV as related to the broader socio-cultural context of gendered inequalities (Fraser, 2013). We recognise that the meanings of gender, violence and GBV are fluid and dynamic, produced in the context of heterogeneous institutions (such as family, work and education), discourses (such as the contested meanings around being a university student or being a woman) and spaces (such as the home, workplace or classroom). As a social phenomenon that is widespread and prevalent in diverse societies and communities, GBV is shaped by social structures and cultural discourses and is an “interpretation of violence through gender” (Merry, 2009, p. 3). It is a highly variable phenomenon that “takes shape within particular social arrangements” but is “never distinct from larger systems of social inequality and power based on race, class, and strength” (Merry, 2013, p. 23). Thus, understanding GBV in relation to higher education access and participation involves an intersectional and “situated analysis that recognises the effects of the larger social context on gender performance” (p. 23).

The concept of gender performance brings attention to the ways that people ‘do’ gender in relation to expectations connected to constructions of femininity and masculinity, which are not static but are continuously made through the performance of gender. In Butler’s theorisation, gender is always a doing, made through its expression (Butler, 1990, p. 34). Examples might include gendered expressions of ‘being tough’ or ‘being soft’. In this way, gender is discursively produced; tied to contested constructions of masculinity and femininity, which fluctuate over time and space and are shaped by discourses of class, race and sexuality. Tied to dynamic relations of power and difference, and formed through social values, practices and norms, gender performance is relational (for example, performing masculinity gains meaning only in its relation to performing femininity) and intersectional (for example, the doing of gender has meaning in the ways it intersects with other social differences and inequalities such as class, race and sexuality). We also understand violence as tied to cultural and social meanings, which include a vast array of lived experiences from physical and sexual harm and abuse to attacks on personhood, dignity and a sense of self-worth (Merry, 2009; Bourgois & Scheper-Hughes, 2004). Violence is deeply engrained in structural and intersectional inequalities, which “impacts the everyday lives of people yet remains invisible” (Merry, 2004, p. 5). These understandings of gender and violence form our analysis of the impact of GBV on accessing and participating in higher education, where GBV is largely invisible and seen

as outside of student experience, with the exception more recently perhaps of sexual violence and harassment on campus.

The problem of GBV in university contexts is often constructed in individualised terms, with a focus on specific incidents perpetrated by individuals who abuse their power, taking attention away from how GBV is rooted in institutionalised inequalities of gender and sexuality. It is important to recognise that GBV is a manifestation of gender injustice that takes place and is entrenched in social institutions and contexts. Drawing from Kelly’s seminal work (1988), these manifestations take an array of expressions, events and behaviours on a ‘continuum of experiences’, ranging from often taken-for-granted sexist banter to more extreme forms such as rape and intimate partner violence. As Anitha and Lewis point out, the “everyday expressions and behaviours scaffold a culture of gender inequalities that sustains and enables the rarer acts” (2018, p.1). Understanding this in the context of higher education and its relationship to other social sites in which gender injustice is reproduced is significant for shedding light on student victim-survivor experiences. It enables greater examination of the role of higher education in effecting gender equity as a social institution that has the capacity to both reproduce and to challenge gender injustice.

Drawing on Fraser’s approach to gender injustice and considering the relationship between GBV and higher education equity, we argue for the value of engaging both redistributive justice whilst challenging ‘status subordination’, which is a profound form of misrecognition (Fraser, 2013). To clarify these concepts in the context of this project, a redistributive justice approach would ensure that those with experiences of GBV are provided the required resources needed to access and participate in higher education. Such resources include adequate financial support and subsidised housing, safe and affordable transportation, high quality educational programs and childcare facilities, sensitive pedagogical practices and contextualised student services. Research reveals that GBV exacerbates the likelihood of poverty and homelessness (Reeve, 2018; Bullen, 2015) and thus, it is imperative that higher education equity policies and practices engage with the impact of GBV on widening participation in higher education. However, redistribution alone is not sufficient. Simultaneous attention must be paid to the gender injustice of *misrecognition*, “an institutionalised pattern of cultural value that privileges traits associated with masculinity, while devaluing everything coded as ‘feminine’, paradigmatically – but not only – women” (Fraser, 2013, p. 162). These

are the “androcentric value patterns” that pervade everyday interactions and result in gendered status subordination, or misrecognition, including “sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence”, “exclusion or marginalisation in public spheres and deliberative bodies” as well as many other expressions of gendered injustice (p. 162–163). Further, the misrepresentation of GBV frames it through individualist perspectives as about specific one-off incidents enacted by deviant individuals, rather than as deeply woven into the fabric of gender inequalities. The exclusion of the voices of victim-survivors in social institutions such as universities deepens the injustice of misrepresentation. We draw on Fraser’s gender-specific justice framework (Fraser, 2013) to bring attention to the ways that both GBV and higher education are social sites of the gendered inequalities of maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation, deeply affecting the right to higher education (Burke, 2012).

Together with Fraser’s insights, we draw more broadly on feminist analyses to shed light on the experiences of student victim-survivors of GBV in how misrecognition plays out at the affective and subjective levels, including internalised sensibilities of shame and not being good enough (Burke, 2017). Such feelings of deficiency are not only deeply engrained in the gendered inequalities of maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation but are exacerbated by the deficit discourses that underpin equity in higher education (Webb, 1997; Williams, 1997; Burke, 2002; Archer et al., 2003; Archer & Leathwood, 2003). This is further compounded by those deficit discourses associated with GBV, including for example the potentially pathologising gaze of medicalised discourses (for example of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and derogatory constructions of victimhood. This requires attention to the affective domain of lived experiences of GBV that we argue, drawing on our research data, profoundly shape experiences of higher education, including sensibilities of worthiness and belonging.

In the context of higher education studies, deficit refers to the framing of equity as a problem that requires the ‘treatment’ of the perceived deficiencies of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This deficit framing tends to ignore the social, cultural and structural inequalities that create the conditions for differential and unequal access to and participation in higher education to be formed and sustained over time. Many marginalised communities have historically experienced profound forms of injustice through institutionalised discriminatory educational structures, which are sustained through the deficit models embedded in many equity frameworks (Ball, 2013; Gale & Tranter, 2011). Australian research reveals that this deficit framing is deep-rooted and persistent, and entrenched through various equity initiatives (O’Shea et al., 2016), conceptions of capability (Burke, Bennett et al., 2016) and good time management (Bennett & Burke, 2018), and strategies focused on raising aspirations (Gale & Parker, 2015; Sellar, 2013; Sellar, Gale & Parker, 2011). Constructing students through the lens of deficit erases from view the structural, social and cultural inequalities that effect higher educational access and participation (Threadgold, Burke & Bunn, 2018), leading often to students experiencing at a personal level a sense of shame or unworthiness (Burke, 2017).

The deficit model causes further harm to those students navigating complex inequalities and overlooks their potential to impact university institutions through the expression and development of their diverse knowledge, experience and values. Many of the students in this project identified their experiences of GBV as a resource and strength and as a form of knowledge they could share with other students and the institution. This project is the first of its kind to explore key issues emerging in higher education studies, such as the damaging effects of deficit models of equity, with attention to its impact on students with lived experiences of GBV. The project places the perspectives of student victim-survivors at the centre of analysis to build understanding and to identify recommendations.

## Conceptualising time in the context of this study

Higher education research has brought attention to the problematic linear conception of time that is embedded in university structures, particularly in the way it conceals unequal temporal and spatial relations (Burke, Bennett, Bunn, Stevenson & Clegg, 2017; Bennett & Burke, 2018; Burke & Manathunga, 2021). A linear conception of time foregrounds a deficit view that places the onus on effectively managing time on the individual student, without consideration of the gendered injustices students navigate within the specific contexts of their lives in time-space. Time management focuses on competencies and skills and requires that students use and plan their time effectively without consideration of the impact of institutionally-imposed structures, regulations and rhythms (Burke et al., 2017) in relation to gender injustices. There is little consideration of the multiple and competing challenges, demands and expectations that students struggle to navigate (Threadgold, Burke & Bunn, 2018).

We draw on Adam’s concept of ‘timescapes’ (1990, 2004) to analyse the temporal-spatialities that matter for students with lived experiences of GBV and to critique the related problematic constructions of time in higher education.

[T]ime is not neutral or linear; it is not something that we ‘have’ or ‘manage’ in any straightforward sense and is not only about ‘clocktime’, although our experiences of timescapes at university, for example, are often structured by formal schedules, deadlines and terms/semesters. Timescapes are interconnected with a range of different social contexts, organizational spaces and institutions, such as university, work and home. Our experiences of the different timescapes we negotiate are often precarious and deeply shaped by structure *and* agency. Our experiences across different timescapes are not necessarily smooth but are often in tension (for example, meeting family expectations, university requirements and paid work commitments) (Burke et al., 2017, p.12).

The conception of temporalities we embrace resonates with findings from the psychological literature around GBV trauma. In psychiatric terms post-traumatic stress disorder is defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) as a syndrome connected to a distinct traumatic event, evidenced by the presence of three symptom groups: “(1) reexperiencing the traumatic event, (2) avoidance of stimuli that resemble the event and numbing of emotional responsiveness, and (3) increased arousal” (Breslau, 2009). The DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) defines a traumatic event as one that “involves actual or threatened death, serious injury or threat to physical integrity and leads to feelings of extreme fear or helplessness”. Symptoms of PTSD are both chronic and severe, and can include nightmares, anxiety, depression, shame, suicidality, isolation, insomnia and difficulty in intimate relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

The literature stresses that victim-survivors of GBV are likely to be exposed to multiple or even recurrent gender-based trauma and violent events, and events relating to sexual and domestic violence have been found to be associated with the highest rates of PTSD. There is a particularly high incidence of PTSD in the first year following GBV (Rees et al., 2014). A recent meta-analysis demonstrated that women who have experienced family violence are seven times more likely to develop PTSD than those who have not (Oram et al., 2017), while Mitra and colleagues (2021) found that compared to women without PTSD, women who met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD were almost four times likely to have recently experienced physical or sexual violence.

People suffering from PTSD experience intense and disturbing thoughts relating to the triggering event that continue long after the event has passed. As such, the impacts of GBV may be experienced long after the violent experiences end, reverberating throughout victim-survivors’ lives. This is in contrast to dominant Euro-American discourses surrounding trauma and sexual violence which reference the “traumatological timeline” – a temporal imaginary that assigns a linear trajectory to the experience of trauma” (Wieskamp & Smith, 2020, p.74) This traumatological timeline tends to individualise the healing processes of trauma by positioning victimhood as temporary and assigning healing an unrealistic linear timeline (Wieskamp & Smith, 2020). Such discourses position trauma as “something one can (and should) avoid, leave behind, or cure” (King, 2012, p. 38). In this sense, the notion of linear temporality assigns a progressive aspect to trauma recovery – a straight, step-by-step journey towards a positive outcome (that is, recovery).

Since trauma and related PTSD regularly entails reliving traumatic events that ultimately blurs the past and present together, the linear timeline of trauma recovery is neither appropriate nor accurate. Instead, providing a counterpoint to typical linear representations and temporalities of trauma, Mueller-Hirth (2016) acknowledges experiences of victimhood and senses of time as being much more cyclical in nature. In the same vein, Elsaesser (2001, p. 197) argues that trauma can uncover the gap between “psychic temporality and linear chronological time”. Expanding upon this, Elsaesser maintains that “the traumatic event intimately links several temporalities, making them coexist within the same perceptual or somatic field, so much so that the very distinction between psychic time and chronological time seems suspended”. Ultimately, the enduring sequelae of GBV bring with it an “infinite temporality”, whereby the past repeatedly intrudes upon the present (Wieskamp & Smith, 2020, p. 79). In this sense, ‘recovery’ from GBV-related trauma can be thought of as a continual process rather than an ‘overcoming’ or a defined endpoint. Temporal narratives of victimhood move away from linear representations to instead frame survival and recovery as a continual process, something Allen (2018, p. 366) describes as “a process of never-ending becoming”.

Similarly, in the context of post-conflict societies and related human rights violations, Mueller-Hirth (2016) focuses on the temporalities of victimhood, referring to the ways in which victims’ needs and perceptions pose a mismatch to wider society. Contrary to the dominant linear temporality of trauma healing processes, Mueller-Hirth (2016) draws attention to “the temporality of transitional processes and programs at different social and institutional levels” (p. 187). For example, Mueller-Hirth (2016) discusses the idea of temporal hierarchies – hierarchies that mirror broader socioeconomic inequalities, such as societal pressures to move on from past traumatic events (that is, obtain closure), or having to wait for compensation (that is, for victims of crime).

The psychological exploration of the impacts of GBV trauma on victim-survivors’ experience of temporality and its inherent conflict with hegemonic legal and bureaucratic approaches to time reinforces our interest in how time can be a point of injustice for student victim-survivors. For instance, the concept of temporal hierarchies is useful for explaining the mismatch between the lived experience of GBV victim-survivors and the current support mechanisms offered within higher education settings. These mechanisms tend to be ad hoc and incapable of recognising the ongoing impact of GBV experiences for higher education participation.

This literature adds weight to our concern in this project to bring to light the multidirectional flows of time that the students point to. This project disrupts the modernity discourses of clock time that construct it as one-way, linear and chronological (Manathunga, 2019) and that underpin structures and discourses of time in higher education (Bennett & Burke, 2018). Instead, we consider how experiences of GBV and higher education are continually re-situated across and within interconnected, institutional and multidirectional timescapes. In building on work by Manathunga (2014, 2019) and Bennett and Burke (2018) in these ways, this project critically examines the contested and often disorienting temporal-spatialities that play out in the navigation of surviving GBV and participating in higher education. The project engages the messy, uncertain and non-linear trajectories that the students represent in their accounts of becoming with (Haraway, 2016), and against, GBV and higher education.



## Methodology and methods



## Methodology and methods

The research aimed to understand how gender-based violence (GBV) experiences impact on students' access to and participation in higher education. This qualitative research project explored the following questions:

- 1 **How do current students who are victim-survivors of gender-based violence experience higher education?**
- 2 **What are students' lived experiences of higher education in the context of prior, present and/or ongoing experiences of gender-based violence?**
- 3 **How do experiences of gender-based violence impact on participation and sense of belonging at university?**
- 4 **How might universities better understand and/or respond to gender-based violence in the context of commitments to gender equity?**

### Methods

The study used qualitative methods including in-depth interviews (n=24) and arts-based participatory workshops (n=11) to explore the relationship between experiences of GBV and participating in higher education. Qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews enable the rich experiential detail regarding experiences and specific contextual examples to be explored in the participants' own words (Waller et al., 2015). Qualitative interviews are a well-established method for use in challenging, sensitive, or personal topics such as GBV (Allen, 2011). A questionnaire completed prior to interviews asked participants demographic questions and contextual questions regarding their prior experiences of GBV (see Appendix 1 for Participant Demographics). This meant that interviews were able to avoid focussing on the traumatic experiences of GBV. Instead the interviews enabled conversation about the perceived value of higher education in the context of experiences of GBV.

### Study details: Recruitment, data collection and participants

The University of Newcastle, Australia is a large regional university with a student cohort of more than 45,000. For this qualitative pilot project, we targeted recruitment of a small group of students (due to funding constraints for the pilot stage of this research) to one of the three Colleges in the University, with flyers advertising the study emailed and/or posted via learning systems. Students were invited to email the research team directly if they wished to learn more about the study and potentially participate. Upon emailing the research team, interested students were provided with an overview of the study, a participant information sheet and a consent form to sign and return if they wished to take part in the interview. Once students returned their consent form, they were invited to participate in a 10-minute online demographic questionnaire administered via Qualtrics. Students were considered eligible to be interviewed if they indicated in the survey that (a) they were a current student at the University of Newcastle, (b) were aged 18 or over, (c) were not currently experiencing severe mental distress and (d) had personally experienced a form of GBV at any time throughout their life. If students met these criteria they were invited to take part in a one (1) hour interview at a time that suited them, and were informed they would receive a \$20 e-Gift voucher for their participation.

Following the email callout, 50 students expressed interest in participating in the study via an email to the research team. Of these, 28 returned their signed consent form, 27 completed the survey, and 24 proceeded to an interview. Reasons for students not proceeding to interview included not meeting the selection criteria, not being available for an interview due to study or work commitments, withdrawing from the study due to personal reasons, or not responding to two or more follow-up emails. Hence, the final sample consisted of the 24 participants who proceeded to an interview, and the information in this report pertains only to them.

Interviews enabled a conversation between participant and researchers about the perceived value of higher education in the context of experiences of GBV, processes and challenges of accessing university study, identity-formation in relation to be/com/ing a university student and wider lived experiences connected to but outside the immediate formal boundaries of university study. The semi-structured interview schedule was developed in relation to our conceptual framework as well as the project aims and the wider research literature as summarised above. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2.

The study also piloted a participatory art-making workshop, Claim Our Place. This provided students with a series of online workshops underpinned by feminist pedagogies and arts-based methodologies. With an emphasis on art-making processes which are accepted as being intrinsically therapeutic (Malchiodi, 2007), Claim Our Place aimed to provide a creative online space, to foster self-expression and develop connections between women students who shared lived experiences of GBV. Underpinned by research evidencing the longitudinal impacts of GBV on women's well-being (Loxton, 2017; Ferreira, Loxton & Tooth, 2017), art as a vehicle for knowing, learning and being (Dewey, 1934; Tyler & Likova 2012) and associations between the expressive arts and well-being (Heenan, 2006; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010), the pilot program included the provision of art materials, Zoom workshop sessions, ongoing opportunities for connection via a Teams site and a suite of pedagogical resources. Attentive to competing priorities identified by participants, this multilayered approach was intended to increase possibilities for access, participation and engagement. The program was designed with the aim to create a space of wellbeing, belonging, self-discovery, and to reframe students' experiences through the lens of gender justice. All participants who took part in an interview were invited to participate in Claim Our Place and in total 11 students took part.

These qualitative interview and arts-based methods aimed to generate vital new knowledge about how university experiences are impacted by GBV, and identify strategies and practices that enhance a sense of belonging and the capacity to participate in higher education for students with experiences of GBV.



### Data collection

The in-depth interviews took place from May to July 2021. While 7 of the interviews in May and June were conducted face-to-face on university grounds, due to the risk of COVID-19 from mid-June onwards the remaining 17 interviews were conducted via Zoom. Claim Our Place art workshops were offered to research participants at the completion of interviews. Originally designed to be conducted face-to-face across two campuses, Claim Our Place was brought online between July and October 2021, in response to state-wide COVID-19 lockdowns in New South Wales during this period. Art packs were delivered to 14 participants, who were further invited to participate in weekly Zoom workshop sessions, and/or access resources uploaded to a dedicated Teams channel. Between 4 and 7 students consistently attended workshop sessions and another 3 expressed interest in accessing resources in their own time. The online program was facilitated weekly by two artist/practitioner members of the research team. Across six ninety-minute Zoom workshop sessions, students engaged with demonstrations of creative techniques including painting, mandalas, mixed media, contour drawing, frottage, printing and collage. With a focus on carving out a participatory space that suspended expectations of commitment or product, art-making was employed as a tool for voice, connection and well-being and each weekly program unfolded in discussion with participants, who were encouraged to create intuitively and at their own pace. Demonstration videos created and uploaded to the Teams channel following each workshop afforded opportunities for wider engagement and to reinforce learnings. Drawing from the focus of research interviews, an evaluation workshop invited feedback relating to experiences of participation in the pilot program and explored the impact of sharing informal opportunities for creative practice with other student victim-survivor women.

### Participants

The 24 interviewees were aged between 18 and 64 years old. Participants were invited to self-select their gender identity from a range of options including woman, man, non-binary, transgender, or use an open text description option. The majority of participants identified as women (23), one participant was a man. The sample consisted of 17 undergraduates and 7 postgraduates (4 face-to-face, 3 distance/online), whose median year of commencement at university was 2018. Participants were studying at Callaghan campus (9), Ourimbah campus (3), Newcastle city campus (9) and online/distance (3). Five (5) participants attended university straight from secondary education, 8 via Open Foundation/Newstep/Yapug, 5 via higher education, 3 via mature

age special entry, 1 via VET award course, 1 via a TAFE NSW to university program, and 1 via a TAFE certificate. Participants were employed on a casual (12), part-time (4), full-time (3) or student basis (3), while 2 were unemployed and either looking (1) or not looking for work (1). Participants identified as being bisexual (3), heterosexual (17), pansexual (1), queer (2), or opted not to disclose (1). In terms of cultural ethnicity, 19 participants identified as being White Australian, 3 as White European, 1 as South American and 1 as Australian Filipino.

Participants indicated the highest level of household education as being a bachelor's degree (10), followed by a TAFE certificate or diploma (9), a Masters or PhD (2), a Year 10 School Certificate (2), or a Higher School Certificate (1). Participants also completed an adapted version of the single item MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status which asked them to rank their education, income and occupation relative to other Australians (Adler & Stewart, 2007; 0 = *lowest income, education, and occupation*; 100 = *highest income, education, and occupation*). These three items were combined and averaged, revealing a mean score of 48.61. Lindberg and colleagues (2021) determined that the mean subjective social status score of a representative Australian sample (aligned with population statistics according to age group and sex; N = 1423) was 58. So, although participants in the current study perceive their social status to be 'middling' relative to other Australians, this sample may have a lower subjective social class than the general Australian population.

### Analysis

The interviews and workshop evaluation discussions were taped and transcribed, and the transcriptions and analytical process were managed using NVivo qualitative software. The transcripts were read through several times to obtain a sense of the general themes, and the interview data was analysed collaboratively by the team through identification and critical discussion of emergent themes within the data to structure the development of an analytical framework. Emergent themes in the data were added, developed or removed as the analysis progressed. This involved making analytical links between the data and relevant bodies of work, both conceptual and descriptive. All interviewees were assigned pseudonyms. The analysis presented below begins with the findings from the questionnaire, which provides context of the forms of GBV experienced by participants. Following this, participants' experiences of higher education participation and arts-based workshops are discussed.

## Findings: Understanding the impact of gender-based violence on university experience and participation



## Findings: Understanding the impact of gender-based violence on university experience and participation

The findings presented below create new knowledge of the experiences of higher education students who are victim-survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) at different points across their lifetimes. The first section of analysis details the findings from the questionnaire completed prior to the interview which asked participants to provide contextual details about the forms of GBV they had experienced. All participants had experienced psychological and emotional violence, most commonly in the home, and all participants had sought some kind of support.

The findings from the qualitative interview and workshop methods are presented thematically. The first theme details participants' diverse **journeys to participation in higher education**, where intimate partner violence in particular was described as highly damaging and causing numerous challenges for participating in higher education. A second theme articulates participants' **broader sense of purpose** in attending university, and how participants felt determined to complete their studies despite numerous personal and structural barriers. A third theme discusses the **ongoing reverberations and the lasting impacts** and enduring challenges they manage related to their experiences of GBV. A fourth key theme relates to **belonging** at university, where participants described both the centrality of study to their sense of identity, and the struggles associated with feeling 'different' to other students or like an 'outsider' due to their experiences of GBV. The final theme details participants' difficulties in **navigating university systems** and expectations, which were often described as out of alignment with their own capacities and their unmet need for additional support. These themes create a detailed picture of how experiencing GBV can impact on participation in higher education, as well as the significance of higher education for future plans and in creating a new sense of self and capacity beyond the damage caused by GBV.



## Forms and patterns of GBV

A questionnaire completed prior to interviews asked participants to indicate the different spaces in which their experiences of GBV had occurred; how recent the abuse had been (ranging from the past week to 1+ years); and whether they were currently experiencing any forms of GBV; and what, if any, forms of support they had accessed. In keeping with our approach to GBV as including a "vast array of lived experiences" and as deeply ingrained in structural and intersectional inequalities, which "impacts the everyday lives of people yet remains invisible" (Merry, 2009, p. 4), we also asked participants to nominate what forms of GBV they had experienced (please see Appendix 3 for a full description).

All 24 participants nominated that they had experienced psychological/emotional violence. The other most nominated forms were verbal violence (n=23), verbal sexual harassment violence (n=23) and non-verbal sexual harassment violence (n=23). These were followed by physical violence (n=21), physical sexual harassment (n=21), sexual (n=20), sexual personal boundaries (n=21), socioeconomic/financial (n=15), or sexual reproduction (n=7). Additionally, 21 students had experienced at least one form of GBV while in an intimate relationship. The most common form of GBV experienced within an intimate relationship was psychological/emotional (n=20), followed by verbal (n=17) and sexual personal boundaries violence (n=15; see Table 1 in Appendix 4).

The age at which participants had their first experience of GBV ranged from 5–28 years with an average age of 14 years. Five participants stated they were currently experiencing GBV at the time of taking the survey, while all 24 participants personally knew of someone who had experienced a form of GBV at some time throughout their life. Participants' most recent experience of GBV ranged from occurring in the past week to more than 11+ years ago, with the past 2–4 years being the most common timeframe.

## Journeys to higher education: New beginnings, ongoing challenges and self-discovery

Participants' journeys to higher education were diverse, and spread across a range of different higher education entry pathways. Across the cohort of 24 students interviewed, 8 entered university from a higher education pathway, including a VET or TAFE course diploma; 7 through an 'enabling' pathway such as Open Foundation or Yapug/Newstep program; 5 entered university directly from high school through their ATAR; and 3 through a mature-age study entry pathway. The diversity of entry pathways reflects the diversity of the participants in terms of age and the range of experiences of GBV across the lifecourse, including from childhood, during youth and adulthood. Around half (11) of the participants were aged 18–29, 6 were aged 30–39, and the remaining participants were aged 40–64.

Many described the impact of GBV at different points in the lifecourse particularly during youth or early adulthood as significantly impacting their confidence and life plans, such that they had been led to believe they were 'too stupid' for university. Such expressions of belief about lack of confidence and low capability show that what are experienced as personal and individual limits and failings are actually part of the collective experience of having been affected by GBV, and more generally of gendered injustice. In other words sensibilities about low levels of confidence and capability are tied to the *social* phenomenon of GBV, which then impacts at the *individual* level of student experience and identity.

*I think certainly gendered violence can...reduce your confidence, it makes you feel small and stupid and maybe that you don't want to finish the degree because what good will you be, you know if you're so dumb how can you help people, you know. ...Certain experiences made my self-esteem go right down and it sort of made me think, you know, why am I studying this degree? Like why? You know, how could I be of any use to anyone you know? (Rochelle)*

However, experiences of surviving GBV also provided incentive to explore and develop personal sensibilities of potential. For many participants their experiences of GBV provided determination to counter the narrative of their abusive partner and prove their worth through their studies. The notion that experiences of surviving GBV can provide an important motivation as well as a crucial insight into GBV through lived experience, refutes the hegemonic deficit discourses that are usually used to understand students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Against the damaging deficit discourses of lack of capability, some of the students we spoke to drew strength and academic insight from their own experiences.

The most common setting that students had experienced any form of GBV in was at home, except for verbal sexual harassment and non-verbal sexual harassment which were most commonly experienced on the street (n=12) or at an entertainment venue such as a bar or sports stadium (n=15), respectively (see Table 2 in Appendix 4). Twenty-one students had experienced at least one form of GBV at their or someone else's private residence. Within the home, the most common forms of violence participants had experienced included psychological/emotional (n=20), verbal (n=16), physical (n=14), and sexual personal boundaries (n=14; see Table 3 in Appendix 4).

All 24 students had sought out some form of support regarding their experiences with GBV, while 14 students were currently actively seeking support (see Table 4 in Appendix 4). The most common forms of support that students had accessed included:

- psychology or counselling services (either face-to-face, over the phone, or via the internet; n=23)
- support from family and friends (n=21)
- the police (n=18).

These were followed by seeking support from another service (n=16), the university (n=14), a phone support helpline (for example, 1800RESPECT, Lifeline; n=12), an internet support helpline (for example, ReachOut.com; n=9), or a domestic violence shelter (n=6). Other services listed by students included Got Your Back Sista, and support groups and women's educational groups run by social workers.



Escaping from abusive intimate partner relationships often signalled a new phase or opportunity for new beginnings, and to take previously unthought or unavailable paths, such as to tertiary study. The Open Foundation program, as an alternative entry pathway to university, was described as enabling participation in university which would not have otherwise been possible.

*Interviewer: So how did you come to do your studies, like what led you to it, you know, I think I saw that you came through Open Foundation?*

*Alyssa: Yeah, so my husband used to tell me that I was too stupid and too dumb to go to uni, and I thought, last year we separated, and my friends, they were doing uni, and I'm like 'I might give it a go' because I've always wanted to become a nurse, and started doing that and as I was going along, because I did nursing and midwifery and social inquiry, and I started thinking maybe I would go into the more helping side, like social work.*

As Alyssa shows here, for many participants in our study, their experiences of GBV animated their desire to help other women experiencing the same thing. This desire to harness their own suffering to be part of helping others and reducing the levels of GBV in society directly informed many participants' decision to enrol in university, or the courses they eventually focussed on.

Many of the participants describe experiencing intimate partner violence as being a completely debilitating process emotionally, physically and mentally which would prevent being able to attend, or participate, in higher education. For example, Corrine explains:

*I don't think I would have been in a space to learn. I was obviously under immense stress every day. I didn't really have access to, I guess, anything that would allow me to successfully go to university and complete it well in terms of money, transportation, a healthy, physically healthy, mentally healthy, so even if some of those barriers had been taken away and I was physically able to attend, I just don't think mentally I would have been able to complete it anyway. (Corinne)*

The sense of a lack of confidence, which stems from GBV experiences, was described as a significant barrier to accessing higher education, and also affected the experience of those who had made it to university. This is an important insight as research on equity in higher education similarly identifies the damaging and gendered effects of deficit discourses on student identity, access and participation (Burke, 2002, 2015; Leathwood & Read, 2009).

*Within myself there was probably an obstacle which is more like mental kind of, like, I'm highly anxious and I guess that wanting to make sure I can do everything perfectly is an obstacle to trying to get in. Because you have that fear of should I enrol? Am I just going to, you know, work out that I am quite stupid or, you know, so there's that whole, I guess, anxiety around failing. Which, I mean, that is an obstacle. I did push through it because I did look at doing uni a couple of times previously but just was, like, just with other things happening or just talking myself out of it going, 'Oh, I'm not going to be able to do this'. (Vera)*

The participants' accounts suggest that university study was a significant source of personal development, challenging the abusive narratives in order to build a strong sense of confidence and capability. Suri described gaining confidence over time through study, and becoming emboldened by the process as she completed Open Foundation to move into further study.

*The more I studied and the more I actually got the confidence in my ability to study is when I realised that this is what I should have been doing all along... I never thought I could really, and it wasn't until I did Open Foundation that I realised I could. (Suri)*

Participants' accounts demonstrate the importance of higher education in transforming their sense of capability and capacity. This finding is in stark contrast to prevalent conceptions of victim-survivors of GBV as defined by the extra needs and incapacities they are perceived to have. Such deficit discourses erase the agency of students who have experienced GBV. For many of the women we spoke to, the experience of studying was central to reclaiming their agency and sense of purpose and worth.

Janae embarked on study as a mature aged student while in an emotionally abusive relationship. Despite her abuser's attempts to convince her she would 'fail' and was wasting her time, she managed to complete her Bachelor's degree and now has completed postgraduate studies.

*He would say, 'I don't know why you're doing this. You're going to eventually fail anyway, so what's the point in wasting time. You're wasting money. You're never going to finish it'. I did think – I had that in the back of my head all along, 'Well, okay, he's right. I'm not smart enough. I won't do it. But I'll just continue and, sure, I'll fail something and then I'll drop out'. It didn't happen. (Janae)*

While accessing higher education had a powerful positive impact for many participants, nevertheless the effects of GBV created significant obstacles and intrusions to the experience of higher education. Lynette described her experience of GBV as altering her life and study course. Her experience meant she had to 'step aside' from the career she had dreamed of pursuing as a 'high-flying personal assistant', and she instead enrolled in Open Foundation to change careers. Whilst she describes this pathway as a wonderful opportunity and enabler, she regrets that her GBV experience impacted her trajectory so profoundly, and that it curtailed her opportunity to go to university much earlier in her life:

*I would have definitely [have] started university a lot sooner. So, when I had my [GBV] experience, that was my first... I wanted to be a high-flying executive personal assistant. That was my career goal. But once I worked for the doctor and had my court case and everything like that, I totally just stepped aside from that career and went into disability work, because I had lots of family that worked in the system as well... I was only meant to go into disability for a little while, and then get back onboard with my career plan, but it just didn't work like that; I was quite damaged for a few years after my experience. (Lynette)*

This example resonates with findings from other studies which show the effects of violence and abuse can emerge as barriers to accessing and succeeding in higher education (Hahn & Postmus, 2014). Deficit discourses, paired with the practical and material barriers associated with GBV, can make the journey to higher education particularly difficult. Beyond initially accessing higher education in the first place, victim-survivors' experiences of GBV often continue to impact on and disrupt their participation in higher education (Wagner & Manusson, 2005). Despite these significant challenges and barriers, participants described being drawn to higher education to help others and to contribute to their communities.



## A broader sense of purpose

Contemporary higher education policy discourses construct the purpose of higher education primarily through the lens of economic-driven aims, including a focus on job-readiness and employability (DESE, 2020). However, many of the participants in this study pointed to a broader set of aims that motivated their participation, including moving towards secure and meaningful employment but also encompassing a concern to make a difference.

*Interviewer: What kind of role would you like to go in to?*

*Jarrah: Yeah so I think that I'd want to go into something in the public advocacy, public interest space. I'm not a hundred percent sure if I wanna do that in a legal capacity as a solicitor yet. I'm gonna do the practice program and be registered but I think I'm more interested in like I said, groundwork, human-facing things, really working with community and being a part of community and taking the knowledge that I have, that I've learnt in what is quite a selective archaic institution and kind of broadening that and making that available to everyone where I can and utilising it to bridge gaps in community. So probably like policy, legislation, that sort of thing I'm thinking about going in to.*

Despite the significant challenges many described in accessing higher education, the desire to help other women escape abusive relationships, and provide practical support to others, was described as a central motivation for enrolling in university.

Alyssa described wanting to help women 'escape':

*I wanted to help women get out of domestic violence situations, because pretty much a year and a half ago I was completely unaware I was in a domestic violence relationship and had been for quite a long time. (Alyssa)*

Vera similarly described being inspired to help other women through her own experience, knowing the significance of support:

*I wanted to help people who had experienced domestic violence because I know what it's like to be unsupported when you're going through that. If you can just even just be there to support someone I think that's doing a massive, like, it's just doing something massive for them in their life. (Vera)*

Trixie explained how she felt her experiences of GBV were not only helpful to her future but also as a resource to eventually help others experiencing GBV, once she completed her degree:

*which is again why I don't regret my life story because I'm using it and I know that my history is going to be really helpful for my future, because I want to use my life experience to help people that are in the same experience, like who have experienced the same thing. (Trixie)*

Many of the participants explicitly expressed a commitment to social justice as part of their broader aspirations in striving towards gaining a university degree.

*I always believed in social justice and using your privilege in a way that is ethical (...) But at the end of the day, I think, you know, when you have an education, it can also advocate for more vulnerable people. (Ellie)*

University life presents opportunities for collective activities and student representation. Some of our participants found themselves drawn to becoming actively involved in student organisations in order to have a voice on behalf of others and make a difference. This provided a sense of purpose for many of the participants. As Merindah put it, this activity was something that she had not expected to be interested in, but emerged during her student life:

*So, my expectations, it wasn't what I thought it would be. I didn't think I'd get involved in the student associations, like the student representative council or anything like that, I didn't think I'd even be on a board as a treasurer or director! In a workplace, let alone at a university, a local university. So it was more than what I imagined it to be, but that's putting myself out there and I'm a community advocate. I've been a massive advocate for lots of things, for events coordination, for disability, so social justice causes – anything like that I'm right in. (Merindah)*

## Reverberations: The ongoing impacts of GBV on participation and experience in higher education

As well as being a significant barrier to accessing higher education, lived experiences of GBV continued to carry a major impact on women's experiences at university through causing lasting stress and anxiety, undermining their sense of capability and a misalignment with assessment structures causing challenges in meeting deadlines and academic expectations. Participants described how the impacts of past GBV continued to reverberate in their lives through their orientation to study, particularly through how they navigated self-doubt or lack of confidence. This played out in complex ways, as both a continual undermining of sensibilities of confidence and capability and as a source of inner strength, resilience and refusal of abusive constructions of selfhood. For example, Zara described using the insults and derogatory comments of her former abusive partner to spur her on to excel in her studies to undertake a postgraduate degree, explaining "I use it to push myself":

*It made me wanna be better after being told like 'You can't do this, you can't do that' for so long, after getting out of that relationship I was like 'Yes I can'. And since then every time I see an opportunity come up and I'm like 'Oh you may be not good enough' it kind of makes me think 'No you are, you know, just do it'. So yeah it's definitely pushed me to push myself I guess, yeah. (Zara)*

The participants' accounts bring to light the long-term effects of lived experiences of GBV, which are not only specific incidents at a particular moment in time but also act as residual threads woven into a present sense of being, and thus inevitably impact on being a student. Carole is a mature-age student whose pathway to higher education was through Open Foundation. Her experience of GBV was in an intimate relationship many years ago, and she reflects on how difficult, or impossible, it would have been for her to have ever attended university whilst she was in that relationship. She also touches on the ways those past experiences continue to shape her current experiences.

Rochelle talks about the inspiration of the work placement opportunities she had whilst doing her speech pathology degree and meeting professional practitioners with knowledge about how to help others. She explains:

*I got to go on a lot of placements on this degree, so being put with a clinical educator who's just, you know, a speech pathologist at work, and like, growing really close to them and watching what they do and then I sort of follow them. One of them was this lady called [name of speech pathologist] and I was her, I was one of her students in a placement and we worked with children in preschools and that sort of thing, and it was just incredible watching her work and watching how intelligent she was but also like still so aware of people and able to sort of, I don't know, use her knowledge to help them. It was so cool. (Rochelle)*

These articulations of the broader purpose of higher education participation go beyond wanting to 'accomplish something' (Wetterson et al., 2004), and speak to students' motivation to use their knowledge and skills to help others. These examples are important in understanding student aspirations, both acknowledging the motivation for financial health and well-being, opportunities for career development and recognising the deeper investments students make in becoming potential agents of change through their university studies. Importantly, for some students it is their experience of GBV itself that galvanises their commitment to deeper engagement in higher education. We see this in students' engagement with curricula that include analysis of gendered social relations, and in their seeking courses that give them the skills to help others, as well as in involvement in collective social justice activities on campus. In all these ways the experiences of GBV are not just a motivator, but also a source of deep academic insight and empathic capacity. Understanding the multidimensional aspirations that fuel the determination to persist with their studies is crucial given the ongoing impacts of GBV on higher education access, participation and experience.

*30 years on I kind of moved on to a very different relationship, a very different relationship. I think if I'd have continued along that line there's no way I'd be at uni, there's no way I'd be interacting, I couldn't, you know, looking back on that, that historical relationship – there's no way that I would have even considered entering into university. And yeah I do get, every now and again sometimes when I see different researchers or articles or whatever, yeah the red flags come up, they come up, I can feel them. So I suppose in a way, just because I'm feeling them or getting red flags – is that impacting me? I don't know, maybe, I don't know. Sometimes when I yeah, as I said, when I look within my studies something about domestic abuse or whatever, I can feel the flush, I can feel the rise coming up in me. But it's been a while as I said, so I've just learnt to identify that, own that, and help to process that and then move forward. (Carole)*

Carole describes the violent relationship she endured 30 years ago and how it would have blocked her ability to participate in higher education. The possibility of 'interacting' with others at university would have been unimaginable, such that the prospect of attending university was not even considered by her back then. She describes the memories from this relationship registering 30 years later as 'red flags' she can feel whenever domestic violence or abuse is mentioned in her studies or day-to-day life. This surfaces in her body as a 'flush' or a 'rising' feeling which she has had to learn to manage and 'move forward' from. This clearly illustrates how experiences of GBV, even a considerable period in the past, are always present for some students. It shows how subject matter which touches on GBV experiences can bring a range of feelings to the surface in ways that are not always anticipated by academic staff, or even the students themselves. This raises the need for university staff to have an understanding of GBV in relation to the ways it might impact on their students.

For Kendall, who had been in an abusive relationship when she commenced her university studies, continuing study after the relationship had ended was difficult as she continued to be impacted physically and mentally by the effects of coercive control, particularly stress and anxiety.

*When you're coming from a place of just constantly being told that you can't and that you're an idiot and that you don't understand things, or you've got no common sense. It's very hard to see past that and you take that on a level, even though cognitively you know that that's not the case. It starts to take a home deeper inside you that you don't actually even realise is going on...*

*It's had a dramatic impact on my whole studies thus far and my ability to even complete my degree in time, or on the original time trajectory. I've also made several attempts previously to participate in tertiary education, but this has been the furthest that I've gotten. Which is good, and now it's at a point where I just can't give up. I'm just white knuckling it, really, to just try and get through, but that's okay. (Kendall)*

Kendall describes being determined to continue her studies, despite the significant challenge she encounters in just getting through. She explains how she takes pride in her identity as a law student, and its significance in shaping her sense of a future through employment opportunities. However, she feels unable to be the 'ideal student' as a result of her experience of GBV, and this causes her angst and shame.

*The reality is [I'm] white knuckling it and I'm still only there by the skin of my teeth. The shame that I feel that asking for extensions, they [others who admire her for being a law student] don't know all of that stuff. And so yeah, it's an interesting thing. And so it's this weird thing that I think that in a lot of ways I'm incredibly proud to be a student and to be studying law, and that ties quite significantly into my identity, but then there's also this huge amount of shame and embarrassment about the way that I'm conducting myself in my studies, and worry about the future about whether or not I'm actually even going to be able to gain employment. That also ties dramatically into my identity, and that's a really interesting and huge polar opposite approach. (Kendall)*

Shame is felt in the body as a feeling (Ahmed, 2004), as fear marked on the body and felt as lack of self-worth and disconnection (Erskine, 1995; Scheff, 2014; Reed et al., 2007). Burke (2017) argues that personal sensibilities of shame are generated through wider gendered injustices but are concealed through the deficit discourses that place the weight of responsibility for overcoming social disadvantage on individuals to conform to institutionalised expectations. The theme of shame and shaming was salient across the accounts of participants in this study. Ellie describes the individualising and shaming process of escaping an abusive relationship whilst being concurrently enrolled as a university student.

*I think it's very much something that you deal with yourself and it's a lot of shame. And you really don't sort of speak up until it either gets to breaking point. And I suppose, in a way, it's sort of hard to navigate in that setting because, yeah, you just feel, not only in your personal life, a lot of shame and guilt, but also as a student. And when I think I had to do adverse circumstances to get out of the debt when I did leave. It was yeah, having to go through that process, of like, getting a letter from your psychologist and your GP as to why you didn't drop out at census date. So, it just brings a lot of shame and guilt on victims because that idea of society it's victim blaming. It's their fault. So, overall, you just don't want to speak up about it. (Ellie)*

Ellie points to the emotional and mental toll of exiting an abusive relationship whilst a student as being almost completely overwhelming, and significantly affecting her studies. She said she felt like she was 'living in a different world' to other students.

*You need to exit the situation, you're trying to just stay afloat. So, you can't complete the normal demands of what a student could in a healthy environment because you're living in a different world, really. So, you're trying to work out how to exit the situation but at the same time, you're at breaking point. So, mentally, you know, you're just really broken. And you're not in the place to do work. And you're really just surviving. So, really, it just... the best way to describe it is having the floor underneath you, ripped out and just falling but you've got nothing to grab onto. So, yeah, it's really hard to and pretty much impossible, to get an education in that environment. (Ellie)*

Tara also describes being incapable of participating in university fully while she was experiencing GBV.

*I couldn't give the time to the classes, or I was barely passing, last year I failed or I didn't finish subjects and yeah. (Tara)*

These experiences indicate that some students with experiences of GBV need greater flexibility in terms of timeframes that might produce rigidity and misalignment that is potentially detrimental to the success of student victim-survivors. This form of temporal inequity (Burke et al., 2017) is a symptom of the enduring effects of GBV, which are rooted in the interconnected gender injustices of maldistribution and misrecognition. That is, through a lack of attention to the impact of GBV on higher education equity, the temporal resources required to participate successfully in their program of study simultaneously form deficit constructions of the student. Ultimately the pilot project suggests that more research is required to understand what temporal structures and what forms of student support would best enable student victim-survivors of GBV to successfully navigate higher education study and foster a sense of belonging at university.



### ‘Belonging’ at university

The difficulties in taking part in university life stemming from participants’ experience from GBV were wide-ranging. Participants described being at university as a central part of their lives and identities, particularly in their goals of moving towards a future away from crisis and experiences of GBV, and towards building life chances and opportunities. This inevitably necessitated fostering a sense of belonging at university, particularly in terms of explicit and implicit expectations in higher education, which can lead to feelings of illegitimacy as a university student (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017; Wong & Chiu, 2021). However, participants described both their efforts and struggles to ‘belong’ at university in the face of the severe impacts on confidence wrought by their experience of violence and abuse. The university environment was critical to fostering a sense of belonging for many of the participants.

University campuses were described as affording ‘tight knit’ communities and connections, where participants talked of feeling recognised and known by students, as well as staff (lecturers, tutors, and library staff in particular). Belonging was described as linked to a sense of connection with peers in and out of class, and with an identity as a ‘university student’.

*I love the social aspect of being when we can be on campus and being at uni and talking to other peers and lecturers and stuff about the content and about all of that stuff. So even though it’s incredibly hard, I do just generally love it. (Jarrah)*

Corrine also described the relationships she has formed with others at university, including lecturers and fellow students, as creating a sense of belonging, and being valued:

*To some degree I do feel a sense of belonging, particularly I found in postgrad because whether it’s just my experience or I’m lucky enough to have lecturers that are quite engaging and very responsive. So, creating, I guess, some type of relationship with, whether it’s lecturers or tutors as I’m studying has helped to create that sense of belonging. Like I’m valued in their class and my learning and my participation is valued. So therefore, I’m part of that wider community. (Corrinne)*

Trixie described her first experience of being in a tutorial at university as providing a calm, supportive environment, in ‘stark contrast’ to the ‘stressed’ environment of her former relationship.

*It was a nice, small class, I think we had maybe 15 people in the class and everyone was really supportive... We had laughs, we just had that support and like we had a Facebook group where we chatted if we needed support there, and I think it was just kind of like a really stark contrast between what I’d just been dealing with for the past four years nearly and having so much support and laughing again, I was like ‘Oh my goodness, this is nice, let’s keep running on this!’ It was really nice to be in this calm, non-stressed environment. (Trixie)*

University provided a new experience, through feeling support in the quiet, calm, ‘chatty’ and relaxed atmosphere of the classroom, and outside of it with her classmates through a shared Facebook group. Trixie’s insight that the small class size was important for providing a supportive environment is important. Large classes and lack of tutorials can make it particularly difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to connect with academic staff and other students and to find ways for their particular experiences and insights to come into the pedagogical space. Yet as Trixie indicates, it is exactly these relationships with teachers and other students that provide the possibility of creating a sense of belonging for students.

Connection with other students is also described by Vera as being key to the feeling of belonging and being welcome at university. She described her initial hesitancy when beginning Open Foundation that she would be the only older student:

*I was worried I was going to be the old person in class that everyone goes, ‘What’s this old woman doing here?’ because I am a mature age student. It was really nice when I got into the actual class the first day and I kind of looked around and went, ‘I’m not the oldest person here and there’s a lot of mature age students’. I think I expected it to be predominantly really young just out of school kids. I just – I honestly didn’t really know what to expect. I was a bit worried it could be a very not – I guess I kind of thought more along the lines of what schooling had been like in, say, high school and not the basically the adult learning that, you know, uni is where it’s not, kind of, like, ‘What are you doing? Where’s this?’ kind of thing. (Vera)*

Jasmine also described a feeling of belonging at university that came through being recognised by peers when she walks around campus, and feeling comfortable in the physical space she studies in. Belonging was described as a sense of familiarity and ease in her surroundings.

*Definitely my peers and the friends that I’ve got around me. I feel comfortable to walk through the uni and I know where everything is now. So I also have a place where I like to study so I think that’s really important is being able to find a comfortable place where I can sit down and feel comfortable with the people around me and study and put my headphones in and really get into it. So that’s really important to me and I have a sense of belonging because of that physical space and because I’ve been there so long as well. I feel like I know everything and where everything is. (Jasmine)*

As well as relationships with teaching staff being important, having other staff across campus facilities that were helpful and available was important for building a sense of belonging on campus. Carole described this assistance and support from staff as helping her to build relationships with others at university, and to feel she ‘belonged’.

*[The librarians], they’re just great, so they’ve assisted me immensely and I’ve built some really lovely relationships with, you know, some students, I connect with a few of them outside of uni and I’ve had the most wonderful lecturers and tutors, like I can’t, just, yeah, some real gamechangers there for me. You know, I think when you have a good teacher and someone that kind of sees you, it’s a gamechanger, it changes your interaction with education. (Carole)*

Carole described being recognised and appreciated by a teacher as a powerful experience, a ‘gamechanger’ for how she interacts with university and feels she can belong. Again, this reinforces the need for teaching staff with the time and capacity to genuinely engage with and ‘see’ students like Carole. This kind of relationship is important for all students, but can be particularly transformative for students with experiences of GBV who may never have felt intellectually seen. It opens new realms of being and belonging, and helps students like Carole re-create their sense of potential in their lives. This form of belonging is about building gender justice in higher education through a deliberate commitment to challenge the institutionalised misrecognition of student victim-survivors’ identities and experiences.

Those who described feeling a sense of belonging at university felt they could relate to and be understood by their peers, teachers, and staff. For those participants who were experiencing ongoing impacts to self-esteem and confidence as a result of suffering GBV, a sense of belonging at university was much more difficult, or not yet possible.

### Struggling to ‘belong’

Alyssa described feeling ‘numb’ a lot of the time, and that her recent experiences of gender-based violence made it difficult to feel comfortable or trusting in the company of others.

*Interviewer: Do you feel a sense of belonging through your studies?*

*Alyssa: I do but at the same time I don’t know, like I’m numb the majority of the time so I don’t really feel much, so sense of belonging. I would love to join a club I just don’t have time so therefore, because of the kids and all that, so I don’t know, I do but I don’t, like I belong to a university but a sense of belonging? No, I don’t feel like I belong here, I don’t feel like I really belong anywhere to be honest, I feel nomadic. (Alyssa)*

Like Alyssa, Trixie describes how elusive a sense of belonging is, both in her university studies and in her life more broadly. She describes belonging as a ‘struggle’, journey or process, where she must navigate feeling like an outsider as an inevitable part of being a student for someone with her history and background, and that she didn’t feel ‘belonging’ in other parts of her life.

*I’m a very social person and I’ll connect with lots of people but I have a lot of struggle with the feeling of belonging, like I don’t, I’ve never felt like I belong anywhere and I’m still on that journey of searching for a place where I belong. So like, don’t get me wrong – I love being at uni, I’ve got all the supports that I’ve got at uni... But like in my psych degree I had extremely high achieving friends and like I didn’t kind of feel like, I always kind of had to feel like I’m crawling to kind of keep up kind of thing, so I didn’t kind of feel like I belonged there either. But like I’m not gonna let the feeling of belonging stop me from doing things because I would just sit in my bed all day when I’m not at uni. Yeah so the feeling of belonging is quite elusive to me. Like I’ve not really felt that ever. Like even with my family I feel like I’m very much the **black sheep** of the family, like friends I’ve not really felt connected there but I was just kind of like I’m just very social, so yeah it’s still a journey for me. (Trixie)*

Despite the struggle to ‘crawl to keep up’ with high achieving academic friends in her degree, Trixie describes being at university as the focal point of her life which gives her purpose. Elsewhere in the interview, Trixie described higher education as crucial to her ‘journey towards healing’. Similarly, any sense of belonging at university for Trixie can be thought of as something that may be cultivated through the course of this journey. This understanding of belonging as a process, rather than a static ‘state’ to be achieved, resonates with the sociological framing of belonging (Harris, Cuervo and Wyn, 2021). Furthermore, it is important to locate her personal struggle in a broader social context, bringing attention to the feelings of disconnection she articulates to the gender injustice of GBV that has so profoundly shaped her experiences. Thus, her self-construction as the ‘black sheep’ of her family becomes more than just an individual characteristic when analysed through the lens of gender injustice.

It is unsurprising from that perspective that another participant, Henriette, also used the term ‘black sheep’ to describe herself and her feelings of *not* belonging in her peer group at university. Similar to Trixie, she explains how after suffering from GBV, in her case an assault during her university studies, she found it more difficult to maintain connections and relationships with others she had previously known living on campus.

*I felt ostracised, I didn't feel like I connected with anyone because I was still in a bit of a valley if that makes sense. Like I was for a time feeling really, really alone while living with a hundred other people. Yeah I felt like I just couldn't connect with people mainly because of the incident but also because I felt like being in second year was a lot different to coming straight from high school really on to campus. Like there were, I was living with a lot of 18 year-olds who were excited to have fun and wanted to go out all the time and form friendships that way, and I was in second going 'Oh! I just want to study and have a coffee with someone but I don't know who to connect with, I don't know who to reach out to or confide in because yeah'. Yeah I felt like a bit of a black sheep at the time, yeah. I felt like I was damaged in some way. (Henriette)*

These descriptions of struggling to belong at university related to feelings of shame and self-blame stemming from experiences of GBV were echoed by other participants. It is important to reiterate that shame is connected to institutionalised forms of misrecognition and often internalised as a lack of self-worth or failure. Such feelings of shame made it difficult to stay engaged with others, and to persevere with challenging coursework.

*I think a part of us always will blame ourselves, like, have I – what did I do to deserve that. It must have been something about me that attracted that person in the first place. (Jenae)*

*I was just always on edge. It was really hard to concentrate and yeah, it was just like you were there physically, to be present, to try and still be there to persevere. But yeah, on campus you just felt very isolated and, you know, 'Who are you going to talk to?', 'Who is going to understand this?', 'Where do I go get help?', 'Do I have to drop out?', 'What do I have to do?'. So, you just feel very confused, isolated and just ashamed. (Ellie)*

Feeling isolated, alone, and in need of practical support and assistance was described as particularly challenging for continuing to stay at university. The feeling of being out of place, of not belonging, could be overwhelming and could mean participants questioned whether they were ‘meant to be here’.

*The first time I attempted uni was right in the midst of me being in an unsafe situation, and I felt very separated from... You know, a couple of times I tried to attend class or to access class, because I just hadn't been, I guess, at that time, exposed to regular social situations very much at all for such a consistent period of time. So going into an unfamiliar environment, I felt very alienated, I guess. I just, I felt like I was so overwhelmed, didn't know what was happening. I do remember feeling really kind of like, 'I don't think I'm supposed to be here'. (Corrinne)*

## Navigating university: Disorientation and misalignment

As explored above, GBV experiences reverberate as students navigate higher education, often with significant effects on their sense of self, safety and capability. Ellie talks about this as ‘living in a different world’. The disorienting temporal-spatialities that the students negotiate generate major challenges for their studies, as articulated powerfully by Ellie:

*Interviewer: Did it impact your studies in other ways as well?*

*Ellie: Oh, majorly. You just, overall, sort of feel, because you need to exit the situation, you're trying to just stay afloat. So, you can't complete the normal demands of what a student could in a healthy environment because you're living in a different world, really. So, you're trying to work out how to exit the situation but at the same time, you're at breaking point. So, mentally, you know, you're just really broken. And you're not in the place to do work. And you're really just surviving. So, really, it just...the best way to describe it is having the floor underneath you, ripped out and just falling but you've got nothing to grab onto. So, yeah, it's really hard to and pretty much impossible, to get an education in that environment.*

For some of the students, GBV not only impacted their university studies as reverberations of past traumatic incidents, but continued as relentless forms of violence in their current life experiences. Sully had experienced different forms of GBV throughout her life since childhood. Despite this, she was determined to study law at university. She explains:

*As I went, when I turned 10, I started doing debating and stuff in primary school and then into Year 7 and I really just loved arguing about a certain issue, and one day someone said to me 'Oh you'd be a great lawyer', and I held onto that forever, and ever since I've always had a big interest in wanting to do something in the law field. But I knew I was not gonna get the ATAR for law being, I think it was like 90, but I was determined, I didn't want to do anything other than law. So I was like, okay I've gotta find out a way to somehow get into law, but I knew I wasn't gonna get the ATAR. And so I did, I'm pretty independent which is lucky because I just did a lot of research myself, so I started Communications and then tried really hard that year and then I applied to add on the Law which was good and then I started that in 2020. (Sully)*

Experiencing GBV whilst enrolled at university was described as being particularly challenging for feeling disconnected and alienated from others. Like Ellie and Corrinne, Suri described that having her confidence severely impacted by GBV made it even more difficult to ask for assistance or navigate the university systems to access extensions and other practical matters.

*For a very long time, I didn't think that I should be there. [My experiences of GBV] have definitely affected my confidence. It's so unfair. I feel like I'm just this one person in there with these sad stories. (Suri)*

Karlie also described feeling a sense of injustice about how she is impacted by GBV in her studies at university, and through feeling different from other students through carrying a ‘heavy burden’ others do not.

*I won't lie, I'm jealous of a lot of [students]. Especially, like, the younger ones or other mature age... Actually yeah, so, most students. How bad does this sound? At least I'm being honest. Because they don't have that emotional baggage to go with them. They don't have kids to worry about. The friends that I have, they didn't have kids to worry about. They didn't have court to worry about. They didn't have to think about finances, because, you know, they're still living at home with mum and dad. They've got their car bought for them and I... it was like I was dragging, just constantly dragging things behind me... I wish that my life was just as easy and simple as theirs was. And I think that is just a natural, human emotion. (Karlie)*

The struggle for belonging experienced by many of our participants resonates with findings from Wagner and Manusson (2005) who argue that GBV is a significant and unique barrier in higher education contexts. Similarly the work of Reilly and D'Amico (2011) outlines specific challenges in how victim-survivors experience higher education study, such as feeling isolated, and finding it difficult to connect with other students and to the higher education environment as a whole. Given what we know about the extent of GBV across Australian society, potentially very many students are experiencing this same difficulty in feeling they belong in higher education. This raises challenges for higher education institutions to look at what can be done to overcome some of experiences of alienation and isolation that many GBV victim-survivors are dealing with as they attempt to succeed at university.

At the time of her interview, Sully had suffered two separate (off-campus) sexual assaults and had recently fled a violent intimate relationship. These ongoing experiences of GBV placed her life in turmoil, and she sought support from the university via on-campus counselling services. However without the availability of specialised expertise in gender-based violence on-campus, Sully was referred to the same off-campus services that she already received.

*Yeah so I went and did the intake and they told me that my issues were a bit too high stream for their sort of counsellors. They did refer me to Victim Services which I already had a counsellor through. But yeah they suggested there wasn't any point taking me on into the uni counselling (Sully).*

What she felt she actually needed was greater and more specialised on-campus support to navigate the harmful experiences of GBV, including facing homelessness, while not losing the important life chances afforded by her university study.

*Sully: Well even up to last week I was facing homelessness, so I was at the risk of getting kicked out of... during the DV they wanted, our real estate agent actually wanted to kick us out of home. So I had up until the end of July to find a place and with the rental market being insane I was literally at a risk of homelessness, and I rang the uni and I was like 'Look, like what do I do if at the end of this I literally have nowhere?' And they were like 'Oh you can apply for a place here but the offers have already gone out, so oh we probably won't be able to get you anything'.*

As well as the need for specialised student support on-campus, Sully's experience graphically highlights the necessity for adequate provision of fundamental services such as housing, in order to ensure equitable access to higher education for students who are experiencing GBV. We argue that this points to the need for greater inter-agency collaboration with higher education to develop innovative strategies to support post-crisis resources, opportunities and life chances. This includes the importance of providing housing for students fleeing domestic violence as well as a more flexible approach to deadlines for students facing crises such as GBV and potential homelessness. Sully's account sheds light on the significant impact of the combination of GBV and maldistributive and misrecognitive injustice for higher education access and participation. Misrecognition is exacerbated through an absence of specialised expertise in the context of efforts to support students navigating gender injustices.

Navigating higher education for students who have experienced inequalities is a struggle but is often misrecognised as a deficiency of the students rather than a problem for the systems of support available (Threadgold, Burke & Bunn, 2018). Sully is not the only student who foregrounds such challenges. Jarrah similarly describes how navigating extensions and asking for help can be difficult, and this is connected to experiences of GBV that have significantly undermined a sense of confidence and capability.

*I think it sort of knocked my confidence quite a bit in terms of communicating with other people too, especially in the initial stages, like the first two years afterwards, it was really quite difficult for me to articulate to a lecturer or a tutor how I was feeling, if it was someone I didn't know I was, I'm a little bit weird about emotions still. I'm getting better but trying to explain to somebody even with a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, hey actually I am really, really struggling to finish this assessment – I've got three quarters of it done and I cannot even explain to you why I can't finish it, I just can't at the moment. So communicating and working out how to effectively communicate again, and my confidence in just being like 'Look, this is the situation'. I'm much better at it now and I can just reach out to most people but there is that initial I don't really want people to know what's going on with me, I feel a little silly about it, I don't understand what's going on, and even when you think you've processed it it'll still just rear its head randomly at the weirdest things too. So yeah, trying to communicate again and be confident in that you're not crazy is also another thing I think. Yeah, if that makes sense, I'm not sure if that makes sense. (Jarrah)*

Jarrah also described the immense difficulty in navigating the university systems that have been designed to support students:

*As much as the university, my experience has been that as much as the university has resources available or says that there's particular things available I find that it's quite hard to navigate and when you're in the midst of a traumatic situation the last thing that you want to have to do is recount what's happening as it's happening to a myriad of different people. And so that was my experience at the start, but I kind of, I reached out to the university and I accessed some resources. (Jarrah)*

## Student victim-survivors' recommendations to universities

The above analysis of the students' accounts signals where there is potential for improved policy and practice. As well as this, the students often articulated their direct recommendations for the university to better address GBV specifically and its relation to the challenges of building gender equity more broadly. The following points were made as explicit recommendations to the university by the students themselves.

### 1. Improve consistency and processes for academic staff to assist students affected by GBV

Participants suggested support could be offered more consistently across the academic systems and processes relating to requesting extensions and providing supporting evidence. Students recommended that a new structure in which a centralised source for inputting Reasonable Adjustment Plans (RAP) would be a positive development. This would avoid students having to inform every single course coordinator which can be retraumatising, as Vera explains:

*But, I don't know, maybe – it's really hard to kind of – I don't know whether they could; in regards to support if there's some way that lecturers or course coordinators can be made aware without the student having to make them aware so then there's not this kind of disconnect between, 'Well, why do you need this' kind of thing. Because at the moment I feel, especially with the Reasonable Adjustment Plan, that, you know, course coordinators are just getting a piece of paper and, you know, for all they know someone knows a doctor who's just willingly written a letter to get that plan. (Vera)*

However, disclosure is a delicate balance and students pointed to the need for an opt-in system due to fears that some coordinators would 'punish' or target students for their experiences. This led students to highlight the importance of professional learning and development in relation to the particular sensitivities of GBV, trauma and disclosure.

Tara faces similar issues in trying to navigate rigid time structures around assessment deadlines within an environment that is unable to comprehend the significant impact of GBV on her studies. She explains:

*But I feel like when it's more of an ongoing kind of issue, they don't really understand it past the first assessment or whatever. (...) I just felt like I couldn't bring it up as another reason because they'd be like 'Oh well you said that before'. Like when I'd try to apply for adverse circumstances they'd be like 'Well this isn't a sufficient reason'. (Tara)*

Sully and Tara are pointing to the importance for building institutional capacity to address the complex challenges that student victim-survivors of GBV face, which can lead to a sense of powerlessness and exacerbate the risk of attrition. Without the appropriate structures, knowledge and expertise, genuine efforts by university leaders and staff to build gender equity can be profoundly undermined. This also has the potential to further exacerbate the effects of GBV on student-survivors' sense of self-esteem, confidence and capability. These accounts of struggles to navigate university systems point to the need for more nuanced navigational frameworks for student support that would alleviate the gender injustices of GBV, maldistribution and misrecognition, often internalised as a sense of personal shame and unworthiness.

The students shared the knowledge and insight that emerged from their experiences, and with further research, this could lead to enhanced equity strategies, frameworks and practices, particularly in relation to supporting students with complex experiences of GBV.



*Additional training for course coordinators/lecturers re understanding the purpose of the RAP and what's appropriate to ask the student versus what is not appropriate. We have Consent Matters and I'm sure lecturers do have to do their own equity, diversity, sexual assault training and things like that but just generally too I think, maybe a little bit more education or time spent on making sure that lecturers understand the processes too or even the documents that are in front of them, like what is a Reasonable Adjustment Plan and what is a reasonable thing to ask and not ask and things like that too so yeah. (Jarrah)*

In emphasising the need for high quality professional learning and development to enable staff to develop the understanding required to support students, better knowledge of systems such as RAP was recommended by students.

*Yeah, well, so they're aware that there's a Reasonable Adjustment Plan. They're not aware of why there's a Reasonable Adjustment Plan. So, I mean, and when I spoke to the people that do that plan at the uni they said, 'Well, no, she shouldn't be doing that. That's why we're here so you don't have to obviously retell your story to every single person that, you know, you have that's teaching you'. They did offer to contact that course coordinator and say, 'No, she needs this time'. But I said no. At that stage I said, 'Well, I'll just see if I can get it done and if I run into trouble I'll call you back'. So, I mean, they're aware that I've got that Reasonable Adjustment Plan but they're not aware of the reason why I have it because I think there is a broad spectrum of why they did that plan for people. (Vera)*

*So in the initial stage I think some lecturers, and I found it was mainly the male lecturers that I had, were a little bit apprehensive about taking the Reasonable Adjustment Plan on face value or taking what I was saying on face value. Which was a little hard because they were never rude about it and they were never like antagonistic or anything like that, it was just more that I felt like I had to overexplain myself and justify something that I really shouldn't have really been an issue in the first place. So I found myself constantly having to explain again and again, and there was a bit of resistance and pushback from it, I had to seek additional things. (...) Most of the female lecturers that I've had have just been like 'Absolutely that's fine'. So I haven't really had, thankfully, too many bad experiences but there's definitely, early on there was a few that were a bit yeah, not great. (Jarrah).*

## 2. Improve quality of student support including GBV expertise and knowledge

Students also recommended that greater expertise is needed in the on-campus support provided. The quality of student support and the underpinning knowledge, understanding and philosophies are of importance in relation to students' journeys through higher education, including their sense of being valued and recognised members of the university community. This includes acknowledgement of the significance of expertise in relation to GBV for student support systems, which would enable student victim-survivors' experiences to be validated and recognised as mattering.

*It would be really good if they had one or two counsellors that were specifically trained and able to counsel people that are going through sexual assault or domestic violence or any sort of thing like that. (Sully)*

*I guess the way that the uni could probably be a bit better with it is that the counsellors don't really, like they just give kind of general counselling, like they don't know how to deal with actual issues related to gendered violence. (Tara)*



## 3. Universities could foster greater advocacy and awareness

Student victim-survivors believe universities should foster greater advocacy and awareness to challenge GBV. Zara suggests there could be open conversations to recognise key issues and in her words to 'call it out'. Tara supports these suggestions pointing to the need for greater knowledge about GBV. Both Ellie and Tara point to the value of developing modules or courses to build advocacy and awareness in university spaces.

*I think more advocacy and more awareness. The more that there's open conversations and advocacy and awareness, the more that we can kind of tackle the issue and it makes you feel like it's, like not normal – because it shouldn't be normal – but feel like they can relate a bit more and recognise the issues so that we can call it out. (Zara)*

*I guess there should be kind of more knowledge about it, especially emotional and verbal and psychological kind of abusive stuff, because I guess people don't really know when that's happening [...] yeah and I guess more awareness about [GBV] and like how they have the little modules you have to do when you first start uni, that could maybe be one of them. (Tara)*

*I suppose sort of like the way they do the consent modules, doing just DV knowledge. Just general education like what are the forms of violence. But also, taking note of, maybe just doing some small activities around it. Just to sort of show 'Hey, we don't agree with this and we also want students and teachers to be aware'. (Ellie)*

## 4. Create spaces of support and connection for student victim-survivors

The students also suggest that universities could facilitate spaces of support and connection for victim-survivors. This would include structures and programs that enable students' navigation of complex and often inequitable university systems through a relational approach (Burke, Cameron, Fuller & Hollingworth, 2021). Ellie recommends support groups that facilitate a space for victim-survivors to come together and discuss their experiences and how they are moving forward. Rochelle similarly suggests that opening up spaces to bring victim-survivors together would help build new understanding and raise awareness.

*Support groups. Maybe for people who are survivors, they could come together. Discuss their experiences and how they're moving forward. And having that opportunity, you know, if you come forward and you say, 'Look, you know, my studies are severely impacted because of x, y and z'. Then, being able to put a plan in place for you, to help you navigate that. (Ellie)*

*[Through coming together] you sort of had this new understanding that, you know, being treated this way is not okay and that's why I feel so horrible, you know, and I shouldn't feel guilty about this because I'm in the right and I, you know, I've been mistreated. (Rochelle)*

These recommendations emphasise the significance of connection and relationality for gender equity in higher education. A focus on connection and relationality challenges decontextualised, generic, utilitarian and/or transactional approaches to student support, which tend to be embedded in deficit models that individualise the struggles students encounter rather than locate these struggles in wider systemic and structural inequalities (Burke, 2012; Threadgold, Burke & Bunn, 2018). Drawing from Burke, Cameron, Fuller and Hollingworth (2021), we suggest a 'relational navigator framework' might be further explored as a way to offer a more nuanced approach to supporting students with lived experiences of GBV. This would involve staff collaboratively navigating the complex systems and transitional processes of higher education participation by 'walking alongside' students, and by respecting their lived and embodied contexts and experiences within an ethical framework that does not demand harmful processes of disclosure (Burke, Cameron, Fuller & Hollingworth, 2021).

## Claim Our Place workshops



## Claim Our Place workshops

Many of the interview participants' recommendations above connect with the purpose of the arts-based Claim Our Place workshops: to provide a space for creative practice, connection and support for student victim-survivors of GBV on campus.

Claim Our Place participants were invited to engage in an evaluation of the arts-based workshops. A creative evaluation Zoom workshop for Claim Our Place was organised, and with permission from the participants it was recorded and transcribed. The transcript was read through several times to obtain a sense of the general themes and was analysed collaboratively by the project team through identification of emergent themes within the data. The aim of this was to gain insight into the value of the Claim Our Place approach from the perspective of participants and to understand if students felt they benefitted from the arts-based workshops, and if so, in what ways. We also wanted to understand from the perspectives of the participants what could be further developed, improved and/or done differently.



### Personal impacts of participation

Student victim-survivors spoke to a range of positive impacts experienced through participation. These included an increased awareness of the tactile and calming nature of art resources and processes, coupled with a heightened consciousness relating to the importance of creativity in their lives.

*I feel like it's actually, I think it's tied to the whole situation as well, that whole slowing down a lot too and being a lot more mindful. And I think that's probably that centeredness is probably coming from this, not just once a week, but I find I'm doing a lot more, all the time. And so, I'm maybe coming from a quite a calmer place, I'm better able to go into my other things and be that way. (Suri)*

*What I value most I think, with the art progress, process rather, is just how tactile it is, because like you said in this kind of world that we live in now, we're surrounded by, digital things, computer meetings, documents, I'm submitting everything through my computer. (Henrietta)*

*[W]hen you're being creative and you're actually doing something and creating something and you get over that guilt of not doing other things, you realise the importance of art and the role it plays in your life. (Rochelle)*

Experiencing new and different ways of viewing the world, deeply appreciating opportunities to connect with other student victim-survivors and yielding to the principle of process over product in art-making and beyond, were defined by the participants with feeling. Granting oneself permission to carve out time for creativity resonated strongly throughout the evaluation workshop, as did the notion of art-making as a centring practice.

*I think it's the courage to do that [research project] and then this beautiful thing that's come from it. And us finding that courage to engage with this. I think it, one builds from the other. And so, it's like a process of building us up by us putting ourselves out there for it, and sort of getting over that anxiety a little bit and making beautiful, beautiful things. I'm meeting wonderful, wonderful people who understand... (Suri)*

*So we've been exposed to this creative space, so now it's opened up a whole other world for me, and I'm now seeing things that I haven't seen before. (Merindah)*

*[T]hat process versus end product difference. I think that's been a really big thing for me, from this. (Suri)*

*It was a really nice opportunity to have a weekly time for myself when I could just recentre. (Rochelle)*

## Relationality

All participants identified a sense of enjoyment experienced throughout their engagement with Claim Our Place. They spoke of feeling welcomed, developing a sense of connection and genuine care for one another in an online space and appreciating the sharing of feedback and artistic progress.

*It was joyful when I could log on and people who I haven't, I don't really know too well, are excited to see me and are excited to see what I come up with, with different art techniques. And it's just the most encouraging thing because it's not the same as uni. (Henrietta)*

*We have different ages, and we definitely have different stages within like artistic ability or like experience with art, but we all did have something that sort of bound us together and make us see the good in each other, and we could relate. (Suri)*

Participants also described the deep impression that the home delivery of art packs had upon them, highlighting feelings of deservedness and worth. This form of redistribution was experienced as a sense of their value as participants in the pilot project.

*[T]hey obviously think we're worth it to be able to be sending this out. (Merindah)*

*I actually was not expecting the box at all. And so, I was thinking, oh my gosh, do I even deserve this? But it was just, it was such a wonderful surprise. (Henrietta)*

*And I think the way that you celebrate that, we all deserve nice things and nice experiences. Like, I think often I don't hear nice things like that. So, you know, that little box of freebies that came and there was such beautiful quality. It's like all my Christmases wrapped into one box, the only thing that comes in the mail is bills. And then I got this! (Suri)*

## Safety and belonging

Notions of safety and belonging within the program were intertwined with relational aspects discussed above. Participants spoke of feeling welcomed, finding courage, overcoming anxiety, and experiencing underlying feelings of empathy and relatability that contributed to a felt sense of safety.

*We all understand. And I think that's probably a part of the lack of judgement maybe. And that sense of safety is that yeah... (Suri)*

*I was surprised with how easily we could just, I guess, connect and relate to the exact same thing. I know we're very different people, but it just felt really comforting to know that we are still working through this like similar problems and in saying that, that felt comforting to know that we can all do similar things like expressing ourselves through paintings or just art to solve a whole bunch of different problems. (Henrietta)*

*But the fact that it's just for women, that makes me feel quite, quietly confident, and safe and secure. (Merindah)*

## Reverberations

Reverberations across and beyond the student experience were described by participants. The centring impacts of creative practice impacted the ways in which students approached broader aspects of their lives, including their studies.

*I'm going to introduce all of what has been taught in this course to do with my work. (Merindah)*

*I think for me, I don't want it to sound bad, but it's helping me kind of release some of my perfectionism. So, I feel like I'm trying really hard to enjoy my learning a bit more rather than stressing myself out with everything having to be perfect. (Suri)*

*It just gives you time to just have a think and actually accomplish something. It kind of helped me refocus and get back into my studies. Because I've been a bit lax on them lately. It was a really nice opportunity to have a weekly time for myself when I could just recentre. (Rochelle)*

## Recommendations emerging from Claim Our Place

Student participants recommended that Claim Our Place be offered by the university as an ongoing program, to support the well-being of student victim-survivors. Moreover, in considering broader student demographics, it was proposed that consideration be given to making the program available to diverse groups of students, including those with a disability and students identifying as LGBTQIA+.

One student recommended that information relating to connection and well-being programs such as Claim Our Place be included with enrolment information.

*They should be promoting a course like this. When people enrol, saying, 'Right, uni is pretty full on, and you've got lots to navigate and you're going to have to navigate it yourself. And there's going to be support there, but you're really going to have to try and stand on your own two feet. But by way, we've got these... amazing programs that are going to help you with mindfulness and becoming empowered and feeling strength and stay true to your convictions and your identity', and so many things. (Merindah)*

Similarly, another proposed that art-based programs such as Claim Our Place should be widely accessible.

*I don't think people in general should feel like they have to experience hardship just to deserve some sort of peace. I feel like this art space has been really good for helping me through personal stuff. I feel everyone deserves to do the same thing, because it just helps in so many ways. That's my view on it. (Henrietta)*

On the basis of these findings, Claim Our Place workshops should be expanded and offered more widely to create the kinds of spaces for support and belonging participants articulated as vitally needed by student victim-survivors of GBV.

## Program pedagogy

An appreciation for the combination of formal and open-ended pedagogical approaches embedded within the program was expressed across the evaluation workshop.

*Artists that I've never heard of in my whole entire life. Yeah. I love the research side of things and knowing why and how, and the background to yeah. Different people's mindsets and the way they create. Yeah. Thank you. I love that. (Merindah)*

*So, my favourite part about our workshops is learning about colour theory, because that was something I didn't really like step into in like previous use of artwork... (Henrietta)*

*The words that you would use and like you were teaching us about the background stuff as well as like the skills. And I know that's yeah, that's been really good for me. Like in terms of education and potentially like teaching kids this kind of stuff. (Suri)*

The program's flexible approach to participation was also reflected as being important, as students negotiated a balance between study/life commitments.

*Important to be able to dip in and out. Sometimes that is the only option. (Padlet wall notes)*

*I never felt there was any judgement. I think that's very powerful, and it can be quite hard to find and that certainly was very important to me as well. (Suri)*

*I like the fact that there wasn't, throughout it, there wasn't pressure, and you get judgement and criticism and stigma and all the rest of it in society and with this, it was like, there was no pressure. If we could make it, we could make it. There was no... you've got pressures with work, with children, with whatever your life circumstances are. (Merindah)*

Although students noted a preference for meeting and making art face-to-face, the predictable timing of the Zoom workshops and accessibility of online resources were appreciated by all participants.

*Full time uni, I struggle with my routine, getting things done, but the consistency of the workshop has been great. (Henrietta)*

*So, I'll still be able to access the resources, so when I do have time, I can go back and view the links that have been put in there. (Merindah)*

## Conclusions and recommendations



## Conclusions and recommendations

These findings provide vital new knowledge about how university experiences are impacted by GBV, and identify strategies and practices that enhance a sense of belonging and the capacity to participate in higher education for students with experiences of GBV.



### Key findings

These findings illustrate the significant impact GBV had on participants' access to and participation in higher education. These impacts included the ways that students' experiences of GBV affected their sense of their place within the university. Students reported feeling isolated from their peers as a result of their experiences with GBV. Some students felt a sense of shame, others felt the need to remain silent about their experiences, despite having to deal with effects that imposed themselves on their studies emotionally or through related life-crises. GBV also commonly denied students access to the resources they needed to study successfully, including safe housing, and financial and emotional supports.

In relation to student support, our study found that greater expertise is required in order to enable both staff and students to navigate the significant implications of GBV for higher education policy, practice and experience. This includes the need for specialist counselling that is not dismissive of the particular concerns raised by GBV trauma and experience and the requirement to connect this expertise in the specific context of higher education. Although some student victim-survivors had access to counselling outside of the university, this was disconnected to their needs *as students*, and they pointed explicitly to the importance of specialist counselling offered on-campus. Furthermore, the student victim-survivors' accounts of the challenges they faced in navigating complex higher education systems points to the desirability of developing equity-oriented forms of student support that enable staff to 'walk alongside' students within the context of their lived experiences, perspectives and knowledge through a relational navigator framework (see: Burke, Cameron, Fuller & Hollingworth, 2021). A dedicated team with expertise around the challenges of specific social problems, such as GBV, that significantly affect higher education access and participation would greatly enhance the student support available to GBV victim-survivors within a framework with the capacity to contextualise students' experiences through a lens of gender equity.

Relatedly, and combined with more nuanced student support frameworks, higher education institutions can better accommodate the needs of GBV victim-survivors in how timelines, timing and temporalities are understood and incorporated into institutional practices. Our study highlights the distinct temporalities of GBV trauma, and how these often conflict with the universities' systems for assessment and participation. As our participants explained, surviving GBV does not consist in 'overcoming' specific incidents, but in living both with ongoing and residual impacts that reverberate in student

experience. Such non-linear temporalities do not fit into the current support mechanisms of higher education, which tends to be ad hoc and unable to recognise the ongoing nature of the impact of GBV experiences for higher education participation. The study found then that there needs to be deeper understanding of the ongoing effects, challenges and concerns related to GBV at cultural, pedagogical and practical levels of higher education frameworks, including student support.

One significant finding from this study was how many of our participants found higher education to be playing a transformative role in their lives, helping them rebuild self-esteem and self-determination during and after experiences of GBV. For some students, engagement with peers and university staff made them feel supported, seen, and that they belonged. The success they were able to achieve academically provided a potent contrast to the impacts of GBV which had made them feel inadequate, unworthy, or like a failure. For some, their experiences of GBV provided important academic insights that helped them excel in their studies and contribute to a deeper understanding of related issues among fellow students. For others, surviving GBV was central to the motivation to succeed at university, in order to be able to work against the scourge of GBV and to help other victim-survivors. Therefore, while the challenges of navigating higher education explained above are very real and need to be addressed urgently, our pilot project also produced very hopeful insights about the prospect for higher education to play a positive role in creating social change around GBV and empowering victim-survivors to recreate their lives in the aftermath of abuse. Recognising and embracing the ways that higher education can provide an antidote to the experiences of being controlled, disrespected and denigrated that are so central to GBV, provides a powerful argument for programs targeted at GBV victim-survivors that encourage, enable and support participation in higher education.

Many participants expressed the view that higher education institutions can play a vital role in drawing attention to the nature and extent of GBV and promoting gender equity. Beyond their needs as individuals, student victim-survivors saw a role, and a responsibility, for universities to raise awareness of and challenge GBV. In their own participation in higher education, students also endorsed a vision of higher education that centred not on their own individual gain, but in increasing their capacity to contribute to the collective good. Although they had personal aspirations for their futures and recognised higher education as imperative in reaching these, they also identified the powerful resource of gaining a degree

in higher education combined with the knowledge and understanding that their experiences provided for making a wider contribution beyond themselves. They hoped to make a difference to others, contribute to challenging GBV and act as an advocate for other victim-survivors of GBV. They saw their capacity to contribute to the flourishing and well-being of their communities as significantly enhanced by the opportunity to engage with higher education.

Participants in the pilot have had the opportunity to contribute to knowledge on a significant social issue which is often seen as private, and not usually acknowledged as an important dimension framing student experience. One of the benefits of this research is that participants may come to view their experiences as being common to many other university students, and therefore feel a sense of solidarity with their fellow students. In particular, participation in the arts-based workshops may have helped participants to gain a new understanding of their lived realities, by establishing coalitions of support with other students who have similar lived experiences, and by promoting the development of campus networks of belonging. All participants have the option to be notified of the research findings which will give them an insight in to how they and others are negotiating student experiences in the context of GBV. In terms of benefits for society more broadly, this study, as part of a broader research agenda, contributes towards building strategies which may enable those who have experienced GBV to positively navigate access to and participation in higher education. It shows that higher education has the capacity to be a space of rebuilding self-esteem, connection, capability, belonging and opportunity, alleviating the damaging effects of GBV on the life chances of victim-survivors and their families.

## Value and significance

This study is the first of its kind to explicitly examine the impact of gender-based violence (GBV) on higher education access, participation and success. The study embraces a feminist framework that understands GBV as socially situated within a broader context of gender injustices. At the time of conducting the research the global COVID-19 pandemic was bringing to light the insidious nature of GBV, often invisible but always entrenched in social structures and relations, impacting everyday lives, including the lives of students. We know that GBV has significant negative effects on the well-being and flourishing of GBV victim-survivors (for example: Brown et al., 2015; Moulding, 2015). However, despite the inevitable impact of this massive social issue on university students, previously there has not been rigorously developed or documented knowledge regarding the relationship of GBV to higher education access, participation and success.

To date, the largest studies of GBV in higher education focused on the prevalence of sexual violence on Australian university campuses and in university contexts (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017; Heywood et al., 2022). Without in anyway minimising the serious problem of violence and harassment that is perpetrated on campus or in university contexts, the current study found that experiences of GBV were lowest on campus, with students twice as likely to have experienced GBV at home, at work, or in a public place, compared to on campus. This finding correlates with existing evidence that domestic and family violence is an endemic problem in Australia, affecting at least one in four Australian women (ABS, 2017). Indeed domestic, family and intimate partner violence has been described as a national emergency in Australia (ABS, 2017) and is the third largest health risk factor in Australia (AIHW, 2018). Therefore, the finding of this study, that students' were most likely to have experienced GBV in the domestic sphere, is not unexpected. What our study does, for the first time, is to examine how GBV which is inflicted in private impacts on victim-survivors' experiences of higher education.

## Further research

This pilot study produced rich data and important insights that deserve further exploration. We are currently building on this work to develop a more detailed picture of the significance of higher education for victim-survivors of GBV. This will include a more comprehensive survey that strengthens the preliminary findings about the different forms of GBV student victim-survivors experience in their lives and the impact these have on opportunities to access and participate in higher education. A survey of all students based at the case study institution, across all campus sites, will build a map of the different forms of GBV students have experienced in their lives before and/or during their participation in higher education. The survey will help to map out: a) the prevalence of GBV; b) the demographic profile of those experiencing GBV (for example, sex, gender, ethnicity, age, mode of study, pathway to university, socioeconomic status); c) the forms of GBV experienced; and d) the temporality and spatiality of GBV.

We will also extend the Claim Our Place workshops to ensure that student victim-survivors continue to have access to such spaces of connection and will embed our evaluation approaches in this ongoing work.

Although small-scale, the depth of the data collected here, analysed through the lens of gender injustice, has enabled the identification of a set of actions to support students who have experienced GBV to achieve more equitable access and participation in higher education. Moreover, this study has created the foundations for a larger-scale research project to create new knowledge about the relationship between GBV and higher education equity. There is scope for this research to be extended to provide valuable quantitative and qualitative insights with the aim to make visible the impact of GBV on university access and participation. Ultimately, this research agenda, and the resources and policy recommendations it produces, lay the foundation for the creation of a much-needed 'hub of best practice' to cohere a systematic approach to GBV in higher education.

## Recommendations

### Cultural

- 1 Efforts need to be made to challenge the misrepresentation of experiences of GBV and the complex gendered inequalities that this produces.
- 2 Greater understanding of the sensitivities around disclosure and creating appropriate frameworks for the recognition of the impact of GBV is needed. This must avoid harmful practices of disclosure that retraumatise and/or produce pathologising constructions of the individual student.
- 3 Greater advocacy and fostering of awareness needs to be adopted to challenge GBV with education and awareness raising, which should form a key higher education intervention.

### Educational

- 4 Universities should provide educational programs for staff and students that address and challenge GBV in all of its forms and complexities (similar to consent provision but broader in scope). This should attend to the institutionalised, systemic and/or individual forms of sexism and misogyny, to build cultural awareness.
- 5 Greater acknowledgement and understanding is needed of the role and capacity of higher education to act as an agent of change, supported through high quality professional development and learning.



### Collaborative

- 6 Greater collaboration of universities with external agencies is needed to build expertise of the specific challenges student victim-survivors face.
- 7 Sustained inter-agency collaboration with universities is required to generate support that includes prevention, crisis support and enables post-crisis pathways to higher education.

### Leadership

- 8 The role of higher education in challenging GBV requires a broader understanding of gender equity at the level of cultural change, including zero tolerance of institutionalised forms of misogyny.
- 9 An explicit commitment from institutional leadership to mobilising higher education to help challenge all forms of GBV would be a valuable step towards creating change.

### Practical

- 10 University counselling and student support services need additional training and expertise in how to effectively and appropriately respond to students seeking help for GBV-related issues, whether incidents occurred on or off campus.
- 11 Campus safety should be improved with particular attention to increased lighting and security.
- 12 University scholarships are recommended to provide financial assistance and recognise the significant barriers GBV victim-survivors face in accessing higher education.
- 13 The application process for scholarships, or any other forms of support, should be carefully designed to address the sensitivities of disclosure.
- 14 A navigational framework designed to enable student victim-survivors of GBV to successfully navigate complex higher education systems and transition processes is recommended.
- 15 In order to foster a sense of belonging, universities should facilitate spaces of support and connection for student victim-survivors of GBV, such as the workshops provided for this pilot.
- 16 Attention to the relationship between flexible and responsive time structures and inclusive pedagogical, curricular, assessment and support frameworks and practices is needed.

## References



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence. (2000). *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report* (Revised Edition). Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development.
- Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service. (2015). *Family violence in Aboriginal communities*. Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria. Retrieved from: <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/dvrcv-advocate-springsummer-2015>.
- Adams, A. E., Greeson, M. R., Kennedy, A. C., & Tolman, R. M. (2013). The Effects of Adolescent Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Educational Attainment and Earnings. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28, 3283–3300.
- Adler, N., & Stewart, J. (2007). The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status. MacArthur Research Network on SES & Health. Retrieved from: <https://macses.ucsf.edu/research/psychosocial/subjective.php>.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge.
- Allen, M. (2011). Violence and voice: using a feminist constructivist grounded theory to explore women's resistance to abuse. *Qualitative Research*, 11(1), 23–45.
- Allen, N. T. (2018). A reconsidering chronos: Chronistic criticism and the first Iraqi national calendar. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 104(4), 361–383. doi:10.1080/00335630.2018.1519256.
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth edition*. American Psychiatric Press Inc.
- Anitha, S. & Lewis, R. (2018). Introduction: some reflections in these promising and challenging times. In S. Anitha & R. Lewis (Eds.), *Gender Based Violence in University Communities: Policy, prevention and educational initiatives*. Policy Press.
- Archer, L., Hutchings, M., Leathwood, C., & Ross, A. (2003). Widening Participation in Higher Education: Implications for Policy and Practice. In L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.), *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of Exclusion and Inclusion*. Routledge Falmer.
- Archer, L., & Leathwood, C. (2003). Identities, Inequalities and Higher Education. In L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.), *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of Exclusion and Inclusion*. Routledge Falmer.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2017). *Personal Safety Survey, Australia*, 2016. Cat. no. 4906.0.
- Australian Government Productivity Commission. (2009). *Report on Government Services*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2009/2009>.
- Australian Human Rights Commission. (2012). *Working Without Fear: National Telephone Survey*. Retrieved from: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/working-without-fear-results-sexual-harassment-national>
- Australian Human Rights Commission. (2017). *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*. Retrieved from: <https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-facts/overview-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-health-status>

- Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. (2020). *Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2019*. Retrieved from: [healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-facts/overviewaboriginaltorres-strait-islander-health-status](http://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-facts/overviewaboriginaltorres-strait-islander-health-status).
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018). *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia, 2018*. Cat. no FDV 2.
- Ball, S. J. (2013). *Foucault, Power, and Education*. Routledge.
- Banyard, V. L., & Cross, C. (2008). Consequences of teen dating violence: Understanding intervening variables in ecological context. *Violence Against Women*, 14(9), 998–1013.
- Barrett, B. J. (2015). Domestic violence in the LGBT community. *Encyclopaedia of Social Work*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.1133>.
- Bennett, A., & Burke, P. J. (2018). Re/conceptualising time and temporality: an exploration of time in higher education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 39(6), 913–925. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2017.1312285
- Bertram, C. C., & Crowley, M. S. (2012). Teaching about Sexual Violence in Higher Education: Moving from Concern to Conscious Resistance. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 33(1), 63–82. doi: 10.5250/fronjwomestud.33.1.0063.
- Bourgois, P., & Scheper-Hughes, N. (2004). Comment on Paul Farmer: An Anthropology of Structural Violence. *Current Anthropology*, 43(3), 317–318. doi: 10.1086/382250.
- Boxall, H., Morgan, A., & Brown, R. (2020). The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Informit*, 12(3), 38–46. Retrieved from: <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.435862482298266>.
- Branch, K. A., Hayes-Smith, R., Richards, T. N. (2011). Professors' Experiences With Student Disclosures of Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence: How "Helping" Students Can Inform Teaching Practices. *Feminist Criminology*, 6(1), 54–75. doi: 10.1177/1557085110397040.
- Brandwein, R. A., & Filiano, D. M. (2000). Toward Real Welfare Reform: The Voices of Battered Women. *Affilia*, 15(2), 224–243.
- Breslau, N. (2009). The epidemiology of trauma, PTSD, and other posttrauma disorders. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 10(3), 198–210. doi:10.1177/1524838009334448
- Brown, J., Burnette, M. L., & Cerulli, C. (2015). Correlations Between Sexual Abuse Histories, Perceived Danger, and PTSD Among Intimate Partner Violence Victims. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(15), 2709–2725. doi: 10.1177/0886260514553629.
- Bullen, J. (2015). Governing Homelessness: The Discursive and Institutional Construction of Homelessness in Australia. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 32(2), 218–239. doi:10.1080/14036096.2015.1024886.
- Burke, P. J. (2002). *Accessing education: effectively widening participation*. Trentham Books.
- Burke, P. J. (2005). Accessing and widening participation. *British Journal of Sociology & Education*, 26(4), 555–562. doi: 10.1080/01425690500251981.
- Burke, P. J. (2012). *The Right to Higher Education: Beyond widening participation*. Routledge.

- Burke, P. J. (2017). Difference in higher education pedagogies: gender, emotion and shame. *Gender and Education*, 29(4), 430–444. doi: 10.1080/09540253.2017.1308471.
- Burke, P. J., Bennett, A., Bunn, M., Stevenson, J., & Clegg, S. (2017). *It's About Time: Working towards more equitable understandings of the impact of time for students in higher education*. Report for the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1389857>.
- Burke, P. J., Bennett, A., Burgess, C., Gray, K., & Southgate, E. (2016). *Capability, belonging and equity in higher education: Developing inclusive approaches*. Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, University of Newcastle. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1389852>.
- Burke, P. J., Cameron, C., Fuller, E., & Hollingworth, K. (2021). The relational navigator: a pedagogical reframing of widening educational participation for care-experienced young people. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 10(1), 15. doi: 10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2021.v10.x.015.
- Burke, P. J., Crozier, G., & Misiaszek, L. (2017). *Changing Pedagogical Spaces in Higher Education*. SRHE Higher Education Research book series. Routledge.
- Burke, P. J., & Manathunga, C. (2021). The timescapes of teaching in Higher Education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 25(6), 663–668. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2020.1784618.
- Butler, J. (1990). Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism* (pp. 324–341). Routledge.
- Cares, A. C., Hirschel, D., & Williams, L. M. (2014). Teaching About Victimization in an Online Environment: Translating in Person Empathy and Support to The Internet. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 25(4), 405–420. Doi: 10.1080/10511253.2014.965407.
- Coffey, C., Cook, J., Farrugia, D., Threadgold, S., & Burke, P. J. (2020). Intersecting marginalities: International students' struggles for "survival" in COVID-19. *Gender, Work, & Organization*, 28(4), 1337–1351. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12610>.
- Collin-Vézina, D., Hébert, M., Manseau, H., Blais, M., & Fernet, M. (2006). Selfconcept and dating violence in 220 adolescent girls in the child protective system. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 35(4), 319–326.
- Cox, P. (2015). *Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012*. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. Retrieved from: <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/violence-against-women-in-australia-additional-analysis-of-the-australian-bureau-of-statistics-personal-safety-survey-2012>.
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). (2020). Job-ready Graduates Package legislation passed parliament. Retrieved from: <https://www.dese.gov.au/job-ready/announcements/job-ready-graduates-package-legislation-passed-parliament>.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Penguin.

- Dowse, L., Soldatic, K., Spangaro, J., & van Toorn, G. (2016). Mind the gap: the extent of violence against women with disabilities in Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 51(3), 341–359. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2016.tb01235.x>
- Eisenberg, M. E., Lust, K. A., Hannan, P. J., & Porta, C. (2016). Campus Sexual Violence Resources and Emotional Health of College Women Who Have Experienced Sexual Assault. *Violence and Victims*, 31(2), 1–11. doi: 10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-14-00049.
- Erskine, R. (1995). A Gestalt Therapy Approach to Shame and Self-Righteousness: Theory and Methods. Integrative Psychotherapy Articles. Retrieved from: [http://www.integrativetherapy.com/en/articles.php?id=30#\\_edn1](http://www.integrativetherapy.com/en/articles.php?id=30#_edn1).
- Ferreira, P., Loxton, D., & Tooth, L. R. (2017). Intimate personal violence and caregiving: Influences on physical and mental health in middle-aged women. *Maturitas*, 102, 34–40.
- Forbes-Mewett, H., & Nyland, C. (2008). Cultural Diversity, Relocation, and the Security of International Students at an Internationalised University. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 181–203. doi: 10.1177/1028315307308136
- Fraser, N. (1997). Reframing justice in a globalizing world. In D. Held & A. Kaya (Eds.), *Global inequality: Patterns and explanations* (pp. 252–269). Polity Press.
- Fraser, N. (2013). *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. Verso.
- Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2015). Calculating student aspiration: Bourdieu, spatiality and the politics of recognition. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 45(1), 81–96.
- Gale, T., & Tranter, D. (2011). Social justice in Australian HE policy: an historical and conceptual account of student participation. *Critical Studies in Education*, 52(1), 29–46.
- Glass, N., Fredland, N., Campbell, J., Yonas, M., Sharps, P., & Kub, J. (2003). Adolescent dating violence: Prevalence, risk factors, health outcomes, and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, 32(2), 227–238.
- Hahn, S. A., & Postmus, J. L. (2013). Economic Empowerment of Impoverished IPV Survivors: A Review of Best Practice Literature and Implications for Policy. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15(2), 79–93. doi: 10.1177/1524838013511541.
- Harris, A., Cuervo, H., & Wyn, J. (2021). *Thinking about belonging in youth studies*. Springer International Publishing.
- Heenan, D. (2006). Art as therapy: an effective way of promoting positive mental health? *Disability & Society*, 21(2), 179–191.
- Heywood, W., Myers, P., Powell, A., Meikle, G., & Nguyen, D. (2022). *National Student Safety Survey: Report on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students in 2021*. The Social Research Centre.
- Hughes, K., Bellis, M., Jones, L., Wood, S., Bates, G., & Eckley, L. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against adults with disabilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Lancet*, 379(926), 1621–1629.

- Ison, J. (2019). 'It's Not Just Men and Women': LGBTQIA People and #MeToo. In B. Fileborn & R. Loney-Howes (Eds.), *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change* (pp. 151–167). Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-15213-0\_10.
- Jones, L., Bellis, M., Wood, S., Hughes, K., McCoy, E., & Eckley, L. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Lancet*, 380(9845), 899–907.
- Jordan, C. E., Campbell, R., & Follingstad, D. (2010). Violence and women's mental health: The impact of physical, sexual, and psychological aggression. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 6, 607–628.
- Kelly, L. (1988). *Surviving Sexual Violence*. University of Minnesota Press.
- King, C. S. (2012). *Washed in blood: Male sacrifice, trauma, and the cinema*. Rutgers University Press.
- Korff, J. (2021). Domestic and family violence. Retrieved from: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/domestic-and-family-violence>.
- Krnjacki, L., Emerson, E., Llewellyn, G., & Kavanagh, A. M. (2016). Prevalence and risk of violence against people with and without disabilities: Findings from an Australian population-based study. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 40, 16–21. doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12498.
- Leathwood, C., & Read, B. (2009). *Gender and the Changing Face of Higher Education: A Feminised Future?*. Open University Press.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. Guilford Publications.
- Lindberg, M. H., Chen, G., Olsen, J. A., & Abelson, B. (2021). Explaining subjective social status in two countries: The relative importance of education, occupation, income and childhood circumstances. *Social Science & Medicine – Population Health*, 15, 100864. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100864>.
- Loxton, D., Xenia, D.-G., Anderson, A. E., Townsend, N. (2017). Intimate partner violence adversely impacts health over 16 years and across generations: A longitudinal cohort study. *PLOS ONE*, 12(6), e0178138.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (2007). *The art therapy sourcebook*. McGraw-Hill.
- Manathunga, C. (2014). Time and place in intercultural supervision. In C. Manathunga (Ed.), *Intercultural Postgraduate Supervision: Reimagining time, place and knowledge*, (pp. 43–60). Routledge.
- Manathunga, C. (2019). 'Timescapes' in doctoral education: the politics of temporal equity in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(6), 1227–1239. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2019.1629880.
- Merry, S. E. (2004). Comment on comments. *Law & Society Review*, 38(4), 861.
- Merry, S. E. (2009). *Gender Violence: A Cultural Perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Merry, S. E. (2013). Human rights monitoring and the question of indicators. In M. Goodale (Ed.), *Human rights at the crossroad* (pp. 140–150). Oxford University Press.
- Mitra, S., Lee, W., Hayashi, K., Boyd, J., Milloy, M. J., Dong, H., Wood, E., & Kerr, T. (2021). A gender comparative analysis of post-traumatic stress disorder among a community-based cohort of people who use drugs in Vancouver, Canada. *Addictive Behaviors*, 115, 106793. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2020.106793>.
- Moloney, M. (2014). *Progress report on domestic violence provisions in Round 6 Enterprise Agreements*. The National Tertiary Education Union. Retrieved from: <http://www.nteu.org.au/article/Progress-report-on-domestic-violence-provisions-in-Round-6-Enterprise-Agreements-16069>.
- Moulding, N. (2015). *Gendered Violence, Abuse and Mental Health in Everyday Lives: Beyond Trauma*. Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781315816630.
- Mueller-Hirth, N. (2016). Temporalities of Victimhood: Time in the Study of Postconflict Societies. *Sociological Forum*, 32(1), 186–206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12323>.
- Mummert, S. J., Policastro, C., & Payne, B. K. (2014). *Revictimization through education: Does learning about victimization lead to anxiety and identification as a victim among college students?* *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 25(4), 435–451. doi: 10.1080/10511253.2014.965409.
- Murphy-Geiss, G. (2008). Bringing the Facts to Life: Facilitating Student Engagement with the Issue of Domestic Violence. *Teaching Sociology*, 36(4), 378–388. doi: 10.1177/0092055X0803600407.
- Norton, L. S., Thomas, S., Morgan, K., Tilley, A., & Dickins, T. E. (1998). Full-time studying and long-term relationships: Make or break for mature students? *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 26(1), 75–88. doi: 10.1080/03069889808253840.
- Oram, S., Khalifeh, H., & Howard, L. M. (2017). Violence against women and mental health. *Lancet Psychiatry*, 4(2), 159–170. doi:10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30261-9.
- O'Shea, S., Harwood, V., Howard, S., Cliff, K., & Delahunty, J. (2016). *Final Report: Investigating the effectiveness of the In2Uni Year 12 University Preparation Program (UPP)*. University of Wollongong. Retrieved from: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/2374/>.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2015). *The economic case for preventing violence against women: A high price to pay*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pwc.com.au/pdf/a-high-price-to-pay.pdf>.
- Reed, L. R., Gates, P., & Last, K. (2007). *Young participation in higher education in the parliamentary constituencies of Birmingham Hodge Hill, Bristol South, Nottingham North and Sheffield Brightside*. Higher Education Funding Council for England.

- Rees, S., Steel, Z., Creamer, M., Teesson, M., Bryant, R., McFarlane, A. C., Mills, K. L., Slade, T., Carragher, N., O'Donnell, M., Forbes, D., & Silove, D. (2014). Onset of common mental disorders and suicidal behavior following women's first exposure to gender based violence: a retrospective, population-based study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 14, 312. doi: 10.1186/s12888-014-0312-x
- Reilly, R. C., & D'Amico, M. (2011). Mentoring undergraduate women survivors of childhood abuse and intimate partner violence. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(4), 409–424. doi:10.1353/csd.2011.0046.
- Renn, K. A. (2010). LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field. *Educational Researcher*, 39(2), 132–141. doi:10.3102/0013189X10362579.
- Richards, T. N., Branch, K. A., & Hayes, R. M. (2013). An Exploratory Examination of Student to Professor Disclosures of Crime Victimization. *Violence Against Women*, 19(11), 1408–1422. doi: 10.1177/1077801213514861.
- Scheff, T. (2014). The Ubiquity of Hidden Shame in Modernity. *Cultural Sociology*, 8(2), 129–141. doi: 10.1177/1749975513507244.
- Underwood, J. W. (2019). *Impacts of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment on Graduate Student Academic Functioning*. (Dissertation.) Virginia Commonwealth University. doi: 10.25772/8FY5-3P41.
- UN Women. (2020a). *The Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women During COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.
- UN Women. (2020b). *The Spotlight Initiative: Ending violence against women and girls*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/spotlight-initiative>
- Vázquez, F. L., Torres, A., & Otero, P. (2012). Gender-based violence and mental disorders in female college students. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 47(10), 1657–1667.
- Wagner, A., & Magnussen, J. L. (2005). Neglected realities: exploring the impact of women's experiences of violence on learning in sites of higher education. *Gender and Education*, 17(4), 449–461. doi: 10.1080/09540250500145189.
- Waller, V., Farquharson, K., & Dempsey, D., (2015). *Qualitative social research: Contemporary methods for the digital age*. Sage.
- Watts, C., & Zimmerman, C. (2002). Violence against women: Global scope and magnitude. *The Lancet*, 359(9313), 1232–1237. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08221-1.
- Webb, S. (1997) 'Alternative Students? Conceptualizations of Difference'. In J. Williams (Ed.), *Negotiating Access to Higher Education: The Discourse of Selectivity and Equity* (pp. 65–86). Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Wettersten, K. B., Rudolph, S. E., Faul, K., Gallagher, K., Trangsud, H. B., Adams, K., Graham, S., & Terrance, C. (2004). Freedom Through Self-Sufficiency: A Qualitative Examination of the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Working Lives of Women in Shelter. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51(4), 447–462. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.51.4.447.

- Wieskamp, V. N., & Smith, C. (2020). "What to do when you're raped": Indigenous women critiquing and coping through a rhetoric of survival. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 106(1), 72–94. doi: 10.1080/00335630.2019.1706189.
- Williams, J. (1997) 'Institutional Rhetorics and Realities'. In J. Williams (Ed.) *Negotiating Access to Higher Education: The Discourse of Selectivity and Equity* (pp. 87–107). Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Wong, B., & Chiu, T. (2021). *The Ideal Student: Deconstructing Expectations in Higher education*. Open University Press.
- Wood, L., Voth Schrag, R., & Busch-Armendariz, N. 2020. Mental Health and Academic Impacts of Intimate Partner Violence doi: 10.1080/07448481.2018.1546710.
- Yufang, B., & Yongfang, L. (2019). Creating mandalas reduces social anxiety in college students. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 47(10), 1–10.

Appendices



Appendices

Appendix 1

Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Age Group	Gender Identity	Ethnic Minority	Intl. Student	Sexual Orientation	Straight from High School	Enabling Pathway	Degree	Employment Status
Henriette	18-24	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	Yes		Bachelor of Business / Bachelor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Casual
Alyssa	35-39	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor Social Work (Honours)	Student
Zara	25-29	Female			Bisexual	No		PhD (Communication and Media Arts)	Part time
Tara	18-24	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	Yes		Bachelor of Arts/ Diploma of Legal Practice	Casual
Jemima	25-29	Female			Bisexual	No	Yes	Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Social Science (Criminology)	Casual
Rochelle	18-24	Female			Bisexual	Yes		Bachelor of Speech Pathology	Casual
Sully	18-24	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	Yes		Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Communications	Casual
Clementine	30-34	Female		Yes	Heterosexual/ Straight	No		Master of Business Administration & Finance Applied	Unemployed/ Looking for work
Jasmine	25-29	Female	Yes		Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Speech Pathology	Casual
Trixie	25-29	Female			Queer	No		Graduate Certificate Business Administration	Casual
Eunice	50-54	Female			Prefer not to disclose	No	Yes	Master of Business Administration	Full time
Eric	40-44	Male			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Laws	Student
Irena	25-29	Female		Yes	Heterosexual/ Straight	No		PhD in Management	Student
Vera	40-44	Female	Yes		Pansexual	No	Yes	Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)	Casual
Jenae	60-64	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Juris Doctor	Casual
Ellie	18-24	Female	Yes		Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Social Work	Part time
Lynette	40-44	Female	Yes		Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Communication	Full time
Karlie	30-34	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Education (Secondary)	Casual
Merindah	45-49	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Social Science (Honours)	Casual
Carole	50-54	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Social Science	Part time
Suri	35-39	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) (Honours)	Part time
Jarrah	18-24	Female			Queer	Yes		Bachelor of Social Science/ Bachelor of Laws (Honours)	Casual
Kendall	35-39	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No	Yes	Bachelor of Laws	Unemployed/ Not looking for work
Corinne	30-34	Female			Heterosexual/ Straight	No		Graduate Certificate of Business Administration	Full time

## Appendix 2

### Interview schedule

#### Understanding the impact of gendered violence on access to and participation in higher education

#### Interview topic guide

*Interview aim: To explore experiences of accessing and participating in higher education in the broader context of gendered violence as a social phenomenon.*

### Introductions

Interviewer, purpose of the study and scope of interview (*will not focus on individual incidents of gendered violence but will consider the relationship of experiences of gendered violence and higher education access and participation*).

### Exploring current student context

- 1 Can you **tell me about your studies** – what are you studying, where, and how long have you been a student here at UON?
- 2 What is your current **living situation**? Do you live with anyone else (family, friends, partner, shared space, etc)? Does your living situation present any challenges for your studies – if so can you briefly describe these? Does your living situation support your studies in any ways?
- 3 Are you currently **working alongside your studies**? Can you discuss that briefly, outlining challenges/opportunities in relation to your studies?
- 4 Do you have unpaid commitments – such as caring commitments for example – that you are navigating alongside your studies? Can you discuss that briefly, outlining challenges/opportunities in relation to your studies?
- 5 How are you **finding university life**? What do you enjoy, not enjoy?

### Considering access to higher education

- 6 How did you **come to start your studies** – what drew you to higher education?
- 7 What and/or whom **helped you to access higher education** (e.g. teacher, friend, pathway program...)?

- 8 What **obstacles or challenges did you face** in accessing higher education, if any (e.g. financial, discovering a pathway, lack of support...)?
- 9 What **drew you to UON** in particular?
- 10 What **drew you in to studying [xx subject]**?
- 11 Are you the **first in your family** to attend a higher education institution? If so, can you talk about the significance of this for you, if at all?

### Exploring university expectations and experiences

- 12 What were your **expectations of university life/ your studies**? Is this different in any ways from your actual experiences – and if so in what ways?
- 13 How do you **view your university studies – are they significant in your life**? To your future plans? To your identity (how you see yourself, and want to present yourself to others)? To your family, friends and/or significant others? In any other ways?
- 14 Is there anything about university life that you find particularly **difficult to navigate**?
- 15 Without having to recount any incidents of violence you have experienced, or are experiencing – **do you think your past and/or current experiences impact your experience at university** (positively and/or negatively)? In the pathway/application/admission process? As a university student? How you feel on campus? Relating to other students? The material you study in class? Any other significant impact?
- 16 Have you **experienced any challenges, difficulties or barriers** in your university studies related to your past – or present – experience of gendered violence? What is the biggest challenge you've faced? Are you aware of others experiencing similar (and different) challenges?
- 17 Do you **feel a sense of belonging at university**? If so, in what ways? What **enables this**? Are you able to discuss moments when you don't feel a sense of belonging at university and what might contribute to this feeling?
- 18 Do you feel **safe at university** and if so, what **enables this**? Are there any specific contexts that make you feel unsafe?
- 19 Is there **anything else about your experiences at university** that you would like to add that we haven't yet explored?

### Representing your perspectives on future higher education developments

- 20 Are there any people or supports (formal or informal) you've found helpful?
- 21 What do you think is needed to support university students who've experienced – or are experiencing – gender-based violence?
- 22 If you could say one thing to your course coordinators, what would it be? To the Vice Chancellor?
- 23 Is there anything else you'd like to add or say that we haven't covered?
- 24 Thank you and close.

**Note support options: Campus Care, Interrelate.**

Appendix 3

Forms of gender-based violence

Students were asked in the survey which, if any, of the following forms of GBV they had personally experienced at any time throughout their life. For further, more specific definitions of each form of gender-based violence, participants were able to hover over an 'Examples' button which provided a definition as outlined below:

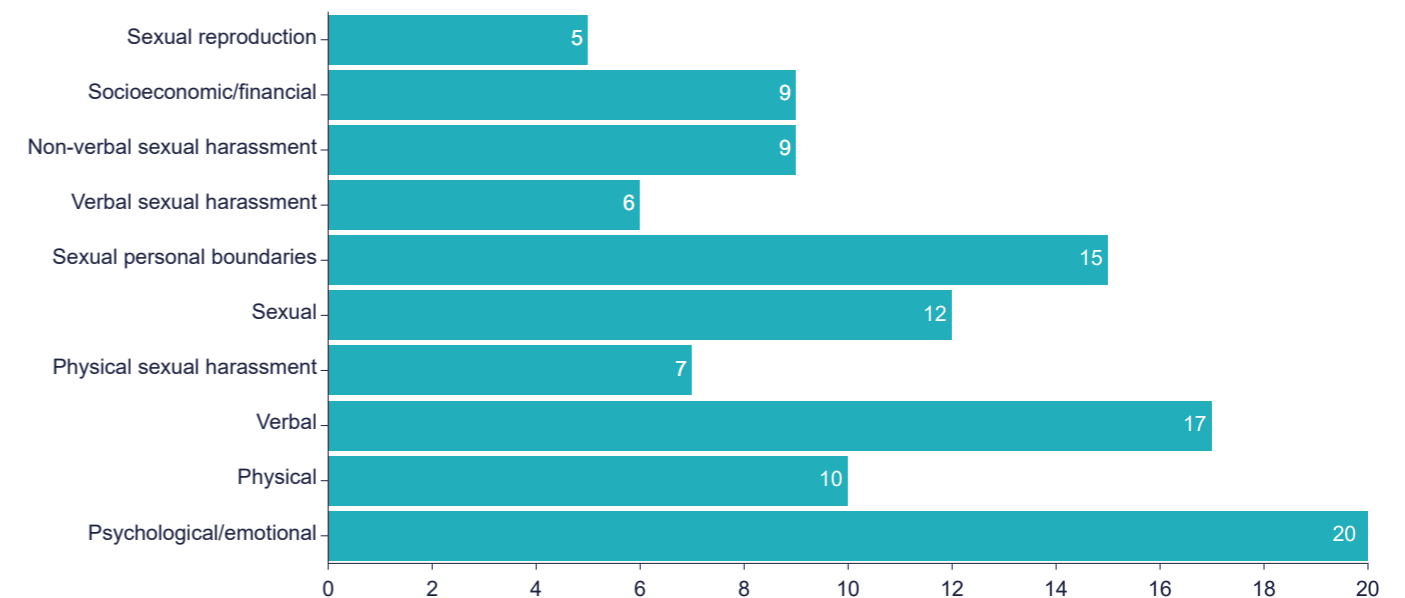
- **Psychological/Emotional:**  
Some examples might include isolation or confinement from family and friends, withholding information, disinformation, gaslighting, or threatening behaviour
- **Physical violence**  
Some examples might include beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming or killing, or the use of objects or weapons, sleep deprivation, medical attention being withheld or blocked
- **Verbal violence**  
Some examples might include putdowns/insults in private or in front of others, ridiculing, the use of swear-words that are especially uncomfortable for you, saying bad things about your loved ones, threatening with other forms of violence either against yourself or your loved ones
- **Sexual violence**  
Some examples might include non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration, by the use of any body part or object; engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with you; or causing you to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with another person
- **Sexual violence and abuse related to reproduction**  
Some examples might include forced pregnancy, forced abortion, denied appropriate medical attention during or after pregnancy or abortion, forced sterilisation, female genital mutilation
- **Sexual violence related to personal boundaries**  
Some examples might include date rape, forced unsafe sex such as stealthing (intentionally and secretly removing a condom during sexual activity), forcing certain types of sexual activities, withdrawal of sexual attention as a form of punishment, or forcing you to watch and sometimes to imitate pornography

- **Socioeconomic/Financial violence**  
Some examples might include taking away your earnings, withholding shared funds, forced dependence, not allowing you to have a separate income (i.e., giving you housewife status, or making you work in a family business without a salary), withholding your key documents, or making you unfit for work through targeted physical abuse
- **Verbal sexual harassment**  
Some examples might include making inappropriate comments or innuendos, catcalling, asking about sexual fantasies, preferences or history, asking personal questions about someone's social or sex life, making sexual comments about a person's clothing, anatomy, or looks, repeatedly trying to date a person who is not interested, telling lies or spreading rumours about a person's sex life or sexual preferences
- **Non-verbal sexual harassment**  
Some examples might include looking you up and down ('elevator eyes'), following or stalking you, using sexually suggestive visuals, making sexual gestures with the hands or through body movements, using facial expressions such as winking, throwing kisses, or licking lips
- **Physical sexual harassment**  
Some examples might include unwelcome forms of contact such as giving you a massage around the neck or shoulders, touching your clothing, hair, or body, hugging, kissing, patting, touching or rubbing themselves sexually against you.

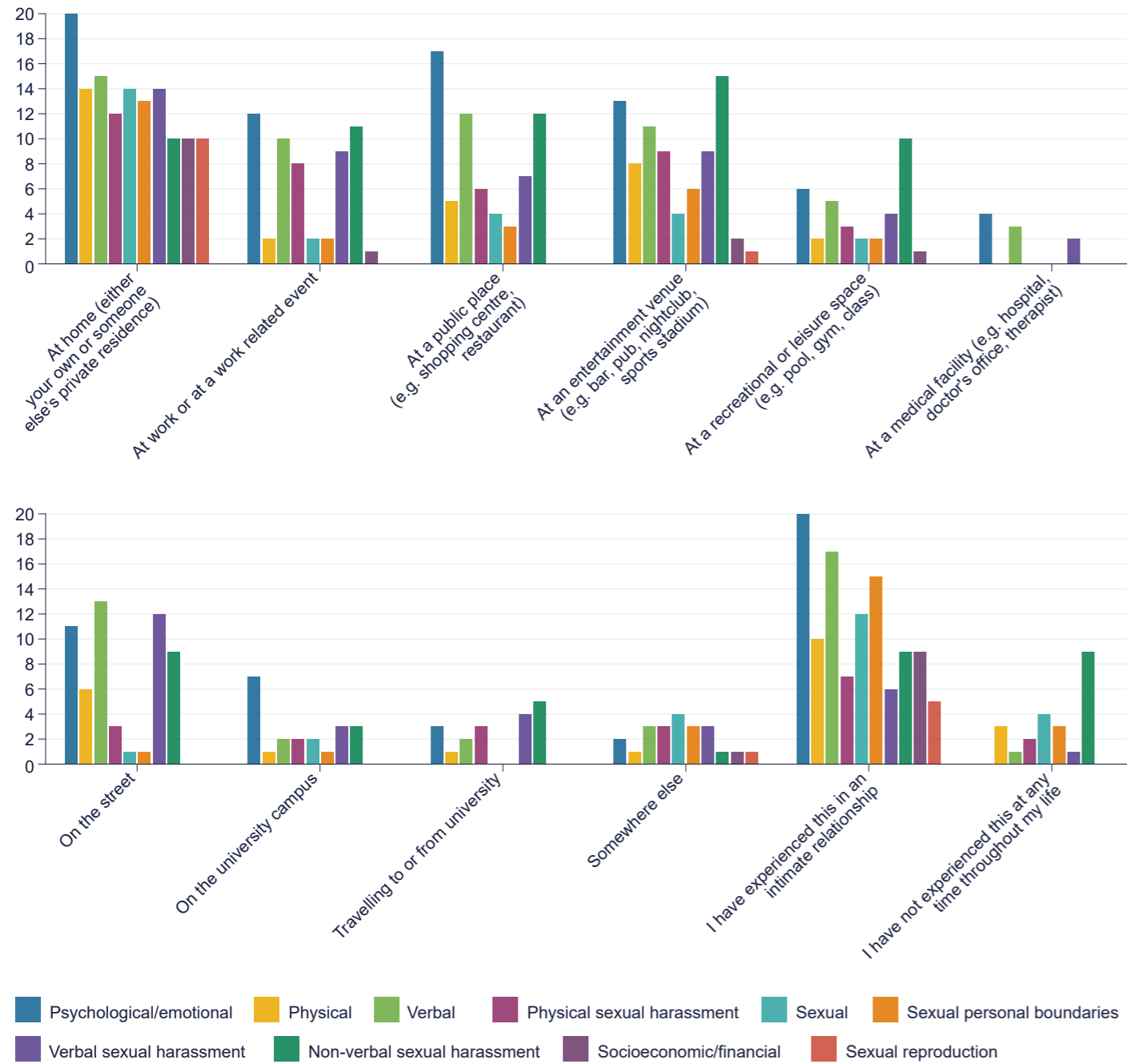
Appendix 4

Tables and Figures

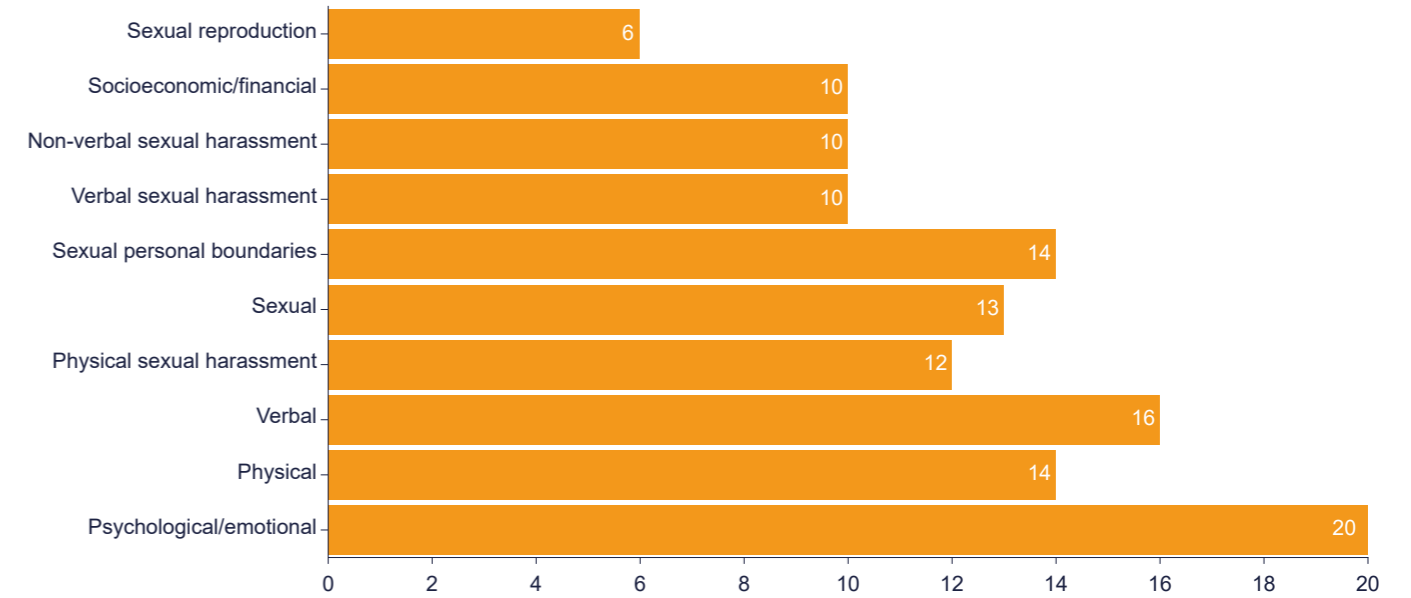
**Table 1.** Forms of gender-based violence participants had experienced in an intimate relationship.



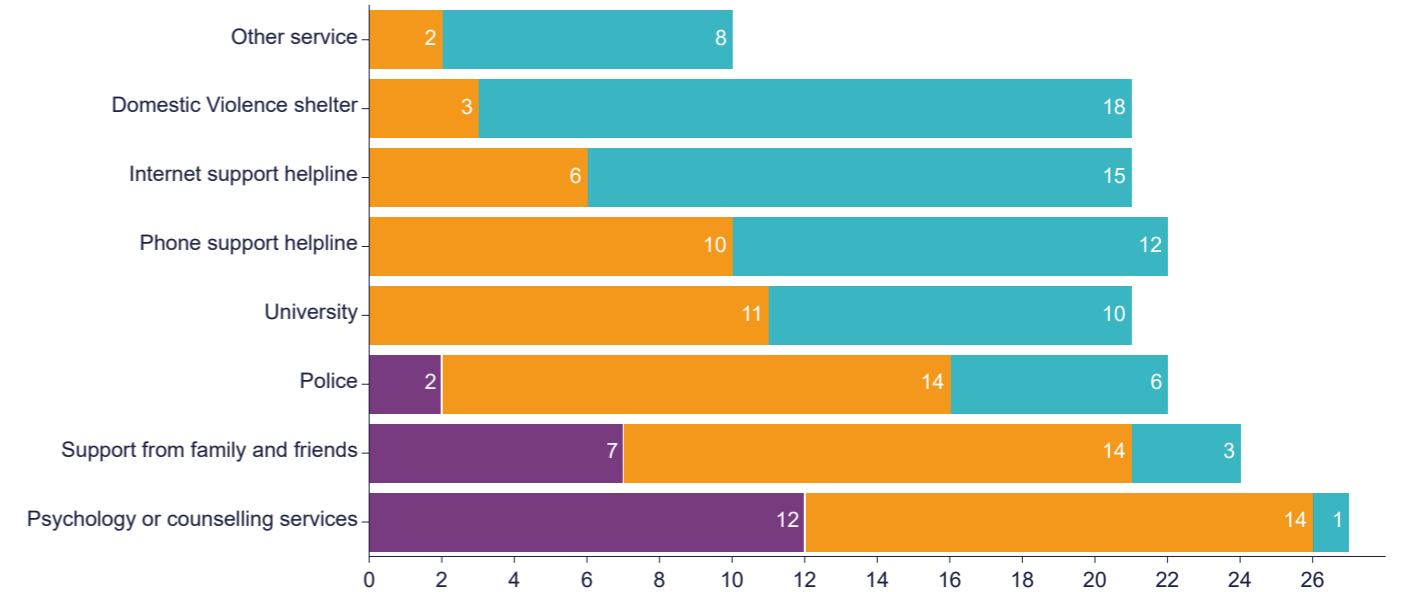
**Table 2.** Forms of gender-based violence participants had experienced in various settings.



**Table 3.** Forms of gender-based violence participants had experienced in theirs or someone else's private residence.



**Table 4.** Services students had sought support from regarding their experiences with gender-based violence.



## Appendix 5

### Support Services

#### **1800RESPECT**

[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

1800 737 732

The National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

#### **beyondblue**

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

1300 22 4636

beyondblue is a national organisation that has a range of information and resources associated with depression and anxiety. Useful resources and further information about beyondblue programmes are available on its website at [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or by contacting its Support Service on 1300 22 4636 (toll free). The Support Service runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls are one-on-one with a trained mental health professional, and completely confidential.

#### **Lifeline Australia**

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

13 11 14

Lifeline Australia provides a free, confidential and anonymous, 24-hour telephone counselling service for adults needing emotional support. Lifeline Australia also has a range of information and resources available from their website, about providing care in times of crisis.

#### **Mensline Australia**

[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

1300 78 99 78

Mensline Australia provides a free, confidential and anonymous, 24-hour professional telephone counselling service for men needing emotional support or in crisis. Mensline also has a range of information and resources available from their website, about providing support and taking care of yourself, in times of crisis.

#### **Kids Help Line**

[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

1800 55 1800

A number of children and youth may also need emotional. Kids Help Line is a free and confidential, telephone counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia.

#### **Black Dog Institute**

[www.mycompass.org.au](http://www.mycompass.org.au)

The Black Dog Institute provides a 24 hour free mobile phone/computer-based programme to assist those with mild to moderate depression, anxiety and stress (myCompass).

#### **Wesley LifeForce – Wesley Mission**

This project aims to build community capacity to engage in suicide prevention activity, improve access to appropriate services and to support those at risk of suicide and bereaved by suicide by building suicide prevention networks and providing education.

#### **StandBy Response Service – United Synergies Ltd**

[www.unitedsynergies.com.au](http://www.unitedsynergies.com.au)

The StandBy suicide Bereavement Response Service provides a 24 hour face to face response service for those bereaved by suicide, training for front line emergency response services in the community, and coordination of suicide response services.



The artwork was produced by participants in the Claim Our Place workshops as part of this Study. They collaboratively planned the cover and produced individual elements. These elements were collated by Anna Rolfe at the University Galleries.

ISBN: 978-0-7259-0457-9