Educators' guide to prevention in teaching and learning

Advice for teaching academics about integrating prevention of gender-based violence concepts into teaching content and practice

Our Watch

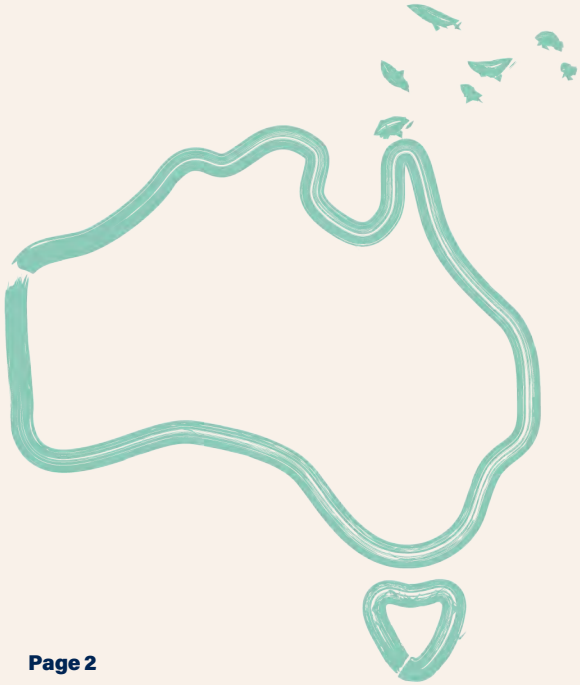
Preventing violence against women

Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, culture, knowledge, and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is an issue for the whole community. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource Changing the picture, the evidence clearly shows the intersection between racism, sexism, and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to suffer from violence at a significantly higher rate than non-Aboriginal women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.



Acknowledgements

Our Watch would like to acknowledge the work of the following staff who contributed to the development of this guide: Ellie Swindon, Jo Brislane, Genevieve Sheppard, Catherine Gow and Anuradha Mundkur.

Our Watch acknowledges Deakin University and University of Western Sydney who were partners in the Upskilling Pre-service Professionals project and collaborated on the development and piloting of this resource. The views and perspectives expressed in this resource are those of Our Watch.

Suggested citation: Our Watch. (2025). *Educators' guide to prevention in teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

Our Watch acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Contents

Introduction

Academic and teaching staff have great influence over what students learn and put into practice, the way they learn, and the environment in which they learn. The role they play in delivering content and modelling teaching practice impacts not only the students themselves but also the community and the workforce, positively influencing gender-based violence and gender equality.

In Australia and internationally, gender equality is recognised as a human right and a precondition to social justice. It is also proven to be directly linked to the prevention of gender-based violence.

There is increased awareness of the importance of gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence in the workforce. Through curriculum design and teaching practice, academic and teaching staff are distinctively placed to ensure the students are provided with appropriate skills and knowledge to promote gender equality and respectful practices in the workforce.

How to use this guide

This guide has been designed to accompany the Prevention in Teaching and Learning resources, which outlines an approach for embedding prevention of gender-based violence content into course curriculum and teaching practice, developing the capability of university students to support the prevention of gender- based violence through their professional roles.

This guide supports academic and teaching staff undertaking professional to:

Consolidate their understanding of primary prevention and the drivers of gender- based violence.

Apply a gender lens to their curriculum and teaching practice.

Develop and tailor teaching resources to integrate new learning into curriculum.

Create safe and open learning environments and facilitate robust and respectful conversations.

In addition to practical advice on content development and delivery, the complementing Prevention in Teaching and Learning resources offer a number of discipline-specific teaching resources, including case studies, mapping tools and video resources. The resources have been developed by Our Watch in collaboration with teaching academics. These can be used according to the intended audience or tailored to meet the requirements of your teaching and learning needs. Further advice on using and tailoring the resources can be found below under Developing and tailoring resources.

These resources support a whole-of university approach to preventing gender-based violence as part of the 'Teaching and Learning' domain of the Educating for Equality model developed by Our Watch.

Understanding primary prevention work

It's important to understand the evidence on what drives gender-based violence before you undertake this work. The following section provides background knowledge on the definitions of gender-based violence, what drives it, and the proven actions to support the prevention of violence and promote gender equality.

Understanding gender-based violence

Gender-based violence refers to men's violence against women comprising any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.[1] These forms of violence include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, financial and technology-facilitated violence or abuse (including image-based abuse[2]), and stalking. This definition encompasses violence that occurs in many contexts, including in the home, in residential care and institutional settings, in workplaces, public places, and online or virtual spaces.

Internationally, there is emerging evidence and increasing recognition that gender- based violence also includes harmful acts directed towards someone because of their gender expression – such as someone from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ+) community.

All violence is unacceptable, no matter who perpetrates it and who experiences it. Women can be and are perpetrators of violence. And men can be and are victims of violence. But the nature, prevalence and severity of men's violence against women is distinct, as demonstrated in the box across, which makes it gendered.

A woman is more likely to experience violence from a male she knows, in a private space such as the home, and she is more likely to experience the violence in an ongoing way. Men are more likely to experience violence from another male who is a stranger or acquaintance, in a public space, often a place of entertainment such as a club, bar or on the street. They are more likely to experience once-off violence.

Men are more likely to experience violence:

- from another man
- at the hands of a stranger
- in a public place.

Women are more likely to experience violence:

- from a man
- at the hands of a current or former partner
- in a private place
- with a higher risk of serious injury and homicide
- that results in ongoing fear or anxiety.

Gender inequality and the socio-ecological model

The term 'gender inequality' describes the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities among people, based on their gender.

Gender inequality is embedded in historical and existing laws, policies, structures, systems and practices which formally constrain the rights and opportunities of women and gender diverse people. In addition, it is maintained and perpetrated through formal and informal means. These include:

Norms: the things which represent our knowledge about what other people do and what we think we should do, such as the belief that, because of biology, women are 'naturally' best suited to care for children.

Practices: the ways these norms are usually or habitually performed, such as differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls.

Structures: systems such as organisations, policies or rules that arrange our norms and practices in particular ways, such as the gender pay gap or differences in access to parental leave.

Such norms, practices and structures encourage women and men, girls and boys to adopt distinct gender identities and stereotyped gender roles within a gender hierarchy that historically positions men as superior to women, and masculine roles and identities as superior to feminine ones

The socio-ecological model of behaviour shows how individual behaviour is influenced by the norms, practices and structures of our societies, institutions, communities and individual relationships. By working across the different levels of society, we have more influence to create more positive change.

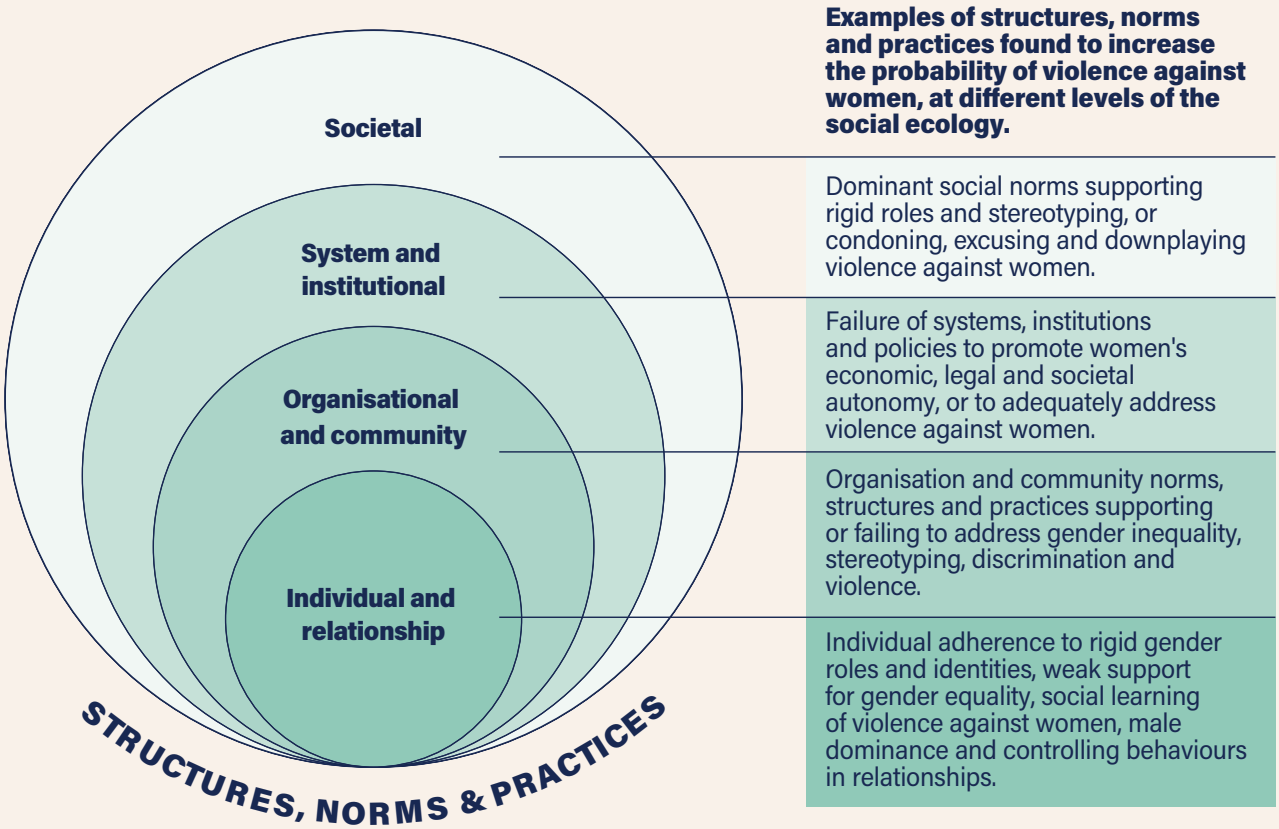


Figure 1: The socio-ecological model of behaviour.

Intersectionality

While gender inequality sets the underlying conditions for gender-based violence to occur, not all women experience violence or inequality in the same way. Gender inequality cannot be disentangled from other social injustices because gendered inequality frequently intersects with other forms of structural and systemic discrimination, inequality and injustice

There are many different aspects of identity that shape how individuals experience the world, and the access to resources and opportunities they are afforded. This includes, but is not limited to: gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability, visa status, geography, socioeconomic status, and education level.

Origin of intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality was developed by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. In developing 'intersectionality' as a concept, Crenshaw cited a court case where a group of African-American women argued that a manufacturing company had refused to hire them on the basis of their race *and* gender. However, the court ruled that the company was not guilty of discriminatory hiring practices based on race, because they had hired African-American men to work on the factory floor.

The court also ruled that the company had not discriminated on the basis of gender, as they hired white women for office-based roles. What the court failed to consider was the intersection of race and gender and the compound discrimination faced by African-American women.[4]

The consideration of how people experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage is referred to as 'intersectionality'. In order to prevent gender-based violence in Australia, discrimination and inequality such as racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia and the ongoing impacts of colonisation must be addressed.[3]

Binary language

The category 'women' is a socially constructed one, and part of a historical binary system of sex and gender categories that do not represent the gender diversity of the population.

In this document, 'women' includes anyone who identifies and lives as a woman, including cis and trans women.[5] While we use the term in this way, we also recognise that the violence experienced by cisgender heterosexual women can be different from violence experienced by lesbian women, bisexual women or trans women, who may also be targeted on the basis of their sexuality and/or their perceived gender non-conformity.

This guide's focus is on the prevention of men's violence against women, given the evidence on the prevalence of gender-based violence. While this scope necessitates the use of binary language (that is, the use of the general terms 'men' and 'women'), the guide also seeks to challenge these conventions. A key way it does this is in pointing to the need for a gender transformative approach to prevention. Gender transformative approaches seek to actively challenge and transform the current gender system through critical reflection on the attitudes, norms, structures and practices of gender that underpin this system of inequalities between and among people of all genders and help drive gender-based violence. For more on how to do this refer to Applying a gender lens to your teaching.

The drivers of gender-based violence

International and Australian research demonstrates that gender-based violence is much more likely to occur when there are unequal power relations between women and men. Gender-based violence is driven by gender inequality, gender stereotypes, and gendered assumptions.

Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia outlines the evidence for taking a gendered approach to understanding and addressing violence against women. It includes information about the drivers of violence against women, the essential actions required to prevent violence, and the importance of this effort taking place across social norms, practices and structures.

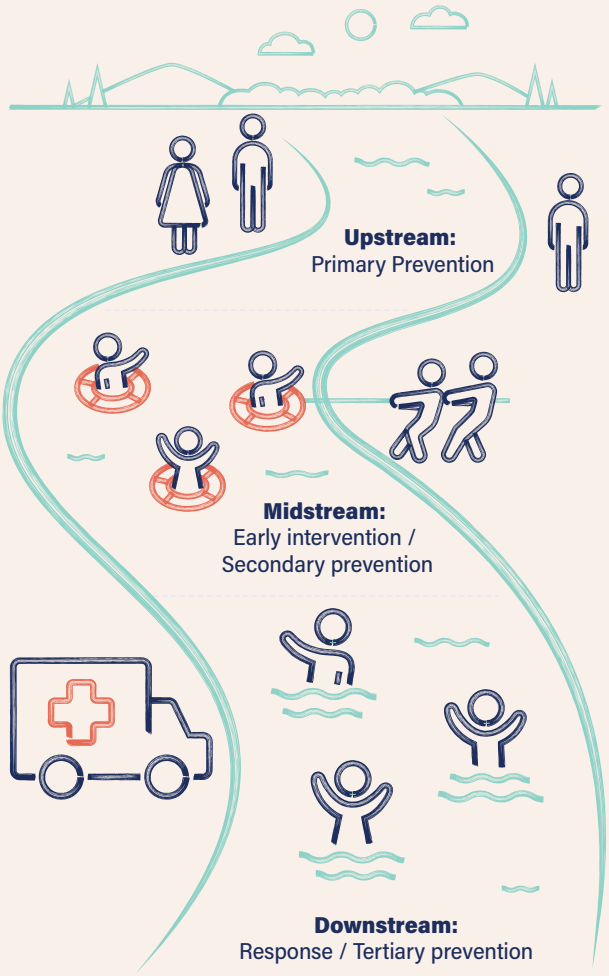


Figure 2: Prevention Stream.

These gendered drivers[6] of violence against women are:

- Condoning of violence against women.
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.
- Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
- Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

Promoting gender equality to prevent gender-based violence

A primary prevention approach aims to stop violence before it starts by addressing the structural and underlying drivers of violence. It takes a whole-of-population approach to challenge the social conditions that support and maintain the existence of disrespect and gender inequality.

A primary prevention approach complements tertiary response, which includes actions taken after the violence has occurred to stop it from recurring, and early intervention, which targets high-risk groups to stop or reduce the severity of violence. Together, these three levels of intervention can be used to guide work to prevent gender-based violence.

To address gender-based violence at its core through primary prevention, solutions across all sectors and social settings are required.

Essential actions to target the drivers of violence against women include:

01

Challenge the condoning of violence against women.

02

Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.

03

Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes.

04

Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships.

05

Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

06

Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice.

07

Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change.

08

Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres.

The role of university teaching in primary prevention

Education is an important strategy for the elimination of gender-based violence. Furthermore, universities are important sites for primary prevention because they have broad reach as places of learning, workplaces and community hubs and operate as spaces where attitudes and norms are produced and reproduced.

As a teaching academic, you can encourage students to develop self-awareness, as well as the knowledge and the skills to challenge gender inequality. You can also build your own awareness of the diverse needs, preferences and opportunities that exist for all students and begin to consider ways to address these differences through curriculum, teaching materials, seminars, tutorials, workshops and lectures.

As a colleague you can also contribute to creating safe and equitable working environments for other staff. You can encourage peers to consider their own actions, approach and commitment to creating equitable spaces for other staff and students. Once capability exists in one person, it has a multiplier effect through planting seeds of awareness and commitment to gender justice in others.

The benefits of taking a gender-sensitive approach to your teaching content and practice include:

- Meeting the growing demand and expectation across many professions for workers to have a strong understanding of gender equitable work practices, to meet legal and ethical obligations.
- Demonstrating preparation for, and adherence to, legislative requirements, increasing compliance and regulatory processes for a gender equitable university.
- Increasing the likelihood that students will broaden their aspirations and reach their potential due to a learning environment that discourages adherence to gender norms.
- Enhancing teaching capability by participating in gender equality professional development opportunities.
- Contributing to people of all genders being safe and having their human rights respected.
- Contributing to positive health outcomes for men and boys. Men and boys who rigidly conform to stereotypes of masculinity such as being tough and in control, being aggressive and not expressing their emotions are subject to poorer health outcomes, including higher rates of depression and suicide.

Applying a gender lens to your teaching

As a teaching academic delivering content about the prevention of gender-based violence, you do not have to be a gender equality expert, and you do not need to have all the answers.

Rather, you can use your expertise as an educator to identify opportunities to build on or incorporate prevention of gender-based violence content into existing curriculum and teaching practice. The Prevention in Teaching and Learning resources can support you in incorporating prevention of gender-based violence content into your course to support students to bring prevention practices into their future careers.

Defining an intersectional gender lens

An intersectional gender lens is a method used to see the differences in the way people experience the world because of the power, resources and opportunities they are afforded, based on their gender and other aspects of their identity. It's a type of multi- level analysis that helps us to link individual experiences to broader structures and systems, revealing how power relations are shaped and experienced.[7]

Patriarchy has determined power-based differences between women and men in Australia for centuries, resulting in historical and contemporary differences such as how we participate in political life, how we are paid, and the division of labour.

However, patriarchy works in conjunction with other systems of power and oppression – colonisation, racism, ableism, classism, homophobia, etc. – whereby not all women are disadvantaged in the same way and not all men are privileged in the same way. For example, an Anglo-Australian, able-bodied woman is likely to have a vastly different experience of sexism than a recently arrived refugee, or a woman living with a disability.

An intersectional gender lens helps us to identify and transform multiple systems of power and privilege at the same time. It also facilitates us to actively reflect on and address our own relationships to power and privilege as teaching academics, colleagues and role models.[8] There is no fixed hierarchy of disadvantage and people can experience privilege and oppression simultaneously, depending on the situation and context. This is true for you, your students, your colleagues and the people represented in your teaching materials.

Honing your intersectional gender lens will help you to become more reflective and self-aware as a teaching academic, and to identify how you can put students' learning needs at the centre of your work while contributing to the prevention of gender-based violence against all women.

For examples of unpacking the ways in which the drivers of gender-based violence impact different women, see Our Watch's *Changing the Picture* resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and the *Changing the Landscape* resource on preventing violence against women with disabilities.

Applying a gender lens to teaching content

Having a strong understanding of the influence and impact of gender and other forms of discrimination can change how you interpret and create teaching content. You can use the drivers of gender-based violence and the essential actions as a way to apply an intersectional gender lens to teaching content.

The first step is to examine the drivers of violence closely and explore how they manifest in your discipline. For example, considering rigid gender stereotypes and gender roles, where do these show up in your discipline? What does the data say about the gendered division of labour in the profession you are teaching to? What implications might this have for students of different genders, or different groups of women and men, graduating into that profession? How do you bring this up with students?

Are there patterns whereby gender-based violence is explicitly or implicitly condoned by colleagues, stakeholders or others in the profession? If so, are there differences in the way different groups of women are affected? Where in the curriculum is this covered, if at all? Where does prevention content align with concepts and theories already being taught?

Once you have concrete examples of how the gendered drivers are operating in your field, you will see opportunities for bringing these out in your teaching materials and content. The table on the following page gives examples of how some drivers manifest in different fields, and examples of how to address them. Think about the alignment of these issues and solutions with your theoretical models, the case studies you present, the texts you prescribe and the learning activities you design.

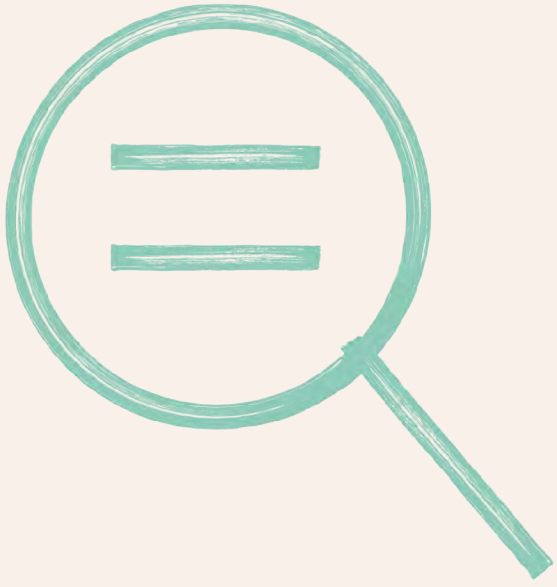
Add another layer of critical analysis with the inclusion of these questions in relation to your teaching topics, texts, materials and resources:

Whose experience is being represented here?

Whose experience is missing or being silenced?

What assumptions am I making about the experiences of different groups of women, men and gender diverse people?

What biases am I bringing to my teaching about the drivers of gender inequality, and other forms of inequality?



Discipline examples

Discipline	Example of gendered driver	How driver manifests in the profession	How driver can be addressed
Health 	Condoning of violence against women	The neglect of women with disabilities in care institutions making them more likely to be targeted with violence.	Train all staff to ensure they deliver appropriate and high-quality care to all clients. Ensure constant monitoring of care provided and commitment to quality improvement.
Legal and justice 	Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence	Female lawyers may be excluded from the informal male dominated networks in their profession, which forms a barrier to their promotion.	Take a whole- of-organisation approach that helps all staff to increase their understanding of gender discrimination and how to challenge harmful attitudes and beliefs based on gender.
Education 	Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity	Gender imbalance in choices for extracurricular activities at school, particularly in team sports, e.g. boys' football team, girls' netball team.	Conduct an audit of the extracurricular program with an intersectional gender lens, to identify ways it may benefit some boys or girls more than others.
Journalism 	Condoning of violence against women	Victim-blaming language used in news reporting about family violence.	Develop guidelines and editorial policies in relation to balanced reporting of family violence against all groups of women. Ensure breaches of the guidelines are addressed.
Early Childhood Education 	Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control	Normalising boys showing aggression and dominance by saying "it's just boys being boys" or telling saying a boy has been violence "because he likes you".	Fostering a culture of respect between all children where violence is not minimised or excused.

Think about the diverse mediums through which ideas and information can be presented – for example, texts, guest speakers, online tools and industry visits. When thinking about the texts you could use to explore topics relating to multiculturalism, for example, consider incorporating texts that explore alternative opinions or view history from a perspective that may not be present in mainstream texts. Applying an intersectional gender lens is likely to enhance the way you teach. For examples of complex scenarios that explore the drivers of gender-based violence and intersectionality in the disciplines of primary education, criminology and health, see Appendix: Sample teaching resources.

Applying a gender lens to teaching practice

Hidden gender biases in curriculum and the socialisation of gender roles can have an impact on how your students experience and benefit from their education. As a teaching academic it is important to reflect on the many ways in which gender impacts your students, and how not deliberately considering gender can perpetuate existing stereotypes, maintain the status quo, and lead to unequal outcomes for women, men and gender diverse people.

Gender is recognised nationally and internationally as one of the major factors that determines access to and engagement with education. If we assume that gender has no impact, we ignore and fail to redress the existing gender-based differences that influence a person's educational opportunities and outcomes. By ignoring gender, or assuming it has no impact, we can reinforce and perpetuate existing gender-based inequities and differences in education status for both women and men.[9]

A student's gender influences their daily engagement with the university. By identifying the ways that gender discrimination and inequality operate in the classroom and through learning, you can take steps towards improving these conditions.

Some areas of your teaching practice that you can reflect on with regard to differences within and between genders, include:

The learning environment and the contextual factors which may influence it

Students engage with the learning environment through the frame of their own personal and professional experiences. External to these factors are the social, cultural and political policies, rules, norms and governance, over which the learner has limited control, but which may impact on their experience of gender, privilege and discrimination.[10]

Who is participating and how they are participating in group discussions

Students who speak more often do so because they tend to feel more welcome, entitled or empowered to express themselves.[11] Also consider the ways in which people of all genders might engage in conversations about gender, for example having conversations about masculinity in ways that invite reflection rather than defensiveness.

Gender roles outside the classroom

Australian women still do the majority of unpaid care work[12] and this can have an impact on some students' ability to comprehensively engage in their learning and meet their study requirements. Strict gender roles also negatively affect men and contribute to violence against women. The Man Box study has shown that stronger adherence to strict male gender roles and stereotypes correspond to negative mental health outcomes for men as well as violence-supporting attitudes.[13]

How equity is modelled

Through the language, tone, body language and interpersonal skills used, teaching academics have the opportunity to demonstrate to students gender equity 'in action'. Teaching academics have a position of power and authority in the classroom, and this can be used either to have power over others or to facilitate the inclusion and empowerment of others.

Ability to appropriately respond to disclosures of violence

Teaching on this topic can increase disclosure and reporting rates about experiences of being a victim-survivor or perpetrating gender-based violence. Students who disclose need to be supported to engage with the specialist services within the university. More guidance on sensitively Responding to disclosures of gender-based violence can be found below.

Engaging with sensitive content

As women and people from marginalized communities are more likely to have had experiences of gender-based violence, content on this subject may be triggering. Content and trigger warnings can be used to alert students of challenging content; however, academics and teaching staff can identify ways of supporting students with personal experiences of violence to engage with curriculum in supported ways. Academics can provide options for how students engage with course content, alert students to specialist services within the university, and through their own trauma informed practice and gender lens better support students to engage with challenging subject matter.

For more information on engaging with men and boys and unpacking masculinities, see Our Watch's *Men in Focus* resources.

Applying a gender lens to your practice can promote student engagement and increase the options and choice for students, while protecting the integrity of the relevant qualifications.

Developing and tailoring resources

Teaching content needs to be relevant to the audience and linked to discipline-specific skills. Developing tailored teaching resources for your student audience will help situate and contextualise the drivers of gender-based violence and their underpinning concepts within the discipline and unit you teach.

Introducing and embedding threshold concepts

Threshold concepts describe the ways of thinking, seeing and knowing that characterise a specific discipline and are valued by its practitioners. They facilitate thinking about the discipline in a holistic and conceptual way rather than the learning process being one of memorising facts and figures.

Threshold concepts are not the same as core concepts in a discipline, because they transform how students see the world and how they understand the discipline. A core concept is a building block that progresses understanding of the subject; it has to be understood first, but it does not necessarily lead to a qualitatively different view of the subject matter in the way a threshold concept does.[14]

It is necessary to spend some time developing the threshold concepts that students need in order to approach material related to gender equality and gender-based violence, so that it informs their way of thinking and knowing, rather than just being an add-on or box ticking exercise.

In order to achieve this, students should be introduced slowly and carefully to the threshold concepts in their journey to embedding gender equality into their professional understanding, practice and identity.

The threshold concepts:

- The social construction of gender
- Privilege, oppression and intersectionality
- The socio-ecology of gender norms, practices and structures
- The gendered drivers of violence against women

For background on these concepts and their relationship to gender-based violence, refer to Our Watch's Prevention Handbook website. For an example of how to unpack the threshold concept of the social construction of gender, see the following page.

One-off sessions for students are not effective. Information needs to be delivered over a sustained period of time, due to the complexity of gender-based violence and its related threshold concepts. Consider in your planning and development how you will scaffold these concepts throughout your unit/course in order to remind students to carry forward and build upon what they have learned about each threshold concept even as they are introduced to a new one.

Embedding prevention content within the curriculum will likely require collaboration with other teaching academics and learning and development units across your discipline to plan how the content will be scaffolded throughout. You may also be able to draw on expertise across your university from other disciplines and gender equity specialists or teams. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will also support continual adaptation of the approach, integrating evidence and learnings.

Student voices should also be included as they integral to successful implementation, and bring unique and important perspectives to experiences of learning and applying learning to practice.

Key components to keep in mind when contextualising and embedding content include:

01

Direct, intentional and critical examination of the drivers of gender-based violence and harmful gender norms.

02

Continual application over time.

03

Ongoing critical self-reflection and connection to one's own gender construction and reinforcement.

Unpacking a threshold concept: The social construction of gender

In order to grasp the threshold concept of the social construction of gender, core concepts such as sex, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, and the difference between what is socially expected and what is individually experienced, need to be learnt. Then students will be able to understand the ways in which gender is performed, expressed, expected, reinforced and policed by socially constructed norms, behaviours and systems.

Tools such as 'The genderbread person' can help convey the complex relationships between all of these core concepts. It depicts the differences and relationships between gender identity, gender expression, biological sex and sexual orientation. It offers a critique on what has been, and continues to be, socially expected of people in terms of their gender and sexual identity, presenting an alternative conceptualisation of how people exist and express themselves beyond binary concepts of male/female, man/ woman and masculine/feminine.

Introducing students to these concepts one at a time before you introduce the genderbread person will help them to understand the complexity and interrelatedness of these aspects of identity, and the role different parts of society have played in constructing, and deconstructing, them.[15] Use facts, examples and discussion to explore how the social construction of gender manifests in different people's lives across different settings.

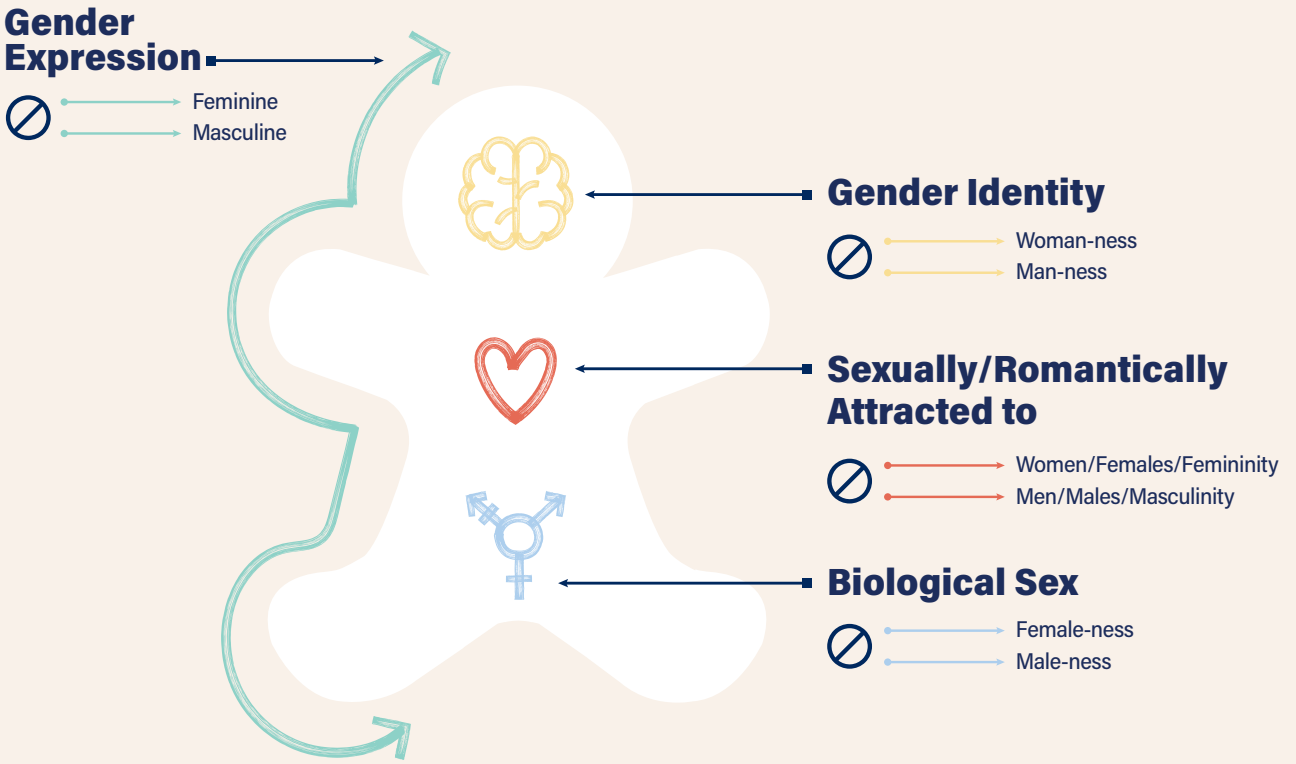


Figure 3: The genderbread person. Source: Killermann. (2013). The genderbread person version 3

Respectfully and accurately exploring intersectionality

Primary prevention is about focusing on addressing the inequitable norms, structures and practices that are embedded in the social systems and processes that shape and reinforce different forms of inequality and discrimination. The image below illustrates the various systems and structures which affect people differently.

This highlights important considerations about how we view or value different aspects of individual identities and the structural barriers or enablers that accompany this. It is important that our teaching content addresses the structural barriers and discrimination that shape individuals' experiences, rather than presenting people as innately vulnerable or disempowered.

While you can aim to consider a range of experiences (see Appendix: Sample teaching resources), no single teaching resource can attempt to represent or speak to the experiences of all women. Instead, your teaching resources should aim to prompt broader discussion about how various forms of structural privilege, oppression and discrimination can impact on individuals in multiple ways, and to challenge any stereotypes or assumptions people might hold about different members of the community.

This includes exploring your own privilege and assumptions, which is a necessary part of the work to achieve real equality. The following questions can assist with critical reflection:

- Have you ensured that the resources you are using represent a range of experiences?
- Does your selection of teaching materials convey how widely gender-based violence occurs?
- Might your selection of resources inadvertently reinforce the idea that only 'some women' experience violence?
- Do you feel confident talking about the people represented in the resources in a way that doesn't reinforce stereotypes or create the impression that some people are inherently 'more vulnerable'?
- Is there any additional research you need to do about how violence impacts different women in order to use particular resources?

Remember to contextualise the resources you choose and identify why you have selected them. Explain that these are just examples and that there are many different experiences that reflect the drivers of gender-based violence.

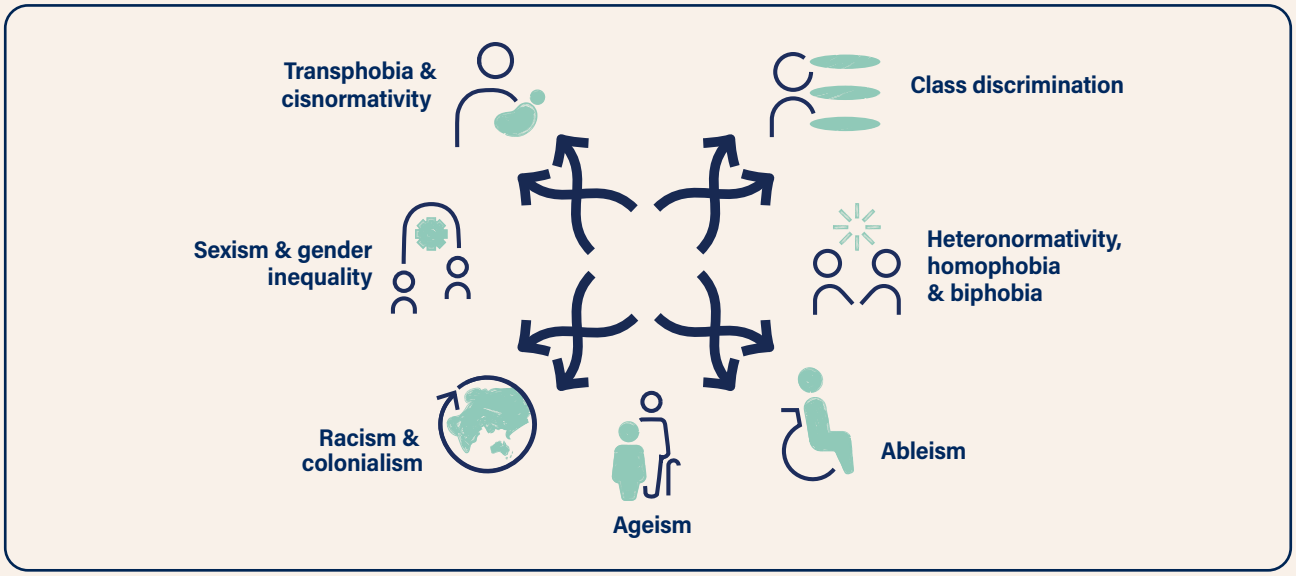


Figure 4: Intersecting forms of privilege, oppression and discrimination.

Tips for developing or tailoring resources

Hypothetical scenarios are a popular and powerful way to convey complex life-based examples to tertiary-level students and give them the opportunity to translate theory into practice. In the context of teaching about the prevention of gender-based violence, scenarios can bring a human face to a public health issue and help to build empathy and understanding, as well as help students connect individual experiences to the broader social context of gender inequality and social injustice.

The scenarios and activities included in this guide (see Appendix: Sample teaching resources) are examples of how you might seek to use scenarios to demonstrate the complex impacts of gender-based violence and their links to the drivers of gender- based violence. The resources you use will depend on the purpose and audience they are directed towards. This may mean you decide to adjust details of the scenarios included in this resource or to write some of your own.

The following are some tips for writing intersectional scenarios that illustrate the drivers of gender-based violence. Keep these things in mind if you are making any changes to the teaching resources included in this guide.

Focus on patterns of power and control

- Focus on showing the gendered patterns of power and control and how these could manifest as fear and coercion, rather than individual incidents of violence or abuse. This can be helpful for highlighting the difference between healthy conflict and abuse.
- Think about how violence and discrimination contribute to creating unsafe environments or cultures – in the home, the workplace and in other settings – and the impact this has on the women and children who occupy these spaces. Also how they may confer additional power onto men in these spaces, thus informing/ contributing to their individual choices.
- Ensure the scenario holds any perpetrators to account and that there isn't anything that might imply that the victim-survivor is to blame/responsible for the violence.

Avoid reinforcing stereotypes, myths or assumptions

- Use your teaching resources to counter or dispel assumptions or stereotypes about particular groups – this may include questioning your own assumptions.
- Be mindful of how you talk about 'women', 'men' and 'communities' – it is easy to talk as if any cohort or community were a single homogeneous group, but the reality is that all communities are complex and pluralistic and made up of individuals with varying experiences and stories. Individuals also belong to multiple communities and no one story can ever claim to represent all people.
- Avoid tokenism – intersectionality is not just about ensuring you have 'one of every group' in your case studies. Thinking through intersectionality requires drawing out and questioning how different people might experience similar events – what might be different? Would they have access to the same services? What norms, practices and structures enable or limit them? What other forms of inequality might impact them?

Think about norms, practices and structures

- Consider how the reactions of others can reinforce, minimise or excuse the drivers of gender-based violence including the reactions of friends, family, colleagues and service providers, as well as policies and laws that reinforce discriminatory or unequal power relationships.

- Make links to the drivers of gender-based violence to show how scenarios involving individual relationships are connected to, reinforce, and are reinforced by larger community and societal norms, practices and structures.

Practice ongoing learning and reflection and seek input from others

- Continue to build your own understanding and adapt to emerging evidence and learning so you feel well informed and aware of how the drivers of gender-based violence are experienced by different groups in the community. If possible, seek input from others with lived experience of the group you are describing – but don't expect them to do the work for you. Furthermore, they will only represent a single experience within the group and not the diversity of the whole group.
- Best practice suggests that you should seek feedback on draft resources from key organisations or individuals and be willing to incorporate their feedback.

Question your own assumptions and beliefs

- Reflective practice is important – be open and aware and constantly consider how you can continue to improve your knowledge and practice, including working alongside partners from many different areas.

Utilise a strength-based approach

- Avoid thinking of certain communities as inherently more vulnerable or in need of 'saving'. Being an ally means affording all people power and reaffirming their agency and choice. Also recognise that socially constructed systems, laws, policies and procedures actively perpetuate discrimination and oppression against specific groups of people who are 'defined' as less important or valuable than others.
- Think about both the problem and the solution – the space we're in and where we want to be. This might include asking key questions such as:
  - What would a best-case scenario look like?
  - If this was a safe space for all women, men and gender diverse people, what would it look like and feel like? What would it include?
  - What do people require in this space to access everything they need?
  - What is prohibiting this, and how do we attempt to fix it?

Facilitating safe and open learning environments

This section provides some guidance on how you can ensure that your teaching practice and content is delivered in a safe, respectful and inclusive manner.[16]

This is important not only due to the need to model the content being taught, but also because it will help create a conducive environment for potentially confronting and/or sensitive material to be taught, making learning more effective.

Being a self-aware facilitator

The role of the facilitator is to promote reflection and participatory learning, present information neutrally, and create a horizontal learning experience where students can learn from each other and from active participation in the activities. Distinct from teaching where you have information to impart or deliver, facilitation means focusing on the learning process and how to encourage participation and engagement of students in their own learning.

Facilitating effectively requires being aware of your position of power, based on your perceived position of authority, and the knowledge and expertise you hold in the subjects you teach. Being aware of this, and how this power as an educator is displayed, is critical. It's important to identify and acknowledge your own position of power in relation to your students and to be ethical and responsible in the use of that power.

Review your own views, assumptions and prejudices, and avoid bringing them into the group. Be aware if students from particular social, cultural or religious backgrounds trigger certain emotions in you – be they positive or negative – that may affect your own work in the group. As a teacher it is unlikely that you will be value-free but you can aim to be value-fair and the best way to be value-fair is to be aware of your biases.

Ask questions to better understand where students are coming from and guide them in group reflections to critically look at harmful norms around gender and violence. More guidance on specific ways you can support safe and respectful learning environments is given below.

Preparing your audience

Changing attitudes and behaviours is a long and multifaceted process. Participation in learning activities will not necessarily lead to an immediate transformation of students' lives and relationships. However, it is a big step towards promoting change in an individual's beliefs and behaviours.

Discussing gender can be personal, complex and sensitive. During sessions, pay attention to the students' comfort level. The teaching content and modes of learning involved in exploring gender equity can generate emotion among students and teaching academics, especially for those who may experience the discomfort of being confronted by their privilege.[17]

It can be useful to be up-front about this at the beginning of the unit or module, and acknowledge that some students – for example,

men – may find the content challenging. It is useful to frame the discussion in relation to the facts and evidence and invite them to ask questions to unpack any uncertainties. Reiterate the relevance of this content to the students' discipline and to their future professional lives.

When introducing the drivers of gender-based violence, inform students that the session will cover information about gender-based violence, and can be personally challenging. Let students know that internal and external support services are available if they, or anyone they know, needs support during or after the class.

Encourage students to make note of these services and where they can be found.

Preparing for disclosures

Gender-based violence, including family violence and sexual assault, is prevalent and occurs across all communities, which means that some of your students (and colleagues) may have experienced and been negatively impacted by such violence. It is important to keep this in mind when introducing themes related to the prevention of gender-based violence, and to do so in a way that lessens the risk of causing distress to others.

It is also important to remind students, however, that the classroom is a space for adult learning and not a therapeutic space. Teaching academics are not necessarily able to provide the most supportive response to a disclosure if it occurs in a group and/ or teaching context. Therefore, you should encourage students to wait and disclose any personal experiences to an appropriate person in a safe and confidential space.

In addition, if possible, share information as to the support services provided by the university and externally in their local community.

Responding to disclosures

If someone tells you they are experiencing or have experienced gender-based violence as a victim-survivor or perpetrator, it is important to respond in a supportive, safe and respectful way. As a teaching academic you need a good

Some key principles to consider when preparing students before introducing gender-based violence content:

01

Focus on building trust with students

Where trust is built and established early in the teaching period, students will be more open to honest dialogue as well as trust your referrals to speak to other, more qualified specialists.

02

Be upfront about what students can expect from your course

You can say something at the beginning of the unit such as 'Please be advised that all readings and screenings in the course are required; some materials contain references to gender-based violence, abuse and discrimination.'

03

Consider alternative readings or activities

If the same learning outcome can be achieved by using a different reading that doesn't contain the same graphic content, it would make sense to do so — or at least to provide a range of optional reading.

04

Facilitate access to effective and supportive services

All universities have student services, including counselling and response services; make yourself aware of these and if necessary, engage directly with staff in the service so that you can provide tailored referrals and support to students in need.

understanding of how to respond to students and colleagues if they disclose gender-based violence. You are not responsible to 'resolve' or 'manage' any disclosure. Your role is to act in accordance with your university's family violence, sexual assault and/or child abuse response and prevention policies and procedures and refer the person to the appropriate specialist services within your university or local community – for example, your local family violence or sexual assault service or perpetrator intervention program.

Your role is to:

- **Recognise** the signs of gender-based violence.
- **Respond** with appropriate care. As a starting point you could say, 'I'm sorry that happened to you'.
- **Act** in accordance with the relevant university response and prevention policies and procedures.
- **Refer** to support services.

For more information on this topic refer to Our Watch's A victim/survivor-centred approach to responding to violence.

Creating a respectful environment

Using dialogue and narrative when teaching about gender and violence prevention enables students to challenge norms, values and stereotypes that may influence their understanding and perception of gender.

When applying these teaching approaches, it is vital that you build a safe space for learning, for sharing ideas, and for honest and open dialogue, which will enable students to reconcile changing perspectives as new knowledge is introduced.

Remember the group agreements

Ask students to decide on a set of agreements and remind them of those agreements throughout the sessions. Important group agreements relate to listening to and showing respect for others, confidentiality, and participation. Examples of agreements relevant to the topic of gender-based violence might include:

- Respectful conversations – challenge ideas, not people.
- Everyone has the right to be inarticulate.
- Practice self-care.
- Keep this as a learning space, not a therapeutic space.
- Consider any power dynamics in the room.

Do not judge

Remember, you are here to facilitate discussion and reflection, not judge the ideas, values or behaviours of others. Be friendly and create rapport with your students. Be aware of your own position of power – avoid judgmental and authoritarian attitudes. Never impose your feelings or opinions on the group.

Promote inclusion

Ensure that all students have the opportunity to speak. Be careful not to let one person dominate the conversation or make other people feel that they cannot share their opinions. Encourage people to share their experiences and learn to identify when people want to speak but may be too shy to say something unless called on. If a student begins to take over a group by spending too much time with a story, find an opening and kindly say, 'It sounds like you have a lot of valuable experiences to share with the group. That's great! Do others have similar or different stories they would also like to share?'

Address students' concerns

Lectures and tutorials can serve as an important opportunity for students to receive help and advice. As a facilitator, it is important that you validate people's concerns rather than contest, contradict or ignore them, even if you disagree or if it isn't in line with the change you are trying to support. You might like to do this by repeating their question or statement back to them, to confirm you have heard and understood it correctly. You can also encourage them to provide more information by asking, 'Can you tell me a bit more about your concern?' Be mindful of time, however, and aim to close the session with a revision of the key points you are trying to convey. See the resources below for more advice on Preparing for resistance.

Appreciate honesty and openness

Encourage students to be honest and open. They should not be afraid to discuss sensitive issues for fear of ridicule from their peers. Thank the group members for sharing their personal views. Never force anyone to participate in the activities; instead, try to create an environment in which the students feel comfortable to share.

Ask questions that promote dialogue

See your teaching as a process. Ask 'process questions' that cause students to reflect, cannot be answered with a 'yes' or 'no', and are unbiased. See the charts on the next page for additional tips:

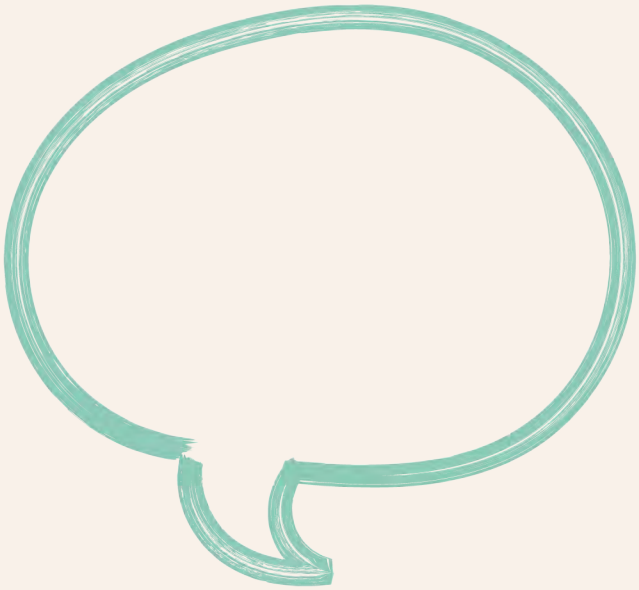
Keep discussions from wandering too far from the key messages

One of the main facilitator tools you can use is the 'bank', also known as the 'parking lot'. While all discussions are welcome, if a student brings up a topic that cannot be addressed within the time allotted, write it on a flip chart called the 'bank' or 'parking lot.' It is important that these topics are revisited at another time. However, if the topic is completely unrelated to the topic being discussed, say something like, 'That's a great comment. We don't have time to address that right now, but let's talk more about it after the session', and ensure you follow up with the student or provide a link to other resources which will assist them.

Ask for feedback

Feedback is an important part of your teaching – not only does it help you reflect on how your work is going but it also helps you to improve or adjust when planning the work you do in the future. When considering how to teach about prevention of gender-based violence, it is important to consider how you will assess your use of the resources and their impact on both you as a teacher and on the people, you work with.

Where appropriate, you might like to encourage students to reflect on this material, especially when content or resources are being delivered for the first time, so you can use their feedback for continuous improvement. Data will also help provide evidence of any change that occurs as a result of the teaching.



Questions to promote dialogue

Do's

Ask process questions: Ask open questions that require more than a yes/no response.	**Example:** Where do you think that assumption comes from? What might that mean for how you work with different people?
Be simple: Ask questions that begin 'What ...?' 'How ...?' 'When ...?' 'Where ...?' 'Who ...?' 'Why ...?'	**Example:** What is an example of a gender stereotype in your profession? How could you challenge it?
Be unbiased: Exclude your own feelings and values from the questions and instead guide students in identifying problems and solutions.	**Example:** Ask yourself what unconscious biases you might be bringing to the work. Are you centring your own experiences, practices and ideologies as the norm?

Dont's

Don't ask questions that can be answered with a yes/no response.	**Example:** Do you think gender-based violence is a problem?
Don't ask leading or biased questions.	**Example:** How do the men you know use violence?
Don't allow your assumptions or biases to interfere with your initial framing or responses to specific questions or people.	**Example:** If a student asks a curly question such as "what about violence against men?" don't shut it down or get emotive. Give them a chance to explain their thinking, listen to their concerns and respond with a clear statement supported by evidence.

Preparing for resistance

Challenging the attitudes and behaviours that lead to gender-based violence will result in some backlash. Backlash or resistance to personal or social change is a normal and expected part of the change process.

Resistance can take a range of forms, including:

- passive denial techniques that seek to ignore or minimise the impact of gender inequality and maintain the status quo, for example 'There's no problem here'
- appropriating or co-opting change efforts, for example 'What about men's rights?'
- backlash, which looks like active and aggressive opposition that has the aim of reversing or dismantling any change achieved.

The spectrum of resistance shown in the diagram below helps us to understand the different ways resistance is expressed, and why. People at the left-hand end of the spectrum of resistance – the entrenched opposition – are the least likely to join and support your argument, and the social norms in our culture reinforce their prejudices. Research has found that focusing on the 'moveable middle' – that is, on the people who are curious, or unconvinced about certain facts and evidence – is the best starting point for change.[18]

Develop strategies to manage resistance or backlash in the classroom and be prepared. Ensure you are familiar with the content, so you are confident to talk about it from multiple perspectives. Think about what possible resistance or backlash you might experience from your students. Think about how you could respond to this, and whether there are strategies you can employ to minimise it (for instance, addressing possible resistance in your introduction or framing of the activity).

In the classroom, monitor classroom dynamics, address any stereotyping and harassment, and intervene quickly, explaining that the terms are derogatory. If a conflict arises in the group, remind the students of the group agreements. Encourage other students to help mediate the situation. Ask the group what they think about the question raised, or how they would suggest handling the problem. When necessary, offer brief responses to questions and clarify misinformation.

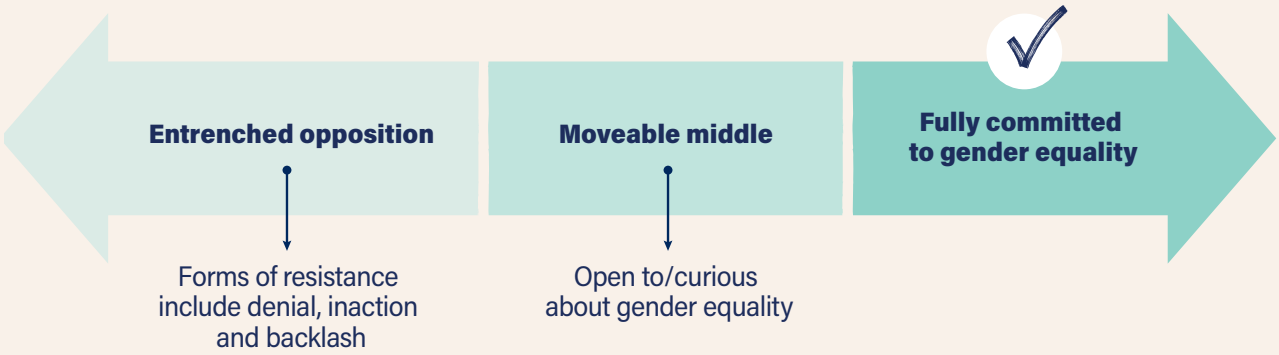


Figure 5: The Spectrum of Resistance. Source: Adapted from VicHealth. (2018). *Encountering resistance*, p. 6.

Appendix: Sample teaching

On the Our Watch website, you will find further Prevention in Teaching and Learning resources, including discipline-specific teaching resources to engage students in the prevention of gender-based violence.

They include complex hypothetical scenarios, PowerPoint slide decks and video resources. The resources have been developed by Our Watch in collaboration with teaching academics.

These can be used according to the intended audience, or tailored to meet the requirements of your teaching and learning needs.

Endnotes

1. United Nations. (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.
2. Image-based abuse (IBA) happens when an intimate image or video is shared without the consent of the person pictured. This includes images or videos that have been digitally altered. Image-based abuse also includes the threat of an intimate image being shared: from eSafety Commissioner, Image-based abuse.
3. Our Watch. (2021). The issue.
4. Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, (1), Article 8.
5. 'Cisgender' is a term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. The term 'cis' is often used as an abbreviation. Conversely, 'transgender' is used to describe a person whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
6. Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia* (2nd ed.).
7. Hankivsky, H. (2014). *Intersectionality 101*. The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, Simon Fraser University, Canada.
8. Chen, J. (2017). *Intersectionality matters: A guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities in Australia*. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health..
9. Domestic Violence Resource Centre, & Domestic Violence Victoria. (2015). *Why gender matters: A guide for community health services*.
10. Clemans, A., Subban, P., & Komarzynsky, L. (2020). *Teaching gender equity: A toolkit for teaching gender equity units of competency*. Women's Health Victoria.
11. Clemans, A., Subban, P., Gleeson, J., & Komarzynsky, L. (2020). *Supporting gender equity education*. Women's Health Victoria.
12. PwC. (2017). *Understanding the paid economy*.
13. The Men's Project & Flood, M. 2024. The Man Box 2024: Re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia. Melbourne: Jesuit Social Services.
14. Meyer, J., & Land, R. (2003). *Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: Linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines*. University of Edinburgh, pp. 412–24.
15. For guidance on how to facilitate learning around these core concepts and the threshold concept of the social construction of gender, refer to Appendix: Sample teaching resources.
16. Adapted from Promundo-US and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. (2018). *Manhood 2.0: A curriculum promoting a gender-equitable future of manhood*. Promundo and University of Pittsburgh, p. 24.
17. Clemans, A. et al. (2020). *Teaching gender equity*.
18. VicHealth. (2018). *(En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives*. Victorian Government.

ourwatch.org.au

Our Watch

Preventing violence against women