

PREVENTION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCE

Prevention of gender-based violence within Early Childhood Education university curriculum and teaching 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.



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Introduction

This resource is a guide for Early Childhood Education (ECE) academics on how to include or build upon content on the primary prevention of gender-based violence in curriculum and teaching practice. This resource has been designed to accompany Our Watch's Educators guide to prevention in teaching and learning and the Overview: Prevention in teaching and learning resources, which outline an approach for academic and teaching staff to develop the capability of university students to support the prevention of gender-based violence through their professional roles.

This resource has been designed primarily for use by teaching academics within ECE university settings, however it can also be utilised within ECE TAFE courses and by early childhood educators (ECEC) working in the early childhood education settings.

This resource can complement and is strengthened by Australia's national Early Years Learning Framework Belonging, Being and Becoming (EYLF), as well as the Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood, and the National Quality Framework for early childhood education, with a specific focus on the prevention of gender-based violence in early years education.

As a teaching academic you do not need to be an expert in the prevention of gender-based violence. This resource is designed to build the understanding and confidence of academic and teaching staff to identify, include and build upon core prevention concepts in your teaching practice and curriculum. This resource draws on the evidence about preventing gender-based violence and the expertise and experience within the early childhood education sector, to provide guidance specifically for ECE academic and teaching staff in this work.

This resource supports a whole-of university primary prevention approach as part of the 'Teaching and Learning' domain of the Educating for Equality model developed by Our Watch with Universities Australia.

To learn more about Educating for Equality visit www.ourwatch.org.au/universities



Note on language:



In this resource we primarily use the broad term of '**early childhood education and care**' (**ECEC**) to encompass the broad settings and spaces in which young children receive education and care. Whilst this does not include all care settings, it primarily focuses on settings such as kindergarten, playgroups, and similar settings. **These settings are referred to in this resource as ECEC.**



Early Childhood Education courses within universities are referred to in this resource as **ECE**.



The Early Years Learning Framework Belonging, Being and Becoming is referred to in this resource as the **EYLF**.

This resource includes:

The drivers of gender-based violence and the essential actions that can be taken to prevent it , as they relate to the ECEC context	09
Introduction to threshold concepts that underpin the prevention of gender-based violence , and how they relate to the ECEC context	33
Curriculum mapping to identify where prevention content can be added to, or built upon, within ECE curriculum.	30
Environmental scan for the delivery of curriculum and self-reflection for academics	42
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Throughout this resource we use **examples of gender and gendered roles that reflect gender stereotypes and binary notions of gender**, which are a contributor to the prevalence of gender-based violence. We have included these in order to suggest how these may be challenged to support the prevention of gender-based violence.

What is prevention of gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence is defined by the United Nations as 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 Internationally, there is emerging evidence and increasing recognition that gender-based violence also includes harmful acts directed towards someone because of their gender – such as someone from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ+) community.²



Primary prevention of gender-based violence focuses on changing the underlying social factors and conditions that cause gender-based violence.

These social conditions are best addressed by changing the attitudes, norms, structures and practices which reinforce, reproduce and uphold gendered power imbalance.

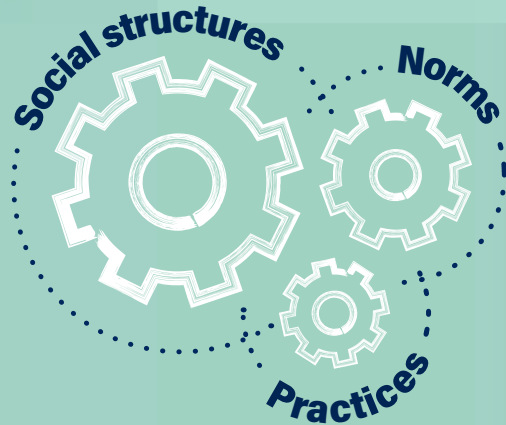
Our Watch's national evidence-based framework *Change the story* shows that gender inequality, rigid and hierarchical gender stereotypes and limits to women's independence help create a context in which disrespect and gender-based violence are more likely.

The evidence tells us that there is a significant problem of gender-based violence in Australia.

For more information about the prevalence of gender-based violence, visit the [Quick facts section of Our Watch's website](#).

Primary prevention of gender-based violence requires changing the social conditions that give rise to this violence; reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify or even promote such violence; and shifting the power imbalances and social norms, structures and practices that drive and normalise gender-based violence.

Individual behavioural change (to stop people using violence) may be the ultimate aim of prevention activity, but behavioural change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, broader and deeper change in these underlying drivers of violence, which are embedded within relationships, families, communities, organisations, institutions and society as a whole.



Social structures, norms and **practices** are interrelated, and each plays a role in supporting the others. This means that a comprehensive approach to prevention needs to address each of these aspects, across all levels of society.

We all have a role in the prevention of gender-based violence, and ECEC settings have been identified as playing an important part in this societal change.

Why is the prevention of gender-based violence important for Early Childhood Education curriculum and teaching practice?

The early years represent a vital period in the development of a child's identity, as well as their understanding of gender and other social norms. By equipping ECE university students with prevention of gender-based violence knowledge and skills, you support them to enter the workforce with the capacity to identify what drives gender-based violence and what can be done to address it in their future ECEC settings. They can also play a significant and cumulative role in challenging and transforming workplace practices, structures and cultural norms that currently uphold gender inequality.

Primary prevention work in the early years ensures that children are not limited by rigid gender stereotypes, supports them to develop equal and respectful relationships, and fosters positive personal identities, all of which contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

What the evidence tells us about early childhood education and preventing gender-based violence

Our Watch has developed a Policy Guide on the primary prevention of gender-based violence and early childhood education. This policy guide identifies that ECE and care (ECEC) services and facilities are important settings for primary prevention initiatives. These settings have direct contact with children in early childhood education and their families, and they are places where young children can spend the majority of their time outside of the home. They employ large, often feminised, culturally diverse workforces and have the infrastructure to support organisational change. ECEC settings also operate as community hubs, connecting families, carers and children across the community, so they have significant reach into, and influence in, local communities.

For more information, see Our Watch's [Policy Guide on the primary prevention of gender-based violence and the early years.](#)

Identity, gender roles and relationships

The early years is when gender roles become embedded and personal identities are continuing to form.

Change the story identifies that rigid and hierarchical gender stereotypes and male peer relations that emphasise aggression, dominance and control help create a context in which gender inequality, disrespect and violence against women and girls is more likely.³ Although it is often thought that children are relatively free of the social biases and stereotypes that adults exhibit, evidence shows that the foundations for these stereotypes are laid down in the early years and the effects can compound over time.⁴

Although children are learning about and exposed to concepts of gender from very early on in their life, they typically start to learn 'gender appropriate' and 'gender-role' behaviour around the age of two and usually identify with a gender by age two or three.⁵ This is also when they tend to have a growing understanding of some of the social meanings associated with gender categories, roles and stereotypes.⁶

A review of studies examining the presence of gender stereotypes and biases expressed by three to five-year-olds found that gender stereotypes influenced children's assessments of what activities people engage in, their perceptions of what occupations are appropriate or available, and their feelings about who they regarded as credible sources of information.⁷ One study found that gender stereotypical behaviour at the age of three predicted gender-stereotypical behaviour at the age of 13, a decade later.⁸ This highlights the importance of intervening as early as possible to challenge the formation of rigid gendered norms which are identified as a key driver of gender-based violence.⁹

Commonly used language can set norms and expectations for children which are carried through to adulthood. For example, phrases like 'boys will be boys' are often used to downplay or excuse boys', and later men's, aggression and violence towards others, while 'boys don't cry' sends the message that boys are expected to suppress vulnerability and 'weakness' and not express their feelings. This sets the foundation for anger being one of the most normalised and accepted emotions that men can express.

Exposure to norms, stereotypes and relationship behaviours in the early years can influence and shape a person's relationships into adulthood. For example, their use of violence versus respect, or loving communication versus antagonism.¹⁰

While children's understanding of gender is shaped by many factors including family, community, broader social networks and norms, ECEC educators play an important role in shaping children's understanding of gender, equality and respect.

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The drivers of gender-based violence and the essential actions to prevent it in Early Childhood Education university settings

Based on national and international research and evidence, Our Watch has identified four drivers of gender-based violence and four corresponding essential actions that can prevent these drivers from occurring.¹¹ These drivers are the factors that most consistently predict whether or not violence will occur at a population level and explain its gendered patterns.

Gender-based violence is not caused or determined by any single factor, however as the number of relevant factors and their degree of influence increases, so does the probability of gender-based violence occurring. These factors are termed 'gendered drivers' because they arise from gender-discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices that together create environments in which women and men are not considered equal. When this occurs, both violence against women and expressions of gender inequality are more likely to occur, be tolerated, and even condoned.

The drivers of gender-based violence appear in distinct ways within ECEC settings.

GENDERED DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Driver 1.

Condoning of violence against women

Driver 2.

Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence

Driver 3.

Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

Driver 4.

Men disrespecting women to bond with other men



ESSENTIAL ACTION 1.

Challenge the condoning of violence against women

ESSENTIAL ACTION 2.

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

ESSENTIAL ACTION 3.

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

ESSENTIAL ACTION 4.

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

ESSENTIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE GENDERED DRIVERS

Drivers of gender-based violence

Below are some examples of the ways each driver may appear in ECEC settings followed by the essential actions which can be taken to prevent them.

DRIVER 1:

Condoning of violence against women.

These are attitudes, words, and actions that trivialise, make light of, or justify gender-based violence.



In ECEC settings this can look like:

- Excusing boys' aggressive behaviour by saying 'boys will be boys'.
- If a boy hurts a girl, saying it is because 'he likes you'.
- If a girl reports being hurt, telling them not to be 'a dibber dobber' or 'tattletale'.
- If a boy reports being hurt, telling them to 'toughen up' or not cry.
- A lack of response for Children's use of aggressive or violent behaviour or downplaying this behaviour by telling children to ignore or 'brush off' aggressive behaviour.
- Using common sayings like 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me', which suggests that non-physical violence such as name calling is not as serious as physical violence. This suggests that children should not be affected by non-physical violence and should just 'get over it'.
- ECEC educators exhibiting aggressive behaviour such as yelling, physical discipline, or threats both to children and co-workers, modelling that this is acceptable behaviour to children. In the ECE education university classroom setting this can look like:
 - Attitudes in the classroom that suggest some women deserve violence or disrespect depending on how they act, how they dress, or what they do.
 - Normalising beliefs that it is ok to yell at, threaten, or physically discipline children.
 - Normalising boys as aggressive, violent, and naturally more likely to use physical/ violent play, suggesting boys using violence or being aggressive is normal and acceptable.
 - Inadequate consequences or response for students or staff who perpetrate abuse or harassment.

DRIVER 2:**Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.**

When men control decision-making and resources in the home, workplace, or community, they have an opportunity to abuse power, while women have less power to stop it, call it out or leave.

**In ECEC settings this can look like:**

- Men working in ECEC settings taking on most leadership roles despite a largely female workforce. For example, this could look like men in senior management or decision-making roles, or roles with higher responsibility, with mostly women employed to work directly with children or being given less decision-making power. This can also include informal leadership or deferral to men in ECEC settings.
- ECEC settings being a mostly female dominated profession that also employs a large culturally diverse workforce, while also being a low-paid profession that is often undervalued and under resourced. ECEC educators deliver a critical service with a high level of skill and responsibility, but the average remuneration in this profession does not reflect the value and necessity of this work. This is an example of structural gender and racial inequality, which also contributes to financial limitations on women's independence and economic security over their lifetime.
- Visual representations of gender that mostly show men and boys in decision-making or leadership roles in society as well as in families and relationships.
- Including books or stories/songs that normalise fathers making all the decisions within the family and being the primary earner.
- Including books or stories/songs that present women as weak and always in need of male help. For example, story books that show the princesses being helpless and saved by the prince.
- Boys being allowed to dominate in group activities by talking over girls or being picked first because they are the loudest.
- Expecting mothers to be the point of contact for children. For example, calling the mother when a child is sick instead of sharing this expectation between parents of all genders.



In the ECE university education setting this can look like:

- Attitudes that mothers should do most of the childcare or domestic roles and fathers do professional work.
- Attitudes that men are the head of family households.
- Normalisation of the idea that men make better leaders.
- Lack of women and gender-diverse people in senior academic or teaching roles.



DRIVER 3:**Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.**

These are strict ideas about what women and men can and should do, which limit men's and women's choices.

When male dominance is normalised and rigid stereotypes and binary ideas about gender are enforced in society, communities and relationships, violence can be used to punish women, and gender diverse people, who don't meet expected roles.

**In ECE settings this can look like:**

- Encouraging or expecting children to play with resources and materials based on gender. For example, expecting girls to play with dolls, and expecting boys to play with toy trucks. Although it is not inherently wrong for children to play in gendered ways, messaging should reiterate that they should not be limited by them.
- Reinforcing gendered stereotypes through language. For example, predominantly using words like 'brave' or 'strong' for boys and 'kind' and 'sweet' for girls can subtly perpetuate rigid gender roles.
- Materials and resources that only represent children in gender normative roles. For example, boys going exploring or leading a group, while girls are shown playing house.
- Telling off, making comments, or drawing attention to children who are not following gender norms. For example, if a boy is wearing a fairy costume pointing out that this is unusual or wrong or asking why he isn't dressed in a 'boy' costume like a fire-fighter. Another example could be calling a girl a 'tom-boy' if she is engaging in activities like climbing trees or play fighting.
- Having different standards or expectations for children based on gender. For example, calling a girl bossy if she is leading a group, whereas if a boy is leading a group encouraging it as he is showing leadership.
- Perpetuating gender stereotypes in communications to parents. For example, assuming mothers will be more involved or are responsible for most of the child-caring rather than fathers. Or organising mothers' days during work hours, while fathers' day activities are organised before work (the assumption being that mothers are at home and fathers are at work).
- Assuming women go into ECEC professions instead of men and are naturally more suited to this work.
- Suggesting boys should not express emotion or vulnerability. For example, telling boys to be a 'big man', saying, 'boys don't cry', or telling boys to 'toughen up.'
- Inviting external guests and programs to ECE centers that are predominantly led by men. For example, inviting guests from sporting or fitness programs with only male presenters.



In the ECE university education setting this can look like:

- Perpetuating harmful or stereotypical gender norms within course content.
- Perpetuating or justifying gender-normative attitudes, such as boys need to be tough and not express emotions, or that girls naturally like playing with dolls and wearing pink.
- A lack of course content that critically analyses gender stereotypes and the adverse effects of gender stereotyping on children.



DRIVER 4:

Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

This is men disrespecting women to bond with other men.

When aggression and disrespect are seen as natural parts of being 'one of the boys', it is more likely violence towards women will be excused – by the perpetrator, their peers, and the community.



In ECEC settings this can look like:

- Failing to address boys' unsafe or inappropriate rough or aggressive play (particularly if the same behaviour would be addressed in girls).
- Normalising boys showing aggression and dominance by saying "it's just boys being boys."
- Shaming or dissuading boys from expressing their feelings beyond frustration and anger. For example, normalising boys being angry or getting frustrated but telling a boy not to cry. This limits boys' ability to process their feelings and reinforces the stereotype that boys should hide and suppress their emotions.
- Male ECEC educators being aggressive or dominating in ECEC spaces and modelling this behaviour to children.
- Male ECEC educators favouring other men in the workplace or sector (i.e. unconscious bias).
- Men in the ECEC profession excluding women from leadership or decision-making opportunities (formal and informal).



In the ECE university education setting this can look like:

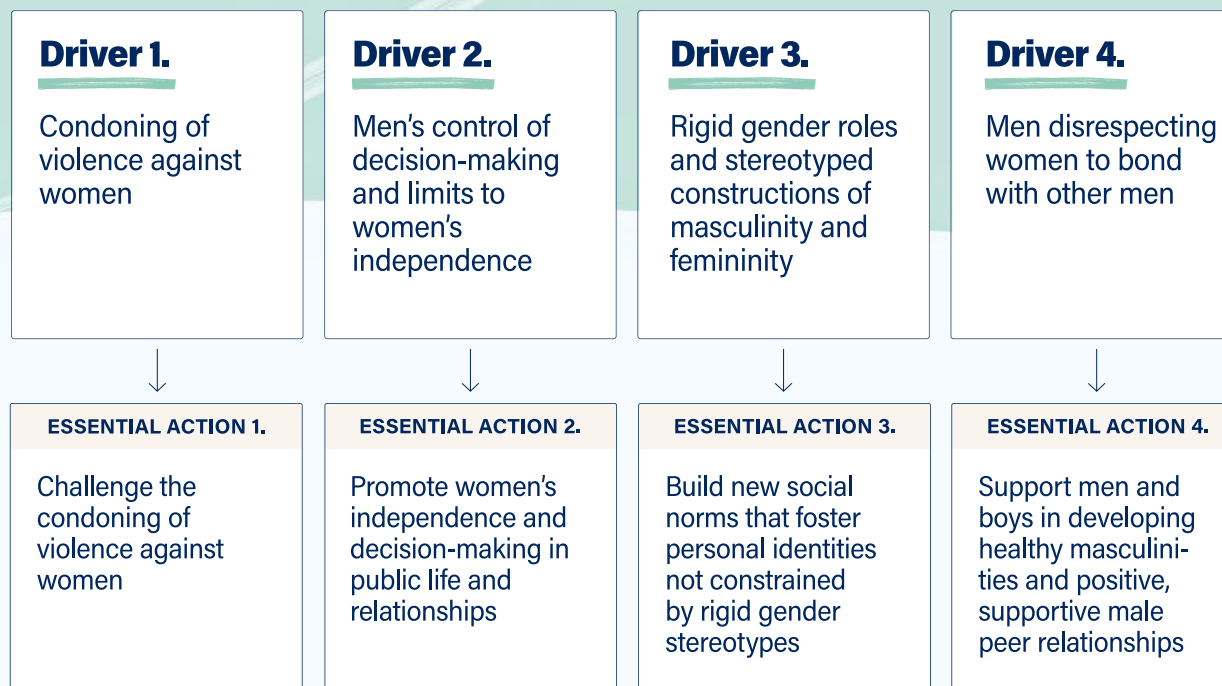
- Discussions or course content in university classroom settings that normalises men as naturally aggressive, dominant or unable to control their sexual desires.
- Male students talking over or being disrespectful to other students, particularly women or LGBTIQ+ people.
- Degrading and disrespectful comments about women and people within the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Male students dominating class discussion or group activities.

It should be noted that, when violence is exhibited by children there can be various causes and educators should approach children's aggression with curiosity, while also ensuring the safety of all children. For example, a boy demonstrating aggression could be enacting masculine stereotypes, practicing being a "strong person", copying behaviour witnessed in the home or that he may be experiencing himself. In addressing this driver, we are not suggesting boys should be punished for using violence, but rather that it should not be normalised or dismissed as a natural part of being a boy.

Essential actions to prevent gender-based violence

Each driver of gender-based violence has a corresponding essential action that works to prevent it from occurring. Below are some ways in which the essential actions may be taken within university ECE courses and ECEC settings.

GENDERED DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



ESSENTIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE GENDERED DRIVERS

ESSENTIAL ACTION:

Challenge condoning violence against women



In the ECEC context this can look like:

- Having age-appropriate responses in place for children who use violence (both physical and verbal) that communicate that this behaviour is not acceptable and offering alternative ways of dealing with strong emotions.
- Instead of responding to violence as normal or inevitable, questioning why it is occurring.
- Supporting safe and respectful 'rough and tumble' play, acknowledging it as an important part of children's development. For example, encouraging awareness of bodily rights and consent, and not assuming all boys like this kind of play and all girls don't.
- Not treating children of different genders differently for using violence. Violence is unacceptable no matter who is doing it.
- ECEC educators modelling that no one deserves violence through their interactions with the children they work with and the environments they create.
- ECEC educators not using language, clichés, or sayings that minimise or condone abuse or harassment.



In the ECE education university education setting this can look like:

- Promoting an understanding that no one deserves violence, and those who use violence do so because they choose to.
- Acknowledging that children's ideas about gender and social interaction are forming at a young age and promoting the importance of respectful relationships between children of all genders.
- Discussing age-appropriate ways of responding to children's use of violence in ECEC settings and supporting students to analyse potential gender-bias or victim-blaming attitudes.
- Challenging violence condoning attitudes in the university classroom.



This essential action corresponds with the following EYLF outcomes:

- **Outcome One**, that children have a strong sense of identity, and especially that children feel safe secure and supported, and that children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.¹²
- **Outcome Two**, that children are connected with and contribute to their world, especially that children become aware of fairness, by understanding expectations and the rights of others, recognise unfairness and bias, and become aware of the ways in which people are included or excluded from physical and social environments.¹³

ESSENTIAL ACTION:

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



In the ECEC setting this can look like:

- Ensuring there is positive role modelling for children, with women represented in leadership roles in books and visual materials.
- Ensuring books and all visual materials are representing diverse protagonists, including female protagonists and protagonists of colours and all abilities, and especially reflective of the children who are in the early childhood education setting.
- Gender equal leadership being modelled to children by ECEC educators, with all educators expected to take on the same tasks and responsibilities regardless of gender. Male ECEC educators modelling respectful behaviour to female educators and co-workers, and not automatically taking on leadership or decision-making roles without fair process or consideration.
- Greater value placed on feminised professions like ECEC through improved remuneration and conditions.



In the ECE university education setting this could look like:

- Discussing with students assumed gender roles, and how these impact on women's independence and leadership, and the effects of strict gender roles on children and families.
- Challenging gendered stereotypes about leadership that may arise in discussion in the classroom.
- Highlighting the importance of representation of women in leadership roles for children in ECEC settings, through books, visual materials, music, roleplay and what is modelled by ECEC educators.
- Encouraging students to challenge their own gender bias about who can be leaders and decision makers.
- Modelling women's leadership and decision-making in classroom structures and learning environments.



This essential action corresponds with following EYLF outcomes:

- **Outcome One**, that children have a strong sense of identity.¹⁴ This essential action corresponds with EYLF outcome one by supporting all children to feel confident to take on leadership roles, make decisions, and engage in activities regardless of gender.
- **Outcome Two**, that children are connected with and contribute to their world, especially that children become aware of fairness.¹⁵ This essential action corresponds with EYLF outcome two by promoting equal opportunity for children regardless of gender.

ESSENTIAL ACTION:

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



In the ECEC setting this can look like:

- Encouraging children to engage with all materials, resources, and play regardless of gender. For example, not directing children to certain types of play based on gender.
- Using gender neutral and strength-based language. For example, using language which focuses on individual strengths rather than gender. This could look like saying 'You were really brave to try a new activity' instead of 'You're such a brave boy' or saying, 'That was very kind of you to share' instead of 'What a sweet girl.'
- Challenging gender norms through stories, visual materials, games, and role play, that show all children engaging in activities equally regardless of gender. For example, including books that depicts girls being leaders and going on adventures, or books that show fathers taking care of children and mothers working as doctors and scientists. We do not need to get rid of representation of men being leaders and having careers, instead we want equal representation, so all children feel they have equal opportunity to be what they want.
- Including books, visual materials, and stories, that challenge the gender binary and represent children with a diverse range of gender identities, children from diverse families including LGBTIQ+ families.
- Exploring children's ideas of gender through prompts. For example, educators may ask children to draw their own families and then discuss with the group all the different things parents can do regardless of gender.
- Building awareness of gendered dynamics in the ECEC setting. For example, are girls being spoken over or being dominated by boys in the classroom or playground. If so, facilitating classes so all children get a chance to speak and engage in activities, and helping children to respectfully negotiate play spaces.
- Creating work environments where ECEC educators feel comfortable to express their own gender identity and model gender diversity to children. For example, ECEC centres asking educators what their preferred gender pronouns are and using these pronouns when referring to them, and supporting ECEC educators to dress in ways that are professional but allow them to express their gender identity (for example, a male ECEC educator wearing their long hair in a braid).
- Having the same expectations of all ECEC educators, regardless of gender. For example, being conscious of not assigning food preparation always to the female educators.
- ECEC centres asking parents and caregivers who the primary contact for children is rather than assuming it will be the child's mother.
- Encouraging and fostering confidence in children in ways that challenge stereotypes. For example, encouraging girls to explore and be adventurous in the same way boys are encouraged.
- Giving value to stereotypically feminised characteristics such as care, emotional expression and collaboration for all children.
- Equally valuing parents for care work, regardless of gender.
- Encouraging all children to safely express their emotions regardless of gender.
- Avoiding using gender as a category to separate children, for example with organising group activities. This de-emphasises gender as a point of division and fosters cooperation between children of all genders, while being inclusive of all genders.



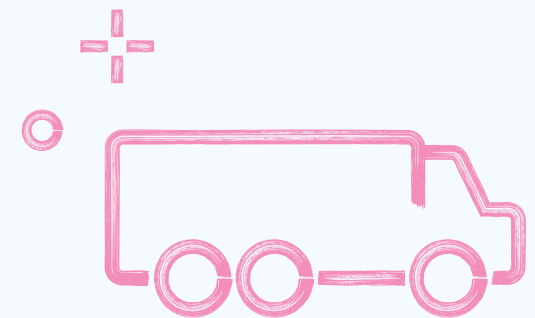
In the ECE university education setting this can look like:

- Challenging gender stereotypes and strict ideas about gender in the university classroom.
- Explore gender stereotyping and its negative effects on children with university ECE students.
- Emphasising the importance of equal opportunity for all children regardless of gender, and how equal opportunity can be created for all children in ECEC settings.
- Supporting students to reflect on their own experiences of, and ideas about gender, and interrogate any gender biases they may hold and bring into ECEC settings.
- Supporting students to reflect on the importance of challenging gender stereotypes and its relevance to ECEC settings.
- Ensuring course content is not perpetuating gender stereotypes.
- Creating course content that critically engages with concepts of gender and child development.
- ECE educators and teams engaging in continued work to reflect on unconscious bias, and professional development regarding gender bias.



This essential action corresponds with the following EYLF outcomes:

- **Outcome One**, that children have a strong sense of identity.¹⁶ This essential action corresponds to EYLF outcome one by supporting children to foster personal identities not constrained by gender stereotypes.
- **Outcome Two**, that children are confident and involved learners.¹⁷ This essential action corresponds to EYLF outcome two by not limiting what resources and materials children use and engage with based on gender.



ESSENTIAL ACTION:

Support men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships



In ECEC settings this can look like:

- Fostering a culture of respectful relationships amongst all children.
- Encouraging boys to express emotions in positive ways. For example, crying can be a positive way to express feelings as it offers emotional release without hurting others. Rather than telling boys not to cry we can validate their feelings and help them identify why they are upset, allowing them to connect with and understand their feelings.
- Promoting and sharing books and stories that show men and boys doing all sorts of activities and jobs, including things that are stereotypically 'feminine'. For example, *My Shadow is Pink*, by Scott Stuart explores gender identity and the male protagonist's love of princesses and fairies, while *Some Boys* by Nelly Thomas and Sarah Dunk, challenges stereotypes about what children can like based on gender.
- Showcasing examples of men who embody diverse forms of masculinity, such as nurturing fathers, emotional leaders or team players.
- ECEC educators promoting positive aspects of male identity and male peer relations. This could look like male ECEC educators helping children to talk about their feelings, showing caring and empathetic behaviour, showing respect to their colleagues of all genders, as well as calling out disrespectful behaviour when they see it.
- Encouraging boys to play with materials and resources they choose and emphasising child-led play.
- Inviting male carers into early childhood settings, including male educators and parents and care givers.



In the ECE university education setting this can look like:

- Encouraging an inclusive classroom culture where everyone feels safe to express opinions and challenge one another respectfully.
- Facilitating discussions and activities in ways that allow opportunities to contribute.
- Having responses in place if comments are made that are degrading or disrespectful.
- Challenging ideas that boys are naturally more aggressive and dominant, and discussing the importance of promoting positive aspects of male identity for boys and their health outcomes.
- Normalising diverse forms of masculinity that challenge male dominance and control.



This essential action corresponds to the following EYLF outcomes:

- **Outcome One**, that children have a strong sense of identity.¹⁸ This essential action corresponds to EYLF outcome one by allowing all children to explore their gender without being confined by rigid gender stereotypes or restrictive forms of masculinity.
- **Outcome Three**, that children have a strong sense of wellbeing, especially that children become strong in their social, emotional, and mental wellbeing.¹⁹ This essential action corresponds to EYLF outcome three by supporting all children to explore and express their emotions regardless of gender.



For more information and resources on men and masculinities, see the [**Men in Focus**](#) resources on the Our Watch website.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Drivers and essential actions

Can you think of examples of the drivers of gender-based violence that you may have noticed in your own professional practice in ECEC settings or teaching in ECE at universities?

What messages about gender or equality have you noticed being shared with children in ECEC settings?

What messages about respectful relationships have you noticed being shared with children in ECEC settings?

How is gender spoken about in your course content? Is it mentioned? How might you begin to include it and facilitate critical analysis?

How have you challenged gender stereotypes in your own life or professional practice? Are there ways you would like to do this in the future?

What small, actionable changes could you make tomorrow to promote gender equity in your teaching?

Are there unconscious biases you've become aware of in your teaching practice? How have you worked to overcome them?

ADD YOUR THOUGHTS AND NOTES HERE

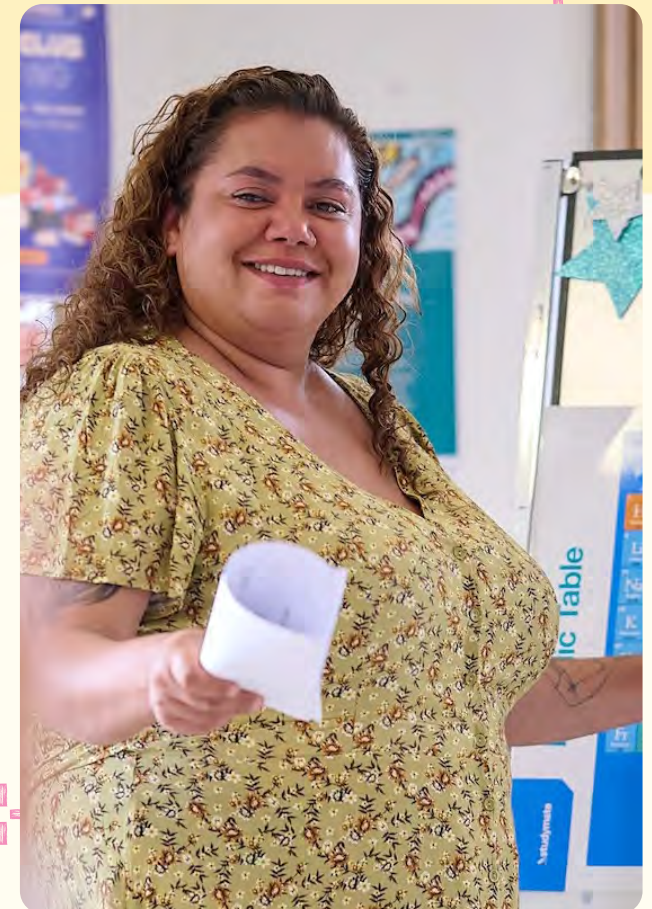


Addressing the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is driven by the ongoing impacts of colonisation, alongside gender inequality. To prevent this violence, we must take action that addresses these drivers. This includes actions that can be taken with ECE university curriculum and teaching practice, as well as in ECEC settings.

Changing the picture, a national resource to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, identifies 'improving policy and practice to better support and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge, languages and perspectives, in diverse contexts and settings, including in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations' as a key action to address drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge, languages, and perspectives can be brought into ECE university curriculum and ECEC settings by learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC educators, community leaders and visitors. ECEC educators also incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander story telling, music, songs and art. This works to introduce children in early years settings to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, creating a culture of respect and appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, and families and children. This also helps to create culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in ECEC settings, as well as helping to address the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.



Essential actions to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women include:

ACTION 1

Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.

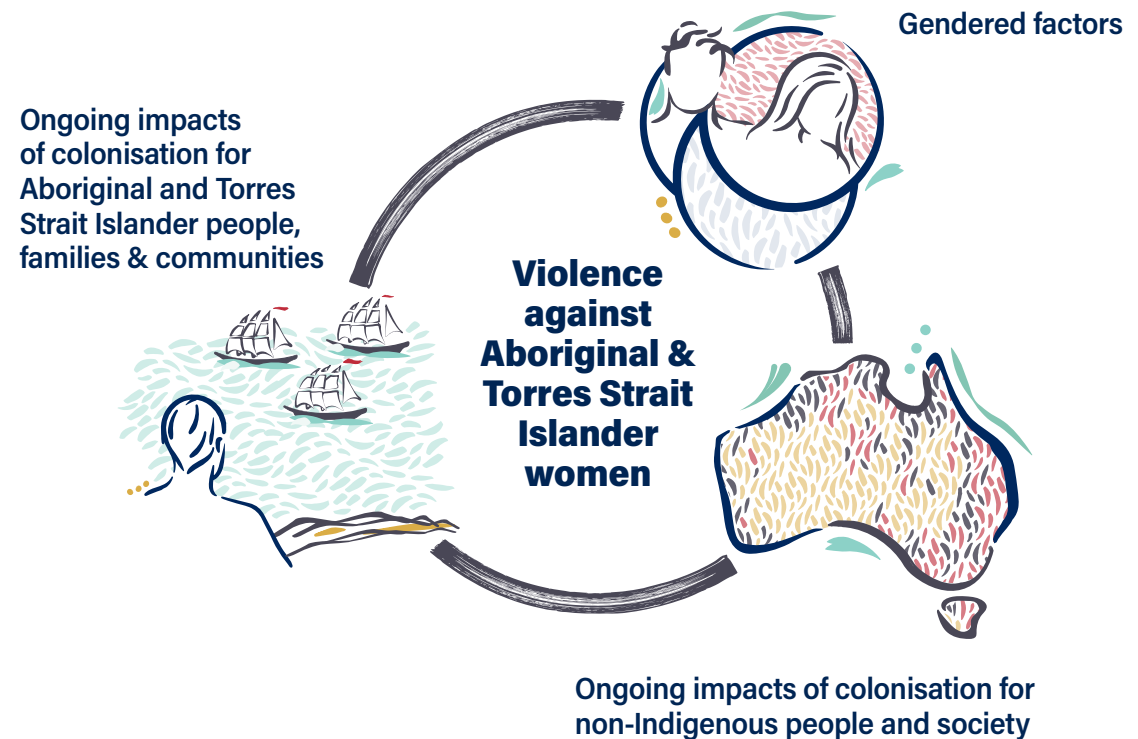
ACTION 2

Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people, and across Australian society.

ACTION 3

Address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN





Taking these actions within ECEC settings can look like:

- Implementing policies and procedures in line with anti-discrimination law to prevent and actively and appropriately respond to racism and discrimination within ECEC settings.
- Providing cultural competency training for ECEC educators.
- Including books, music/songs, images and videos from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within ECEC spaces.
- Ensuring that all learning/educational materials and resources such as books, toys and images are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Encouraging local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and Elders to visit and share culture and knowledge at ECEC spaces and settings.
- Listening to and taking on board the suggestions and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC educators and visitors.
- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC educators to bring cultural knowledge and expertise into ECEC workplaces.
- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's promotion into decision-making and leadership roles within ECEC workplaces.



Taking these actions within the ECE university settings can look like:

- Including readings and resources from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, academics and lecturers/educators within curriculum.
- Creating a culturally safe and respectful space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the classroom and discussions with students.
- Exploring with students how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge, languages and perspectives can be included into their roles within ECEC settings and the importance and value of doing this.
- Ensuring culturally safe and supportive mechanisms are in place for students and staff to report and resolve incidents of racism and discrimination.
- Engaging with culturally appropriate and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community led organisations and resources to develop guidance on challenging racism and the condoning of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Building awareness of university anti-discrimination policies and applicable legislation within the classroom environment to build a culture of 'no tolerance' to racism and sexism.

For a more comprehensive overview of the essential actions for the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women please refer to [***Changing the picture.***](#)

Addressing the drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities

The only way to reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls with disabilities is to take a primary prevention approach that addresses the underlying drivers of this violence.

ABLEIST DRIVERS AND ESSENTIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

A robust approach to prevention requires multiple, long-term, mutually reinforcing strategies to combat both gender and disability inequality and to address other intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression. This includes work within ECEC settings that addresses the impacts of ableism and creates equal opportunities for all children.

Changing the landscape, a national resource for the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities, identifies the essential actions that must be taken to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities.

Driver 1.

Negative stereotypes about people with disabilities

Driver 2.

Accepting or normalising violence, disrespect and discrimination against people with disabilities

Driver 3.

Controlling people with disabilities' decision-making and limiting independence

Driver 4.

Social segregation and exclusion of people with disabilities

ESSENTIAL ACTION 1

Address the underlying social context that gives rise to violence against women and girls with disabilities

ESSENTIAL ACTION 2

Challenge the acceptance and normalisation of violence against women and girls with disabilities

ESSENTIAL ACTION 3

Improve attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities by challenging ableist and sexist stereotypes

ESSENTIAL ACTION 4

Promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of life

ESSENTIAL ACTION 5

Promote women and girls with disabilities' independence, agency and participation in leadership and decision-making

ESSENTIAL ACTION 6

Engage men and boys to challenge controlling, dominant and aggressive forms of masculinity



Taking these actions within ECEC settings can look like:

- Countering the development of sexist and ableist ideas in children and promoting human rights, respect, and gender and disability inclusion in ECEC settings.
- Including positive representation of people with disabilities within stories, visual materials, videos and role play in ECEC settings.
- ECEC educators modelling inclusive practice and ensuring ableist attitudes and stereotypes are not reinforced through teaching practice or behaviour.
- Inviting people with disabilities to visit ECEC centres and present to children.
- Supporting ECEC educators with disabilities through accessible ECEC spaces, anti-discrimination policies and conversations with ECEC educators with disabilities about how they can best be supported.
- Supporting children with disabilities with accessible ECEC centres, playgrounds, and approaches to learning.
- Challenging negative stereotypes about the capacity of women with disabilities to be effective parents and provide support that enables people with disabilities to fulfil the parental and caring roles of their choice.
- Enabling young people with and without disabilities to learn and work alongside each other, as an effective way to dispel stereotypes, address discriminatory attitudes and build respect and understanding.
- Promoting disability pride, equality and visibility, and actively recognise the contributions of women and girls with disabilities to society.
- Ensuring that all learning environments and teaching approaches support students to participate fully and that mainstream, and specialist education providers offer reasonable adjustments and supports to students with disabilities.



Within the ECE university setting this can look like:

- Challenging sexist and ableist attitudes in the ECE university classroom.
- Challenging negative stereotypes about children and parents with disabilities that may arise in the classroom. For example, challenging attitudes which suggest that children's accessibility requirements or adjustments are burdensome or too time consuming for educators. A way to challenge this is to emphasise that all children's have a right to access and participate in the setting equitably.
- Including content in curriculum about how to support children with disabilities.
- Including the voices and perspectives of people with disabilities in ECE course curriculum.
- Helping ECE university students reflect and challenge any internal bias they may hold against people and children with disabilities.
- Supporting ECE university students with disabilities to succeed in their studies and enter the ECEC workforce.



These actions to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with disabilities, correspond to following EYLF outcomes:

- **Outcome Two**, that children are connected with and contribute to their world, especially that children respond to diversity with respect.²⁰
- **Outcome Three**, that children have a strong sense of wellbeing, especially that children become strong in their social, emotional, and mental wellbeing.²¹ These actions correlate with EYLF outcome three by acknowledging each child's social and cultural identity, and supporting all children's safety and wellbeing including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as the safety and wellbeing of children with disabilities.²²

For a more comprehensive overview of the essential actions for the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities please refer to [***Changing the landscape.***](#)



Curriculum mapping

Ensuring ECE university curriculum includes prevention of gender-based violence frameworks.

By including prevention of gender-based violence content into ECE university course curriculum, ECE academics ensure that ECE students enter their prospective workplaces and careers with essential prevention skills and knowledge.

The process of mapping prevention across course curriculum involves identifying current practice and gaps within ECE curriculum and then integrating primary prevention core capabilities and learning materials into curriculum.

The learning material provided is broken down into threshold concepts that are described below. The integration of this content across the lifespan of ECE students' curriculum ensures they have the skills and knowledge to incorporate the prevention of gender-based violence frameworks in their professional practice.

Prevention approaches require an awareness of gender theory and intersectionality, that is, how gender intersects with other forms of discrimination and oppression such as colonialism, racism, ableism, homophobia and heteronormativity and ageism. It also requires an understanding of the drivers of gender-based violence and the essential actions that can be taken to prevent it.

The mapping process involves three steps. Working through these steps does not need to be linear and will vary depending on the specific context.

The threshold concepts

The threshold concepts, which are detailed below with prompting questions, include:

- ⇒ **Gender, Sexual Identity and Systems of Power, Privilege and Oppression**
- ⇒ **Intersectionality and Gender Equality**
- ⇒ **Addressing Gender Based Violence**

Steps to mapping the curriculum

STEP 1:

Where are the **threshold concepts for learning** already being delivered, or present and active in the curriculum?

This step involves identifying within the key units/subjects:

- where the threshold concepts on gender and intersectionality are already delivered
- where else the threshold concepts on the prevention of gender-based violence present but could be strengthened or expanded upon. For example, as extended content in subjects/units that already address gender theories and intersectionality, or as a case study in a workshop or tutorial.

STEP 2:

Where are the **gaps and opportunities** to embed the specific content on the prevention of gender-based violence?

It is recommended that:

- ✓ the threshold concepts are included across curriculum and over the life of the degree, and not only as a standalone subject or unit
- ✓ the material be delivered in a range of forms, for example, as lecture content, required reading, digital content, tutorial exercises and assessments
- ✓ the material be embedded in core units, tailored for elective units and fit the specificities of your course or degree.

STEP 3:

Environmental scan

This stage prepares the academics who are teaching a unit, for delivery of the content, including self-reflection, establishing a safe environment and identifying support services. If delivering this type of material, academics may find students or colleagues disclose lived experience of violence, possibly for the first time. It is important for educators to know what specialists supports and services are available both within their institutions and in the community, to refer appropriately.

Primary prevention core capabilities: skills

The mapping process aims to ensure students are equipped with the required skills to implement primary prevention of gender-based violence into their professional roles within their working environments.



These skills include the ability to:

- ✓ Locate and **identify own bias/beliefs/values and assumptions** relating to key knowledge areas (threshold concepts).
- ✓ Increase capacity to engage in **self-reflection** relating to key knowledge areas.
- ✓ **Identify the drivers of gender-based violence** within the profession and what essential actions can be taken to contribute to countering the impact of these drivers.
- ✓ **Identify systemic and structural forms of discrimination and abuse** that influence how gender inequality and gender-based violence are experienced differently by different groups of women and girls.
- ✓ **Apply an intersectional lens** to work with individuals and communities.
- ✓ **Identify and call** out sexism, harmful gender norms/stereotypes/violence-supporting behaviours and gender inequality in their professional role.
- ✓ Identify opportunities to further **integrate primary prevention** of gender-based violence principles into their professional role.
- ✓ Understand, prepare for and respond to **resistance and backlash** when working towards social and behavioural change.

Threshold concepts

Threshold concepts describe and inform ways of thinking, seeing and knowing that characterise a specific discipline. In this case, threshold concepts relate to ways of understanding and thinking about the primary prevention of gender-based violence, that is, the structures, norms, attitudes, practices and power imbalances that drive this violence, and how to prevent it from happening in the first place.

These threshold concept materials are designed to support effective teaching and learning content and are based on longer-form evidence-based frameworks developed by Our Watch:

- *Change the story*
- *Changing the picture*
- *Changing the landscape*
- *Men in focus evidence review and practice guide.*

The process of embedding the threshold concepts will:

- ☑ Occur across the life of the course/ degree, providing a scaffold that supports sequential introduction of concepts across the duration of the degree.
- ☑ Occur in those subjects deemed to have most relevance.
- ☑ Focus on incorporating content into existing subjects – it is not about creating new subjects or completely changing the curriculum.
- ☑ Promote gender equality and prevention knowledge and skills amongst students, staff and within the university environment.
- ☑ Be informed and aligned to the evidence base and essential actions to prevent gender-based violence.

Following are summaries of the main threshold concepts and some prompting questions to support mapping these concepts to subjects within the curriculum.

The threshold concepts can be considered individually and can overlap.

This section can be used as a workbook by teaching and academic staff to reflect on the prompting questions. The questions can also be adapted for teaching content with students to build understanding of the threshold concepts. The questions are asked in various ways to support those who are new to this work and to address conscious and unconscious gendered bias.

THRESHOLD CONCEPT 1

Gender, Sexual Identity and Systems of Power, Privilege and Oppression

Gender is a social and cultural concept, which often involves sets of expectations, roles, identities, activities, expressions, attributes and behaviours that society considers appropriate for those assigned as women and girls, men and boys.

These gendered expectations are perpetuated by gender norms, practices, structures, stereotypes and myths. It's important to note that these gendered norms and expectations change over time and across cultures.

For example, young girls may be given dolls to play with as this is associated with the gendered role of caregiving, while boys may be given trains or materials associated with the stereotypically masculine roles like fighting, figuring out problems or driving heavy machinery. This is one example of the ways gender norms may be socially constructed for children at a young age.

In ECEC education settings male educators may be expected to take up leadership or physical-based activities, while female educators may be overlooked for these roles, despite the experience and skill they may have, due to gendered expectations and stereotypes.

Can you think of other ways that roles, activities, attributes and behaviours are attributed to children depending on their gender?

ADD YOUR ANSWERS HERE

Gender norms are given value and are hierarchical.

They affect all of us, men and women and non-binary people, but are particularly harmful to women, because 'feminine' norms are ascribed lower social status than 'masculine' ones which sends the message that women have lower social value, are less worthy of respect and are more often targets of gendered violence. For example, a girl might be called a 'tomboy' which is a positive or neutral phrase when it is associated with masculinity but can also be used negatively towards girls who do not fit into binary gender roles. Conversely, a boy might be called a 'sissy' or told 'not to be a girl' which are used negatively as they are associated with being feminine.

Can you think of other ways in which gender norms are given value and are hierarchical? What attributes are valued in society and are these gendered in particular ways?

ADD YOUR ANSWERS HERE

Gender norms are usually binary and heteronormative.

This means that gender norms subscribe to strict and separate ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman, and position sexual and romantic relationships between men and women as the norm while excluding non-binary and transgender identities, as well as gay, lesbian and other sexual orientations and relationship structures.

Gender norms and binary heteronormative understandings of gender and sexual orientation work to punish, exclude or discriminate against those who do not fit within the dominant norms and stereotypes. For example, strict gender norms tell us that boys should not cry or wear dresses and may be punished or shamed if they do so, while girls should be quiet and gentle and may be punished or shamed if they are too loud or engage in rough play.

Heteronormativity can also be perpetuated within ECEC settings and ECE university curriculum by a lack of representation of diverse family structures and identities. ECEC educators can find ways to counteract heteronormativity, for example, by including books that represent families with two mums or two dads and communications to families which do not assume children have only two parents who are a mother and a father and instead are inclusive of all family structures.

Can you think of other gender norms you may have noticed and the ways they are enforced especially within ECEC settings?

ADD YOUR ANSWERS HERE



Gender inequality is present not only in individual experiences and interpersonal relationships, but also at a systemic and structural level. This is broadly defined as 'patriarchy'.

Patriarchy is a social system that positions men to hold primary power and privilege across roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of resources. Patriarchy also prioritises dominant forms of masculinity, as in the 'traditional man' in structures, systems and norms. For example, 'logical' is seen as a masculine trait and superior to 'emotional', which is seen as more feminine trait.

Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, religious and economic institutions across a range of different cultures and results in women's experiences of oppression and discrimination at an individual and systemic level.

For example, in the ECEC context, patriarchy may be apparent when male ECEC professionals are elevated to leadership positions in place of equally or more qualified women, or when there is disproportionate representation of male leadership despite the ECEC profession having a majority female workforce.

Another example of patriarchy within ECEC settings could be learning materials and resources that normalise men in leadership and decision-making roles, while women are represented as only suited to caregiving roles.



PROMPTING QUESTIONS

Prompting questions to explore the inclusion of **Gender, Sexual Identity and Systems of Power, Privilege and Oppression** in course content:

- Is there content on what gender is and how gender stereotypes effect children?
- Does the course discuss how gender-norms can be challenged and positive personal gender identities can be fostered in the early years?
- Is there a gender bias (explicit or implicit) within the course content, texts, teaching practice and assessments? Does the course content perpetrate harmful stereotypes about boys and girls?
- Does the course include a mix of content from men/women, straight/gay/ non-binary writers or viewpoints?
- Is the existence of gender diversity acknowledged and explained in the course?
- Does course content assume all children are the same and receive the same treatment? Does the course discuss how children's experiences can differ depending on their gender, race, class, ability and socio-economic background?
- Does content consider gender bias and are students asked to reflect on their gender bias?
- Is there introductory content on family structures and how to be inclusive of these families in ECEC settings? For example, is there content on creating inclusive spaces for LGBTIQA+ families?
- Does course content assume children always have a male and female parent or is it inclusive and representative of diverse family structures?
- Do any residual gender stereotypes show up in the course material?
- Does course content assume roles for mothers and different roles for fathers? For example, does content assume mothers are in predominantly caring roles while fathers are the main income earners and do less or no caregiving?
- Is the language used in the content, lectures and set readings inclusive of all genders?
- Does the course content include a reflection of gender inequality at a systemic or structural level?
- How could the course content better promote gender equality for all, including the benefits to men and boys?
- Does the course content promote healthy masculinities and positive supportive relationships between children of all genders?



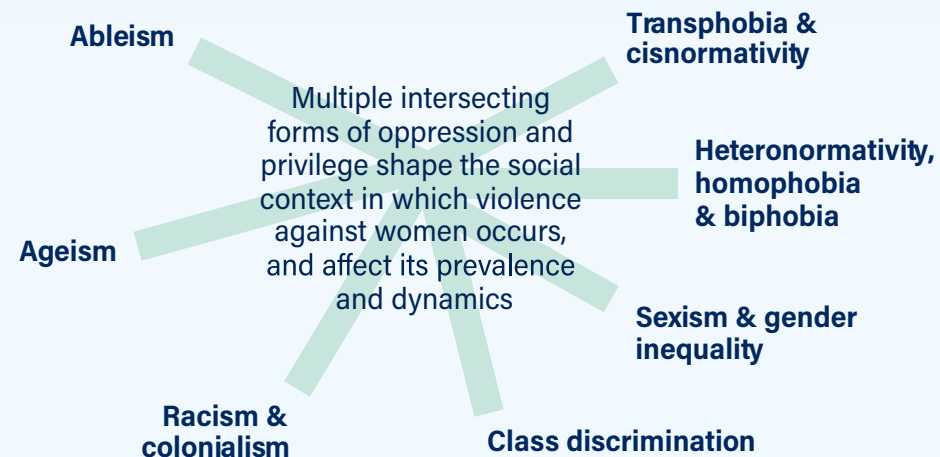
THRESHOLD CONCEPT 2

Intersectionality and Gender Equality

Gender inequality intersects with other forms of inequality (e.g. racism, colonialism, ableism, heteronormativity, homophobia, ageism) to create additional and compounding disadvantage or oppression at individual, community, organisational, system, institutional and societal levels. This results in disproportionate and different experience and rates of violence for some women.

Intersectionality seeks to understand the different ways people experience oppression, discrimination, privilege and power, and the systems, structures and norms that support it.

INTERSECTIONALITY



Intersectionality promotes reflective practice around ideas, unconscious bias, assumptions and experiences of identity, gender, power, discrimination, privilege and violence against women and children so that actions taken to address it will benefit everyone.

An effective intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women is one that not only takes account of the diversity of people's experiences and identities, but that explicitly seeks to address the multiple intersecting systems of oppression and discrimination, power and privilege that shape the social context in which this violence occurs.

For example, in ECEC settings an intersectional approach could look like learning resources and materials which reflect the diversity and lived experience of the communities, families and children within the setting.

An intersectional approach within ECEC could also look like ECEC professionals building awareness of privilege and power dynamics in the ECE setting, amongst both children and educators. For example, are there children or educators with disabilities, or who are from low socio-economic backgrounds? Are there Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and educators, and are they being supported to engage equally in the setting, and experience equal treatment and respect.

PROMPTING QUESTIONS

- Is the general concept of intersectionality (even if a different term is used) explained in the content of this course?
- Is intersectionality discussed in relation to the different experiences and treatment of children due to bias or discrimination?
- Are the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, immigrant and refugee children, gender non-conforming children, and children from regional, rural and remote communities explored and considered?
- Are there readings, other material and guest speakers with lived experience or expertise to deliver material or content related to their community? E.g. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person/author delivering the material on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander content? Member of LGBTIQ+ material delivering on issues and violence impacting those in the LGBTIQ+ community?
- Is there a range of representation in this topic/text/lesson? (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a disability, range of ages, body types, cultural and social groups, LGBTIQ+ people?)
- Thinking about the above, whose experience is missing or silenced, made invisible or excluded?
- Is there content covered on the ways children experience intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination? For example, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls may experience instances of racism as well as gender stereotyping (due to the ongoing effects of colonisation and racism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls face racial prejudice which is not faced by non-Indigenous girls, which may result in harsher treatment or discrimination by other children and ECEC educators unless unconscious bias or racism is addressed and challenged).
- Is there content on creating inclusive spaces and the importance of diverse representation in ECEC spaces? For example, the importance of dolls, play materials, story books, songs and visual materials inclusive of cultural diversity and respectfully inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of children and families who are part of the ECEC service.
- Does course content support or challenge myths and stereotypes about women, men, people, children from various cultures and communities, abilities and backgrounds?
- Does the content include discussion of other forms of discrimination beyond gender discrimination, either implicitly and/or explicitly (e.g. racism, colonisation, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, classism)?
- Have you audited the readings to ensure they are not discriminatory?
- Is the content culturally safe for students from a full range of social, cultural or religious or domestic/international backgrounds?
- Does the content explore what safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions look like?

THRESHOLD CONCEPT 3

Addressing Gender-Based Violence

The evidence demonstrates that gender inequality drives higher levels of men's violence against women. Gender inequality is the social context in which violence against women occurs and is key to understanding what drives this violence.

Gender inequality is expressed at all levels of the socio ecological model and the four gendered drivers below (outlined in *Change the story*) are the strongest predictors of violence against women and help to explain its gendered pattern:

- 1.** Condoning of violence against women (justifying, excusing, trivialising, dismissing or victim-blaming).
- 2.** Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and in private life.
- 3.** Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
- 4.** Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

PROMPTING QUESTIONS

- Is there content on each of the drivers, how they link to ECEC settings and how they can be addressed in those settings? (See section one of this resource for guidance on the drivers and how they link to ECEC settings.)
- Is primary prevention of gender-based violence articulated in course content, and is it contextualised within ECEC settings?
- Does the content make clear the link between gender inequality and gender-based violence, and how this can show up in ECEC settings?
- Is there content on fostering respectful relationships between children of all genders?
- Is there content on the ways in which children learn about gender and how to counteract harmful gendered stereotypes?
- Is there content that promotes positive personal identities?
- Are there up-to-date statistics, facts and types of gender-based violence included in course content?
- Do the statistics and facts include violence experienced by communities that face forms of discrimination including racism, ableism, colonisation, homophobia and transphobia (i.e. taking an intersectional approach)?
- Is creating safe and inclusive spaces covered in course content?
- Does the course content cover age-appropriate concepts of consent, body safety and respectful relationships that reflect the current evidence and links to relevant curriculum (e.g. Respect Matters F-10 curriculum)?

Environmental scan for the delivery of curriculum

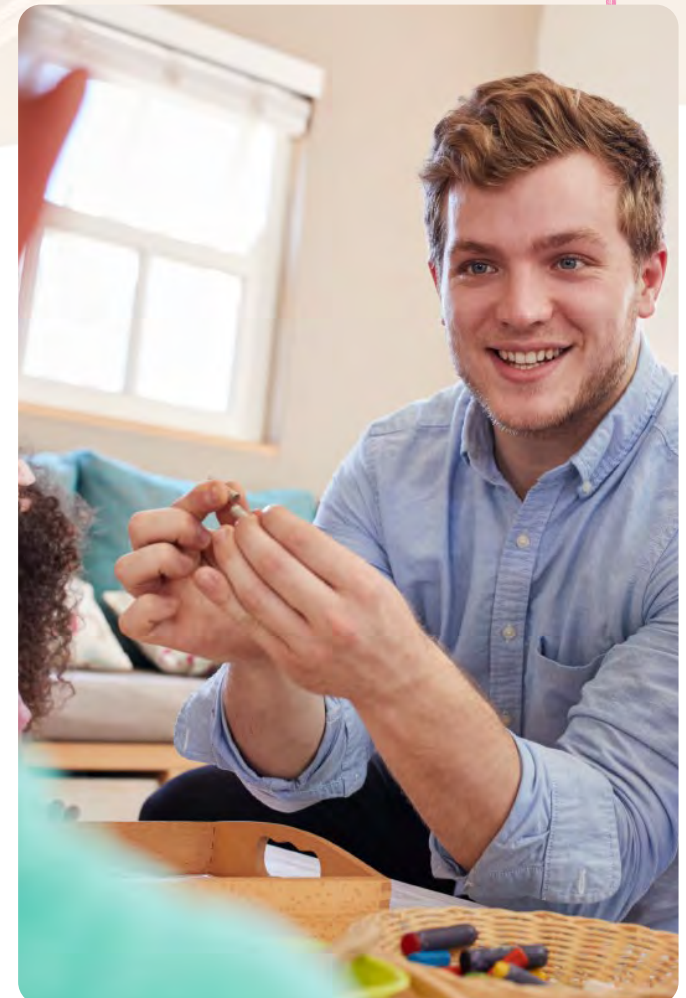
In order to deliver content on gender-based violence there are a few things teaching and learning staff should consider:

My own critical reflection

QUESTIONS

- How does my positionality, for example my race, class, ability, nationality, cultural background, age and gender, affect the way I think about early childhood education? Does my positionality impact my experience in certain settings (e.g. ECEC settings)? What other positionalities or experiences could I be more aware of?
- How might your experiences or positionality impact what content you teach or relate to more, or less? What might you need to be more aware of when engaging with your students, colleagues or professional networks?
- What are my own views, assumptions and prejudices, and how do I avoid bringing them into groups? Consider these particularly in regard to gender, gender roles, gender-based violence, domestic and family violence, race, ability and class. How might they impact the way I work with students, parents or children? How can I unpack these and interrogate where they come from?

For example, a white woman may have experiences of gender discrimination in the workplace but may not have experiences of racism. This means she may be unaware of the compounding or different experiences of gender and racial discrimination that a woman of colour might experience and may need to take extra care to learn about their experiences and needs.



Creating a 'safe' space

In teaching content on primary prevention, it is important to consider how you are supporting and facilitating a 'safe' space for all, as well as being prepared for responding to resistance and backlash, and responding to disclosures of gender-based violence.

Some things which enable the creation of spaces which are conducive to learning and participation about the prevention of gender-based violence and preparing for and responding to resistance and backlash include:

1. Check that there is a group agreement in place to guide respectful behaviour and communication within the class - if so, remember to use it.

If not, engage students in developing a set of agreements which can be reiterated at the start of each session to ensure respectful engagement. It can be helpful to remind students of the group agreement if needed. Group agreements can include not judging or guessing at why people may need time out or may not want to speak about gender-based violence. You can encourage students to consider their needs when participating in these discussions and what they can do to look after themselves and each other.

2. Consider that some people might be triggered by certain content and how this might impact their learning and wellbeing.

For example, reiterate that the statistics tell us that many people have experiences of gender-based violence and for this reason, this content is often difficult to talk about. Then provide details of support services both within the university and in the community that people can refer to for further support. Group agreements can also support ensuring confidentiality and a respectful supportive space.

3. Consider the timing of your content delivery and inform students of the content ahead of delivery.

For example, avoid presenting gender-based violence content on a Friday afternoon, as students may leave feeling triggered or distressed, and there may not be time to follow up with them. If the session is online, prioritise the student's online safety. Inform them a day in advance about the session's content and advise them to wear headphones and join from a private environment where others cannot view or overhear the material.

4. Promote inclusion and 'deep listening,' encouraging all students to have the opportunity to speak or participate rather than one or a few persons dominating conversations.

This can also be mentioned in the group agreement, asking students to consider how they are making space for one another's ideas and respectfully engaging in discussion.

5. Address students' concerns by validating and addressing concerns rather than contesting or contradicting, even when you disagree.

If safe to do so, respond by repeating their question or statement back to them, to confirm you understand correctly. Encourage them to provide more information – but be mindful of time.

6. Sometimes it will be necessary to challenge ideas that are harmful.

Encourage the challenging of ideas, rather than challenging people.

7. Encourage honesty and openness –

thank people for their views and sharing.

8. Ask process questions that cause students to reflect, and that can't

be answered with 'yes' or 'no'.

9. Consider if some students are quieter because they don't know the subject, or are they scared to speak up?

Are there ways of engaging students that does not always require speaking aloud to the whole class, such as utilising polls or small group discussions?

10. Keep discussion from wandering

too far from the key message – utilise a 'bank' or 'parking lot' for ideas.

11. Ask for feedback. Create ways for students to anonymously give you feedback or make complaints or suggestions. Remember you do not always need to take this feedback on as some of it may be backlash or resistance to gender equality.

Can you think of other ways that roles, activities, attributes and behaviours are attributed to children depending on their gender?

ADD YOUR ANSWERS HERE

Delivery - Preparing your audience

Key principles when preparing students for the introduction of gender-based violence content include:

1. Focus on building trust with students. Pay attention to students' comfort level – discussing gender can be personal, complex and sensitive.

2. Be upfront at the beginning about what students can expect from your course and acknowledge that some students (for example, men) may find the content challenging. Reassure students criticisms of gender inequality are not a personal criticism, rather an analysis of long held, deeply rooted societal, culture and structural issues that we all need to unpack and address.

3. Inform students the session will cover information about gender-based violence and let them know the external and internal support services that are available if they need support during or after the class.

4. Some of your students (and colleagues) may have been impacted by such violence – to lessen the risk of causing distress to them and others, it's important to remind students the classroom is a space for adult learning, not a therapeutic space. Encourage students to wait and disclose any personal experiences to an appropriate person in a safe and confidential space. Include information to the services available to them. Remind students they can take breaks at any time if they require time out and ensure that you have provided a list of support services that are available to students.

5. Frame the discussion in relation to the facts and evidence. Invite students to ask questions to unpack uncertainties – reiterate the relevance of the content back to the students' discipline and future professional lives working with children in the early years.

6. Provide an explanation of the terms you will be using. For example, define terms like gender identity and gender equality.

Preparing for resistance

Understanding, preparing for and responding to backlash and resistance is an integral and expected part of advancing primary prevention of gender-based violence initiatives within higher education.

Backlash and resistance in the university setting may look like students complaining about prevention content in student surveys, or students disagreeing with facts and statistics on gender-based violence. Backlash and resistance can appear in covert and overt ways and should be planned for.



1. Understand that **resistance and backlash is an inevitable part of the change process.**

2. Be open, **look for common ground and values that you both agree on.**

3. Practice talking about the gendered drivers of violence against women, formulating responses that are short, clear statements supported by evidence and examples.

4. Monitor classroom dynamics – address any stereotyping and harassment. Intervene quickly and explain that terms are derogatory and why.

5. If a conflict arises in a group remind students of the group agreement/class rules.

6. Ask the group what they think about the question raised or how would they suggest handling the problem.

7. When necessary, offer responses to questions and **clarify misinformation.**

8. Who can I **debrief with?** Encountering resistance and backlash can be challenging and tiring. Ensure you have identified appropriate people that you can seek additional support from and debrief. Support services for staff are listed below.

Some people may never accept responsibility for their part in the change process.

The goal is bringing as many individuals as possible, along the journey to achieve a society free from violence.

Resource which can help with managing resistance are [VicHealth's Encountering Resistance guide](#) and Our Watch's [Resistance and backlash web page](#).

Responding to disclosures: Your role

It's important to respond to disclosures of violence in a supportive, safe and respectful non-judgmental way. For primary prevention activities to be delivered safely, appropriate response policies, procedures and services must be in place.

Evidence shows that when we openly discuss and show that a university supports the prevention of violence against women, staff and students may feel safe to disclose their own experiences of violence. Therefore, response systems and referral pathways to family violence and sexual assault services must be established before action to prevent violence is undertaken. Some students will be under 18 years of age and universities are required to comply with relevant child safety standards in their state.

Key staff and educators should be trained in responding to disclosures and be aware of how and where to refer students or colleagues who disclose being a victim or perpetrator of violence.

The **Victorian Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)** offers best practice guidance on how to assess family violence risk. MARAM recommends that professionals across a broad range of services, organisations, professions and sectors have a shared responsibility for identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk, even where it may not be core business.



Resources

Recognise and respond appropriately to domestic and family violence, Safe and Equal Victoria:
<https://safeandequal.org.au/training-events/>

Course in Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Risk:
<https://www.yourcareer.gov.au/learn-and-train/courses/22660VIC?distanceFilter=25>

Effectively preventing and responding to sexual harassment: A Quick Guide, Australian Human Rights Commission:
https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/sexualharassment/quickguide/QuickGuide_2008_web.pdf

Practice guidance: Responding to disclosures, Our Watch:
<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/workplace/resources/practice-guidance-resources>

Not all university staff are expected to become experts at responding to violence – but everyone has a role to play.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

- 1. Recognise the signs of gender-based violence.**
- 2. Respond with appropriate care.** You are not responsible to 'resolve' or 'manage' any disclosure or provide counselling. You can start by saying 'I'm sorry that happened to you'.
- 3. Act in accordance** with relevant university response and prevention policies and procedures.
- 4. Refer to support services** – within the university and in the community.

External support

NON-EMERGENCY SUPPORT

*National helplines and service directories
(national and state-based) — free and 24/7*

1800RESPECT

☎ 1800 737 732
🕒 24-hours
👉 1800respect.org.au

National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service (including referral to emergency accommodation)

SERVICES: Phone, chat, email, interpreters available

- Support women/men/all genders who are experiencing or have experienced violence.
- Support family members or friends supporting those experiencing violence.

Australian Human Rights Commission National Information Service (NIS)

☎ 1300 656 419 or 02 9284 9888
🕒 10am-5pm Monday – Friday
👉 humanrights.gov.au

SERVICES: Information on workplace sexual harassment and referrals for individuals, organisations and employers

13YARN

☎ 13 92 76 🕒 24-hours 👉 13yarn.org.au

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

SERVICES: Talk with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander crisis supporter

→ **If you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger, call 000.**

Lifeline

☎ 13 11 14 🕒 24-hours 👉 lifeline.org.au

Crisis support and suicide prevention

QLife

☎ 1800 184 527 🕒 3pm-midnight, 7 days a week
👉 qlife.org.au

Support for people from the LGBTIQ+ community

NO TO VIOLENCE

☎ 1300 766 491 🕒 24-hour chat
👉 ntv.org.au

Men's Referral Service – Advice for men about family violence, including information about men's behaviour change programs and crisis accommodation for men excluded from home due to their violence

SERVICES: Phone, chat, interpreters available

Your own self-care

- ✓ **Remember you are not alone in supporting students** – seek support from the university.
- ✓ **Call 1800RESPECT** for debriefing, secondary consultation and guidance 1800 737 732.
- ✓ **Practice self-care** – be aware of your emotions and the impact of this work may have on you. Seek EAP support or external counselling services including 1800RESPECT. Self-care is the joint responsibility of you and your workplace. Seek support from your department.
- ✓ **Familiarise yourself with your university's internal policies for support.**
- ✓ **Use your university's employee assistance program.**
- ✓ **Find a 'buddy'** amongst your colleagues which you can share your experience with and gain support from.
- ✓ **Ask your manager for support** before you go into class.
- ✓ **Ensure you have information about what supports the university can provide** for you when you are teaching this content.



Scenarios for exploring prevention of gender-based violence with ECE university students

Below are hypothetical scenarios that have been developed by Our Watch in collaboration with ECE teaching academics. These scenarios aim to represent a diversity of situations that demonstrate the drivers of gender-based violence and other forms of inequality and oppression, and explore the threshold concepts outlined earlier in this resource.

These scenarios can be used as teaching resources in tutorials, online learning, as group exercises or modified to form assessments. While they are designed with specific student groups in mind, they can also be tailored to meet the requirements of your teaching and learning needs.

Each scenario has questions to reflect on the scenario and threshold concepts and suggested answers that can be used by teaching academics to support discussions.

Further advice on using and tailoring the resources can be found in the [Educators' guide to upskilling preservice professionals to support the prevention of gender-based violence](#), which provides general advice to teaching academics about integrating prevention of gender-based violence content into course content.



SCENARIO 1

Diya

**Purpose:**

- ✓ To explore gender assumptions, racism and ageism, within ECEC settings taking an intersectional approach.
- ✓ To provide students with the opportunity to tap into their own feelings in relation to the character in the scenario and reflect on their own beliefs.
- ✓ To support students to critically reflect on how they can plan for and respond to sexism and other forms of discrimination in their future professions.
- ✓ To support students to identify the drivers of gender-based violence within the ECEC settings.

Scenario

Diya is 50 years old and has worked in early childhood education for over 25 years. Diya grew up in India and migrated to Australia with her family when she was 30. Diya has been at a centre for 12 years and has always received positive feedback for her work from colleagues and parents.

Recently Jarrod started working at the same centre. Jarrod is 28 and has just graduated from his early childhood education studies at university. When Jarrod started at the centre, Diya's colleague Mira mentioned how good it would be to have a man around to do things like fixing things and playing with the boys.

Diya has been finding it difficult to work with Jarrod. Often when Diya makes a decision, Jarrod talks over her and is critical of the decision. Diya feels that even though she has been at the centre the longest and has more experience, Jarrod is always taking charge and overriding her decisions.

One day Diya overheard Jarrod talking to some colleagues about how he can't understand her accent and query her qualifications in early childhood education. None of the other ECE educators said anything to challenge Jarrod when he made these comments.

Diya tried to bring this up with her manager but was told that Jarrod is just showing initiative and that it's good for the children to have a strong male role model. When Diya mentioned to her manager that she heard Jarrod making comments about her experience and accent, her manager told her she would speak to Jarrod about it, but Diya hasn't heard anything about it since and Jarrod's behaviour has been continuing.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS:**? What feelings arose when you read the scenario?**

There are no right or wrong answers here. This is an opportunity for students to reflect on which characters they feel drawn to and to explore the different feelings that arose in relation to each of the characters.

? What power dynamics are being played out in this scenario?**ANSWERS**

- As a 50-year-old woman, Diya is experiencing a combination of sexism, ageism and racism. Although Diya has more experience, Jarrod is using his power as a man to take charge and ignore Diya's decisions.
- Jarrod's positionality as a young, white university educated man, is being elevated in this scenario. His ideas and actions are assumed to be more important and valid than Diya's on the basis of his gender, cultural background and age.
- Jarrod's position as a young man and a perception that he will be good for the boys is being elevated. It is assumed that the female educators do not have as much value or are not role models for the children in their care, and it is also assumed that Jarrod will be a positive role model.

? What drivers of gender-based violence are shown in this scenario?**ANSWERS**

- 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.
- Discriminatory attitudes towards migrant women which increases the likelihood of violence against this group.

? What gender stereotypes or biases are being displayed in this scenario?**ANSWERS**

- That boys always need male role models.
- That because Jarrod is a man it is good he is taking leadership.
- That there are certain jobs men do, and women do which are different. This is exemplified by Mira saying Jarrod can fix things around the centre and play with the boys.

- That because Jarrod is a man his decisions are more important than Diya despite her having more experience and expertise.
- That because Diya is a migrant woman of colour she is not qualified to teach ECE despite her many years of experience, expertise and positive feedback.

? What is the dynamic between Diya and Jarrod modelling to children about the roles of men and women?**ANSWERS**

- That men make decisions and are leaders, while women do what men say.
- That disrespect towards women is acceptable and normal. Jarrod is showing disrespect to Diya by talking over her and ignoring her decisions.
- That disrespect and racism towards migrant women is acceptable.

? What would be the actions to help prevent this scenario from playing out the way it does here?

ANSWERS

- Diya's manager taking her concerns seriously and talking to Jarrod about his behaviour.
- Diya and Jarrod's colleagues intervening in Jarrod's behavior and challenging his comments. How might Jarrod and Diya's colleagues challenge Jarrod's behavior and comments?
- Building awareness for ECE students on power dynamics in the workplace and how to model gender equitable behaviour.
- Building awareness of the harmful impact of gender stereotypes with ECEC professionals and ECE university students.
- Having anti-racism training, policies and responses in place at the ECEC centre.
- Including and embedding anti-bias frameworks within ECE university curriculum.

? If Jarrod has a different opinion to Diya about how to do things, what is a way he could communicate this while modelling respect and gender equity?

ANSWERS

- Talking to her privately and respectfully about his ideas of how to do things, while taking a collaborative approach.
- Considering if his way is the best way, and if instead he could learn from Diya.
- Reflecting on his own biases and if this is affecting his view of the situation.

ADD YOUR THOUGHTS AND NOTES HERE

SCENARIO 2**Rasheed****Purpose:**

- ✓ To explore gender assumptions.
- ✓ To explore how ECEC educators can support men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships.
- ✓ To provide students with the opportunity to tap into their own feelings in relation to the character in the scenario and reflect on their own beliefs.
- ✓ To support students to critically reflect on how they interact with children.
- ✓ To support students to identify the drivers of gender-based violence within the ECEC settings and how this relates to the prevention of gender-based violence

Scenario

Rasheed is four and often cries when he feels overwhelmed. When Roo, one of Rasheed's kindergarten teachers notices Rasheed crying they say to him, 'Come on Rasheed, there's nothing to be sad about. I want you to be a big man today so no more crying'.

Alex, another kindergarten teacher, responds to Rasheed crying in a different way. When Alex notices Rasheed is crying, they say, 'I can see you're feeling upset Rasheed. It's ok to cry. What's upsetting you?'. Rasheed tells them he is feeling sad, so Alex says, "That's ok. It's normal to feel sad sometimes. I sometimes get sad as well and crying can make me feel better". Alex continues to talk with Rasheed about what options there are for Rasheed to process, regulate and express his feelings. With Alex's help, Rasheed decides he needs a little bit of quiet time and does some drawing.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS:**? What feelings arose when you read the scenario?**

There are no right or wrong answers here. This is an opportunity for students to reflect on which characters they feel drawn to and to explore the different feelings that arose in relation to each of the characters.

? Can you identify the drivers and essential actions demonstrated in this scenario? What messages are being sent to Rasheed by the different ECEC teachers?

DRIVER: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.

Roo is encouraging dominant forms of masculinity by telling Rasheed to suppress his feelings and toughen up. Roo is equating being a 'big man' with not expressing feelings of vulnerability and sadness. Roo is also invalidating Rasheed's feelings by saying there is nothing to be sad about.

Dominant forms of masculinity which include suppressing feeling, and internalising pressures to be tough result in the higher likelihood of negative health outcomes for men and increase the prevalence of gender-based violence.

ESSENTIAL ACTION: Support men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships.

ESSENTIAL ACTION: Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by gender stereotypes.

Both these essential actions are being demonstrated by Alex. Alex validates Rasheed's feelings of sadness and helps him to identify and work through these feelings in a positive and constructive way, helping Rasheed to develop self regulation skills. Alex is also helping build new social norms that allow boys to express and explore their feelings and is helping Rasheed to not be constrained by gender stereotypes.

Alex's gender is not identified in this scenario. If Alex is a man, he is also modelling supportive male peer relationships to Rasheed by identifying that he also feels sadness sometimes and that this is normal and it's ok to ask for help.

? How would you respond to a child crying? Do you think you would have different responses based on the gender of the child?

There are no right or wrong answers here. This is an opportunity for students to reflect on their beliefs about gender and masculinity.

ADD YOUR THOUGHTS AND NOTES HERE

SCENARIO 3

Aika



Purpose:

- ✓ To explore gender stereotypes and assumptions.
- ✓ To provide students with the opportunity to tap into their own feelings in relation to the character in the scenario and reflect on their own beliefs.
- ✓ To support students to critically reflect on how they can plan for and respond to gender stereotyping in their future professions.
- ✓ To support students to identify the drivers of gender-based violence within the ECEC settings.

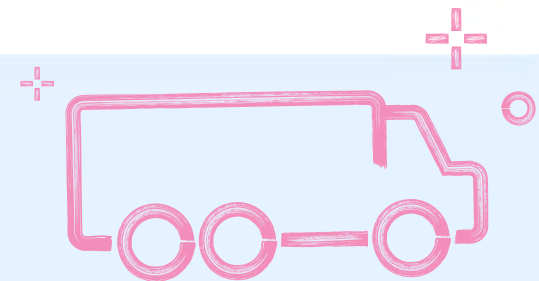
Scenario

Aika is working at a kindergarten with her coworker Alice. Aika has noticed that often Alice directs the girls to play with the dolls and the play kitchen, and says they look pretty, while she directs the boys to play with the trucks and the science, maths and engineering (STEM) materials and tells them they are strong and smart.

Once when Alice noticed a boy playing with the dolls, she made a comment to Aika saying, 'This one likes the girls' stuff' and gave Aika a look suggesting it was unusual he was playing with the dolls.

Another time when a boy hit a girl for not giving him a toy, Aika overheard Alice say to the girl 'It's ok sweetie, he's just a bit excited'.

When Alice and Aika are doing an activity where the children think about what they want to be when they are older, Alice laughs at a boy who says he wants to be a nurse like his mum and tells him he could be a doctor instead. When one of the girls says she wants to be a nurse Alice doesn't say anything. Aika is worried that Alice is upholding rigid gender stereotypes and norms but isn't sure how to approach the situation.



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS:**? What drivers are being shown in the scenario?****ANSWERS**

- Condoning of violence against women.
- When Alice says to the girl that the boy just hit her because he was excited this is making excuses for and passively condoning violence.
- Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
- When Alice directs the girls to play with dolls and the boys to play with the STEM resources, when she points out the boy playing with dolls, and when she has different responses to the children wanting to be nurses based on their gender, she is perpetuating rigid gender stereotypes.

? What is the impact of the scenario on the children involved?**ANSWERS**

- Calling girls pretty and boys smart and strong sends a message to children about what is important based on their gender. Alice's comments suggest that the most important thing a girl could be is pretty and the most important thing a boy could be is smart and strong. This can have a limiting effect on children, especially girls who are being encouraged to focus on their looks rather than their interests and hobbies.

- Telling the little girl a boy has hit her because he is just excited sends the message to girls that violence is OK and is an acceptable way that boys express their feelings.
- Alice's surprised and negative response to the boy playing with the doll, sends the message that there are resources and materials appropriate for boys that are different to what is appropriate for girls. It suggests that there is something wrong with a boy engaging in stereotypically 'feminine' behaviour like playing house or caring for a baby. Even if Alice's response was not said directly to the child, it creates an atmosphere of gendered expectations for children. Children are highly sensitive and rapidly forming their understanding of the world which means they often can pick up on these subtle judgements.
- Alice having a different response to the boy wanting to be a nurse to the girl wanting to be a nurse, suggests that some jobs are appropriate for boys and different jobs are appropriate for girls. Alice invalidates the important and often feminised work of nurses by suggesting that the boy can do better and be a doctor, while her lack of response to the girl wanting to be the nurse suggests that girls can only be nurses rather than doctors.

? What could Aika do in this scenario, and what essential actions could be taken within the kindergarten?**ANSWERS**

- Upskilling educators to be aware of gender stereotypes and the impacts these stereotypes have on children through professional development and teacher training.
- Aika could raise the issue of gender stereotypes and play in, as part of a planning meeting.
- Aika could model inclusive behavior by actively encouraging all children to explore diverse kinds of play, experiences and careers, regardless of gender.
- The kindergarten could introduce books, visual materials and resources that promote gender diversity and equality.
- The kindergarten could develop a gender equity policy that will ensure all staff uphold gender equity principles.
- If Alice's behaviour continues, having discussions with her about the values of the kindergarten to promote equality and equal opportunity for all children regardless of gender.
- If she feels comfortable, Aika could gently talk to Alice about her behaviour.

? How would you go about talking to Alice about her behaviour?

ANSWERS

- **Come to Alice from a place of compassion and curiosity.** We have all been taught things about gender that may be harmful, and Alice may not be aware of the impact of her actions
- **Take a strengths-based and anti-bias approach.** Focus on how as ECEC professionals, you are all working to create equal opportunity for children where all children feel supported to explore their interests and reach their potential.
- **Suggest opportunities for learning and improvement in a collaborative way.** For example: 'What do you think about introducing some new strategies to encourage all children to play with different materials and resources and explore their interests? I'd love to work on this together'.
- **Be prepared.** Think about what you are going to say and draw on the research to support your points.

ADD YOUR THOUGHTS AND NOTES HERE

SCENARIO 4

Ree and Max



Scenario

Ree is working at a kindergarten with three- to four-year-olds. One of Ree's students, Max, is four and likes playing with all sorts of toys. One day Max had chosen to play with a pram and doll and wear a princess dress-up. Ree was fine with this as she likes to let students choose the materials and resources they play with, however when Max's mum came to pick him up, she seemed agitated and snatched the pram away from Max and told him to 'get that off' referring to his dress. Later that evening the kindergarten received an agitated email from Max's parents about not wanting their son to be given "girls toys" to play with.

Purpose:

- ✓ To explore backlash and resistance in the ECEC settings and how students may respond if it occurs.
- ✓ To provide students with the opportunity to tap into their own feelings in relation to the character in the scenario and reflect on their own beliefs.
- ✓ To support students to identify the drivers of gender-based violence within the ECEC settings.



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS:**? What drivers are being shown in this scenario?**

DRIVER 3: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.

? What message is being sent to Max in this scenario?**ANSWERS**

- That boys cannot explore their identity and interests without following strict gender norms.
- That caring for a baby is only for girls and women.
- That he will be shamed and told off if he does not conform to gender stereotypes.

? How would you respond to the parents in this scenario?**ANSWERS**

- Lean on the policies of the kindergarten and know why those policies are in place. For example, it is helpful if the ECEC setting has a policy that all materials and resources are for everyone, and educators know this is so children can develop personal identities not restricted by gender roles.
- Draw from the evidence: For example, evidence has shown that strict gender-roles for children (which include restricting which materials and resources children can play with based on gender)

can have negative health outcomes for all children. The Man Box study has shown that rigid attitudes related to masculinity are associated with higher levels of violence against women, and poor mental health outcomes for the men that hold these rigid beliefs. Children's understanding of gender develops around the age of two, so the early years are a crucial time for embedding positive identities that are not restricted by gender-stereotypes.

- Use strength-based language and find common goals. For example, we all want children to explore their identities and develop a positive sense of self. Allowing children to choose which materials and resources they play with helps them to explore and develop positive personal identities. By having the same materials and resources available to all children regardless of gender, we create a culture of equality and respect between children that sets them up to develop respectful relationships in the future.
- Avoid shaming parents for their beliefs. Parents are usually trying to protect their children based on their own upbringings and understandings of gender. If we focus on the ways that resisting gender stereotypes is essential for creating happy and healthy environments for children in a collaborative way, it can help them to understand and support developing a gender equitable culture. For example, you could say to parents, 'We know sometimes challenging gender roles can be confronting for parents, however evidence

has shown us that creating environments where children are not restricted by gender roles has positive health outcomes for all children'.

- Understand that resistance and backlash is a normal part of the change process. The aim is to bring as many people along as possible, but it will not be possible to convince everyone.

? What could Max's kindergarten do in this scenario?**ANSWERS**

- Make sure there are gender equitable policies in place that include policies on resources and materials being for all children.
- Ensure ECEC educators are aware of the policies and supported to employ them in their teaching or if there is resistance from parents or care givers.
- Let parents and caregivers know what gender equity policies are in place and the reasons behind these policies.
- Have resources and send communications to parents that promote gender equity and challenge gender –stereotypes.
- Provide ongoing training for ECEC educators so they are confident in their knowledge of gender equity, the drivers of gender-based violence, and the equity policies the ECEC centre has in place.

The Prevention in Teaching and Learning resource for Public Health resource includes a scenario development tool that can be used to develop scenarios. This can be adapted to develop scenarios within ECEC settings. You can find this tool [here](#).

EXTRA RESOURCES

These are some extra resources that can support ECE students, ECE academics, ECEC educators, and parents to understand gender and the drivers of gender-based violence in relation to the early years:

- Playgroup Victoria's [ALL Come Out to Play](#) program.
- Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre (WAGEC), [All In Program](#).
- Free from Family Violence (FVREE), [Level Playground program](#).
- Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group, [Girls Can Boys Can](#)



Glossary of terms

BACKLASH/RESISTANCE - the resistance, hostility or aggression with which gender equality or violence prevention strategies are met by some groups. From a feminist perspective, backlash can be understood as an inevitable response to challenges to male dominance, power or status, and is often interpreted as a sign that such challenges are proving effective.²³

GENDER – Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities of individuals. Gender is usually described using only the rigid, binary and hierarchical categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’, and valuing men or ‘masculine’ traits over women and ‘feminine’ traits. This understanding of gender is one that underpins and normalises gender inequality. However, gender is a social construct, meaning it varies across cultures and changes over time. This resource uses a more inclusive and expansive understanding of gender, which includes non-binary identities and which actively challenges binary, hierarchical and stereotyped constructions of gender.²⁴

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE - Gender-based violence is defined by the United Nations as 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.²⁵ Internationally, there is emerging evidence and increasing recognition that gender-based violence also includes harmful acts directed towards someone because of their gender – such as someone from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQA+) community.²⁶

GENDERED DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE – the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

GENDER EQUALITY – involves equality for people of all genders. This term is used in the substantive sense to mean not only equality of opportunity but also equal or just outcomes (sometimes also called equity). It requires the redistribution of power, resources and responsibilities between men and women in particular, and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures that create and sustain gender inequality.²⁷

GENDER NORMS – the dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, men and women. Norms are not neutral in their effect, but rather create and maintain unequal relations of power.

HETERONORMATIVITY – a belief and general perspective that sees heterosexuality as the only ‘normal’ sexual orientation, and heterosexual experiences as the only, or central, view of the world. This perspective also assumes a linear relationship between sex, gender and sexuality (for example: male, man, heterosexual man), and is based on and reinforces the systemic and structural privileging of binary models of sex and gender, that assume a person’s sex and gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth.

INTERSECTIONALITY – describes the interactions between multiple systems and structures of oppression (such as sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ableism, heteronormativity and cissexism), as well as policy and legal contexts (such as immigration status). It acknowledges that some people are subject to multiple forms of oppression and ‘the experience is not just the sum of its parts’. An intersectional approach is ‘a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other’. Conversely, intersectionality also highlights the intersection of multiple forms of power and privilege. An intersectional approach is critical for preventing violence against women because patriarchal power structures always intersect with other systems of power. Violence against women occurs in the context of both gender inequality and multiple other forms of structural and systemic inequality, oppression and discrimination. All of these intersect to influence the perpetration of violence, the prevalence, nature and dynamics of violence, and women’s experiences of violence. Understanding and addressing these intersections is necessary to effectively address the drivers of violence against women and prevent this violence across the population.

PATRIARCHY – a social structure where the ideas, needs and actions of men are dominant over those of women (and non-binary people) and where men (as a group) hold social, political, cultural and economic power. Patriarchy is associated with a set of ideas that seek to explain and justify this dominance and attribute it to innate differences between men and women.

SEX – the biological and physical characteristics used to define humans as male or female.

SOCIAL NORMS – the informal, mostly unwritten and unspoken collective rules that define typical, acceptable, appropriate and obligatory actions in a social group, setting or society. They are produced and reproduced by customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time to uphold particular forms of social order.

SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES – macrolevel mechanisms, both formal (policies, institutions and laws) and informal (social norms), which serve to organise society, and create power relationships between different groups of people and patterns of social and political power.

Endnotes

- 1 Our Watch's mandate is to prevent violence against women. Our Watch's work draws on the evidence base as outlined in Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, 2015, accessed 20 January 2021.
- 2 Our Watch's mandate is to prevent violence against women. Our Watch's work draws on the evidence base as outlined in Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, 2015, accessed 20 January 2021.
- 3 Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*, p. 31.
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Further Information

If you have questions about Our Watch's work on the primary prevention of gender-based violence in curriculum and teaching practice, please contact enquiries@ourwatch.org.au and include the subject line: *'Our Watch Enquiry: Prevention of Gender-Based Violence within Early Childhood Education'.*

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