#METOO: A CULTURAL SHIFT?

YOUNG PEOPLE, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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YOUNG PEOPLE, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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Section 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#MeToo brought worldwide attention to sexual harassment in ways never seen before. The enormous volume of sexual harassment content triggered by #MeToo led us to question how such extensive exposure might impact young people.

Our research set out to discover young people's perspectives of #MeToo and how it might have affected what they think, feel and do about sexual harassment. This report outlines our key findings from a three-year qualitative research project which explored ways young people engage with, understand, and respond to sexual harassment social media content.

Between 2019 and 2022 we completed 17 focus groups and 10 in-depth media-sharing interviews with 91 young people aged between 15 and 25 of diverse genders, sexualities and cultural backgrounds. Most were high school or university students and some were employed in the workforce; we met with them in university or high school settings or, during COVID restrictions, on Zoom. We adopted strong ethical principles to ensure participants felt safe and supported in discussions and interviews, always giving participants options for withdrawing or taking time-out if they needed to. The interview and group discussion formats were semi-formal to encourage participants to initiate conversation and, in groups, respond to one another. Through our interview and discussion group guides, we explored the kinds of sexual harassment media our participants accessed and engaged with, how this media affected them, and the ways they responded to it.

At the time of our conversations and discussions, six to seven years had passed since the original impetus of #MeToo. Nonetheless, even our youngest participants had accessed media related to it. In many of our discussions with young people, '#MeToo' seemed to work as a kind of shorthand for referring to any aspect of sexual harassment. "She me-too'd" him, for example, referred to a young woman's allegation of sexual harassment. Our findings highlight that although social media can be a constructive 'educator' about sexual harassment, it also accentuates a gender gap where young men's sexual harassment education is inadequate and young women and Rainbow youth feel a burden of responsibility for educating young men.

KEY FINDINGS

- Sexual harassment of young women and Rainbow youth is very common and takes multiple forms from online stalking and being groped to rape. Fears of being sexually harassed are high and ever-present in their daily lives and lead to sometimes elaborate measures of self-protection.

- #MeToo and related social media increased awareness of sexual harassment and stimulated conversations about it, but stigmatisation remains present, reducing the likelihood of disclosing sexual harassment, and young men still feel uncomfortable talking about it.

- Social media contribute to a gender divide in sexual harassment knowledge, in part because of content feed algorithms derived from what social media is watched or accessed. Young women and Rainbow youth obtain constructive sexual harassment information whereas young men's information often reinforces rape myths and anti-feminism which are used to discount women's accounts of sexual harassment as being false.

- Sexual violence education in schools is variously non-existent, minimal or not meeting young people's information needs. Young people strongly advocate for provision of sexual violence education in schools, particularly covering sexual consent, and particularly to ensure young men receive such education. Boys' schools are seen as places where rape culture is normalised and condoned.

- Young 'activists' (our term) are committed to educating others about sexual violence but at some personal cost. Online, the volume and content of sexual harassment media leaves them feeling physically and emotionally exhausted and their efforts to bring about change in their schools, workplaces or universities are often unrewarded, and sometimes completely thwarted by those in leadership and management roles.

- Despite some positive outcomes from #MeToo, its impact has been limited. Young people identified wide ranging evidence that little has changed, including the high rates of sexual violence, lack of safety for young people online, and the failure of the education system to educate students adequately about sexuality, sexual violence, and gendered power dynamics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools

Sexual violence prevention and consent education must span all school years in age appropriate ways.

Sexual violence prevention and consent education in the high school years should build on the introduction of broader teaching about consent and respectful relationships contained in the current Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum for Years 1–8. It is important that sexual violence topics are timed for when young people are beginning to develop romantic and/or sexual relationships.

Lisa: In Year 12 we don't have a health class and I'm guessing this is around a lot of schools which to me seems ridiculous because at 16–17 I feel it's the ages where we should be learning about this, it's at the point where it is important to know. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Schools need to create supportive cultures where students feel safe to talk about sexual harassment.

Schools should build supportive cultures through practices such as implementing a clear policy for non-tolerance of sexual harassment, holding sexual violence awareness days, making opportunities in relevant subjects for students to discuss sexual violence (e.g. English literature; History; Health; Social Studies) and ensuring specialist counselling services are available for victims of harassment.

Sebastian: It's developing a culture in our schools where everyone is comfortable and safe to talk about these issues. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

School governance bodies must ensure there is a school policy to deal with sexist language, rape culture and misogyny in their schools.

Sexist language, rape culture and misogyny are enabling factors in sexual violence toward young women and Rainbow youth. Governance bodies need to recognise the important role the school can have in the prevention of sexual violence through a whole of school approach (as in RSE 'best practice') that addresses these enabling factors. School leadership teams must lead in modelling equitable, respectful gender relationships and using non-sexist language.

Molly: I was in like an all boys school and like I've heard all the things that guys would say about girls and they're just really like uneducated on just how to be respectful towards women. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Ensure educators who are teaching about consent and sexual violence prevention are well-trained.

Consent education needs to be high quality, age-appropriate and nuanced. To be effective, content must be developed in collaboration with young people so that it is engaging and relevant for them.

Quality and effectiveness requires well-trained and well-resourced teachers who can then deliver education that encourages and supports students to critique gendered myths, misconceptions and misinformation. Educator training needs to include awareness of the reactions such as defensiveness that may arise and ways to respond to such reactions while maintaining a safe and calm space.

Alexis: When guys say that sort of thing [not all men] it just shows how uneducated some of them are, like they are feeding into that false accusation like narrative and you know just rehearsing like something that they've heard online. (21, 3rd Year University student)

Support activists in their sexual violence prevention initiatives.

The work of young activists is important and needs to be supported. They often face backlash and harassment for speaking out, something schools and teachers need to be aware of and responsive to. Schools and universities must ensure that support is given when needed and activists' calls for action in addressing the prevention of sexual violence are respected and heard. Initiatives such as Rape Awareness days in schools, Thursdays in Black (the national university student campaign working to prevent and respond to sexual violence) and sexual harassment surveys should be resourced (e.g., funding, materials, venues).

Eva: We just don't have the power, like we try to have the power and we try to take action but –

Eden: No one trusts high school students.

(17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Government

Government must prioritise youth in development of the Te Aorerekura Action Plan on sexual violence prevention.

Sexual harassment starts early in life: the highest rate of reported sexual harassment is among 16–24 year olds and much is not reported. The Te Aorerekura Action Plan must include a focus on young people if its primary prevention goals are to be fully achieved. National strategic approaches must also include consideration of online sexual harassment and the harmful role of social media in promoting and supporting misinformation and misogyny.

Asher: I really think we need to discuss this with our youth (sexual harassment) because it is a lot of the time that youth are experiencing it. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Government must fully resource the teaching of sexual violence prevention education in all New Zealand schools.

To fulfil primary prevention goals Government must fully fund and resource sexual violence prevention education in schools. Funding is required for specialist teacher training, curriculum development, and specialist counselling services for victims of sexual harassment.

Morgan: Are we sitting here with our young men and young people and doing something about it? ...Because, well it's like we want it to not happen in the first place. (21, 3rd Year University student)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

We began the research in 2019 after which time COVID-19 caused repeated disruptions until we were able to finally complete focus groups and individual interviews at the close of 2022.

The COVID era was an extraordinarily challenging context for our participants, frequently 'locked out' of schools or universities and locked into a largely online world both educationally and socially for a considerable time. For the project, COVID forced us to constantly revise our ways of recruiting and how we carried out interviews and focus groups. Whenever possible we recruited via an in-person research team presentation to a school or university class/lecture, but we later developed a video presentation and added an Instagram post to our digital recruitment toolkit for periods when in-person was not possible.

1. FOCUS GROUPS

We carried out 17 focus group discussions with 81 participants whose ages ranged from 15 to 24. Additionally, three participants chose an individual interview in which we discussed the same topics as in groups. Of the total number of participants, 67 were high school students, 9 were university students, and 5 were young adults in the workforce. Almost all of the high school students were Year 12 or 13 and aged 16 to 18; one was aged 15 and in Year 11. Participants described their own identities – gender, cultural and sexuality – as shown below.

GENDER IDENTITIES	(42 participants)
Female • female • cisgender • cis female • she/her • woman	69%
Male • male • he/him • man	19%
Trans man	2%
Female transgender	2%
Gender queer	2%
Gender fluid	2%

SEXUALITY IDENTITIES	(42 participants)
Heterosexual • straight	57%
Bisexual	19%
Queer • queer • pan	9.5%
Asexual • Asexual pan • Asexual Lesbian • Asexual straight	9.5%
Male	4.7%

CULTURAL IDENTITIES	(82 participants)
Māori • Māori • Māori/European • Pākehā/Māori • Chilean/Māori • Māori/Spanish/NZ European	9.3%
NZ European • Pākehā • Kiwi • NZ • New Zealander	69%
Asian • Asian • Filipino • Indian • SE Asian • Cambodian • Japanese	10.6%
Mixed • Chinese/NZ • NZ European/Danish • Thai/NZ • NZ European/Canadian • Australian/European • NZ/South African/Greek/Portuguese	10.6%

Notes
- gender and sexuality information not gathered in 2019 but added for later years as we refined and developed the project
- percentages have been rounded
- cultural identities missing data for 6 participants

Groups varied in size between three and eight participants, with one 'group' consisting of two participants, but most had between four and six participants. Most discussion groups took place in person and were held in suitable rooms in schools or university but two were online.

Our group process emphasised the importance of sharing and listening to one another's views, whether they be similar or different. We also stressed safety and keeping what was said by others confidential. Consistent with prioritising young people's voices, our questions were open and loosely structured around sexual harassment media topics that we wanted to explore with them. In particular we focussed on participants' knowledge about, and responses to, #MeToo, their perceived relevance of #MeToo for young adults, examples they recalled of 'stand-out' sexual harassment media stories (e.g. because of how participants might be affected), and their views on the impact of #MeToo on gender relations and social change. All of our participants were fully engaged and interested and we received both appreciative and enthusiastic comments from all groups about the seldom-presented opportunity to discuss sexual harassment.

2. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT SHARING

Ten young women who regularly engaged with sexual harassment media participated in the second, in-depth phase of the project. For each participant, this phase of the research involved a set of two interviews and digital sharing of media content which participants had engaged with and responded to. Four young women were high school students, three 4th year university students, one a 2nd year university student, one a postgraduate student, and one in the work force. These participants were aged between 18 and 25 and self-described their backgrounds as below:

GENDER IDENTITIES	
Female • female • cisgender woman • she/her • woman	10

SEXUALITY IDENTITIES	
Heterosexual • straight	4
Bisexual	4
Lesbian • gay/queer	1
Tend not to	1

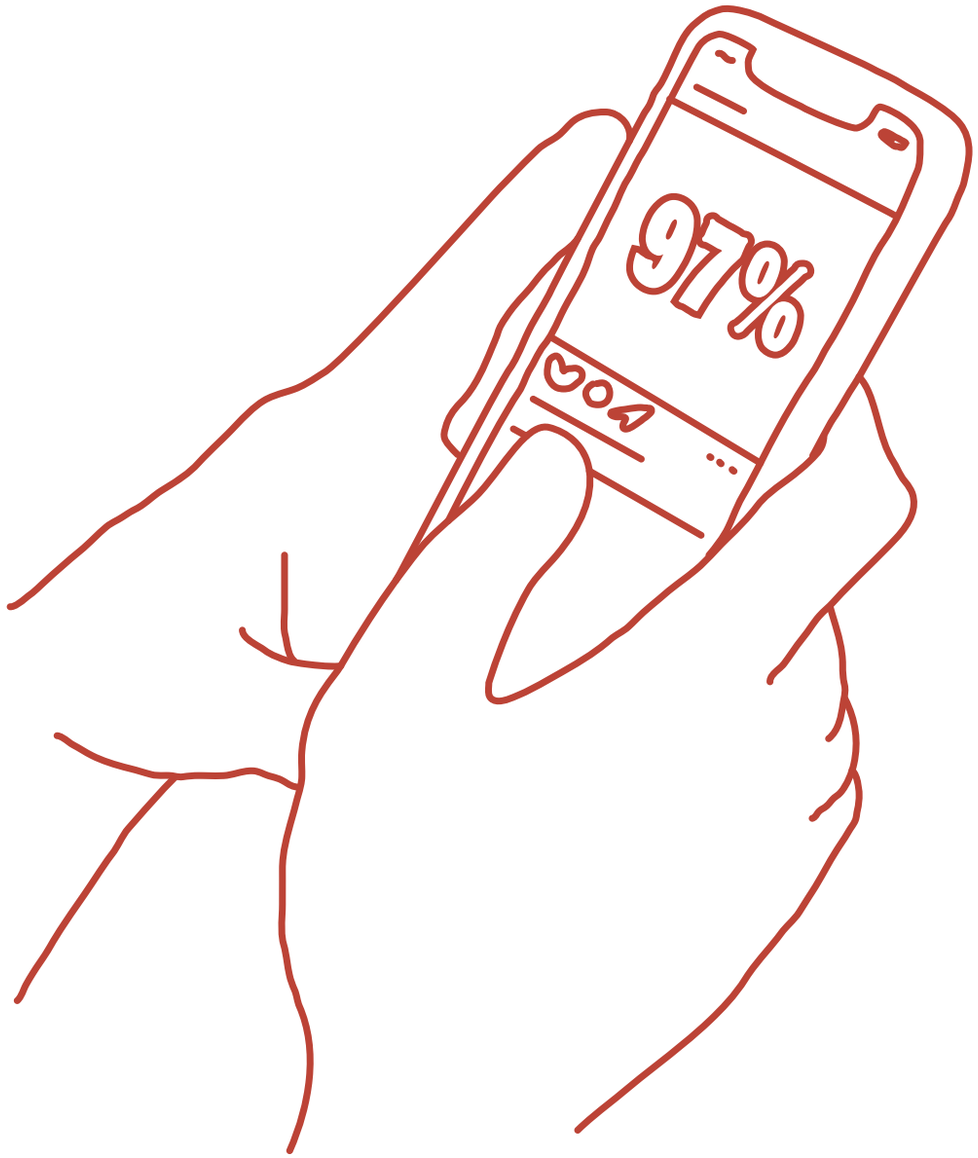
CULTURAL IDENTITIES	
Māori • NZ European/Māori • Māori/Pākehā NZ	2
NZ European • NZ • European/Pākehā • NZ/Pākehā	6
Mixed • Pākeha/Malaysian Chinese • NZ European/Eastern European	2

In addition to the ways of recruiting described above, we also used a targeted approach, meeting in person or on Zoom with on and off campus groups with interests in sexual violence to talk about the research and/or send them our information brochure.

In the first interview, we asked participants about #MeToo as well as their more recent involvement with sexual harassment media, the kinds of social media platforms they engaged with and the nature of their online participation. We also asked participants about the personal impact of their engagement with sexual harassment media where they did not spontaneously mention it. Most interviews were carried out in person apart from two which were on zoom.

After the first interview, and over a period of 3 to 11 weeks, participants shared with us the sexual harassment media they engaged with via direct messaging or email. They also included their emotional and other reactions to some of the items shared. A second interview then focused on this shared media content and allowed us to explore the multiple ways in which participants engaged with, managed, and responded to sexual harassment media. Seven follow-up interviews were carried out in person and three on zoom.

All of the individual interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed; pseudonyms were applied at the point of transcription, some of which were self-chosen where participants opted for this. At every stage of the research, we adopted the strongest possible ethical principles and practices appropriate to research with young people and the topic of sexual harassment. The findings we present in this report are the result of an in-depth thematic analysis in which we primarily looked for common patterns in young people's talk, but we also paid close attention to places in transcripts where more unique perspectives were expressed.



EXPERIENCES AND FEARS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Although we did not ask our participants about sexual harassment experiences we nonetheless heard about many incidents and fears both in the individual interviews and discussion groups.

Only young women and Rainbow participants spoke about their experiences and fears, sometimes when they gave their reasons for taking part, sometimes in response to someone else's comment, and other times triggered by talk about media content. Given that New Zealand sexual violence surveys consistently report high rates of sexual violence experienced by cisgender girls/young women and queer/non-binary youth[1,2,3,4] hearing these disclosures did not surprise us. Participants themselves often referred to a "97%" statistic they had read on social media and used it to highlight how widespread women's experiences of sexual harassment are. Many knew of others their age who had been sexually harassed.

Jayde: I'm interested in this research topic for similar reasons to Darby, like I think having, as a young female I feel I've had a lot of exposure to sexual harassment and sort of any sort of sexual misconduct and stuff like that from my own perspective and seeing, you know, seeing it around me in workplaces or social environments and also hearing the experiences of people my age or a little bit older than me. (19, 2nd year University student)

Felicity: But it's like insane to me about like, how many people like stuff had happened to, it's like, it's just like, like, so many people we know. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

[1] Gordon, L. (2021). Survey of Sexual Harassment Christchurch Girls High https://pukekoresearch
[2] Gordon, L. (2022). Survey of Sexual Harassment Avonside Girls High https://pukekoresearch
[3] Ministry of Justice (2023). *New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey Cycle 5 (2021/22) Data Tables NZCVS Cycle 5 Sexual violence and offences by family members* https://www.justice.govt.nz
[4] Ministry of Social Development (2022). *Youth Health and Well-Being Survey-What About Me?* https//www.msd.govt.nz

In both focus groups and interviews, we heard about diverse experiences happening in a multitude of different places, from physical worlds to online and from everyday sexual harassment to rape.

PLACES OF EXPERIENCE

- Streets
- Workplaces
- Bars
- Social events
- Beaches
- Schools
- Leisure settings

PHYSICAL WORLD EXPERIENCES

- Groped
- Drinks spiked
- Cat called
- Comments about bodies
- Raped

ONLINE EXPERIENCES

- Sent unwanted pictures, messages
- Repeated harassment
- Stalked

Lauren: Like, at least two or three times on the way to the gym, I'll get catcalled or yelled at by someone. I'm wearing like a hoodie and sweatpants. Like, what am I? How am I supposed to live like that?

Abby: Like sexual harassment in my experience is far worse when men are in groups.

Lauren: Oh yeah.

Abby: Like men in groups will come into my workplace and say disgusting things to me, in front of my bosses and my managers when they are groups together, cause they're like showing off to each other. But when there's men alone, the harassment is just like them staring me up and down like really gross, pervertedly, but it's much worse when men are in groups.

(Lauren 15, Year 11; Abby 16, Year 12; Girls' School)

Several participants told us that their experience of being sexually harassed started from a young age.

Ruth: The first time I was catcalled was when I was 12 – that's 10 years experiencing the ill behaviour of men. (22, 5th Year Postgrad University student)

Morgan, speaking in a pair interview with friend and university classmate Alexis, said that she was subjected to catcalling most when she was in her early teens:

Alexis: Yeah, like I used to get catcalled, like I'd say, like 13 – 15/16 was like big time for me. Just like boys driving past in their car, wolf-whistling or being like "nice tits" or whatever, like, I didn't even have my boobs out, like, I don't get it. (19, 2nd Year University student)

Gender and sexually diverse young people are frequently targeted as victims of sexual harassment. Asher, a 17 year old trans man who was transitioning, provides an important perspective as the subject of intense sexual harassment in two particular phases of their life: as a 12–14 year old boyish-looking girl and as a young-looking transman (right).

Many young women also talked about the sexual harassment of friends and people they knew. Callie told us, for example, "a guy in my high school had blackmailed several girls with nudes. So he'd managed to get I think it was five or six girls nudes, and he was blackmailing them to do sexual favours for him and his friends." As a young adult, Morgan described herself as not a "big wanting to go into town person" but that her friends would all go out on Saturday nights and then tell her about their experiences of unwanted touching: "yeah, a guy grabbed my bum".

"I think [the research] is incredibly relevant. Like, you know, the whole, just, you know, the #MeToo movement, and just talking about sexual assault in general and sexual harm, in general is incredibly. Like, I've been catcalled, the two points in my life where I've been catcalled, and you know, screamed at, and called, you know, all that. The most of my life is when I was about 12, to 14, and now when I'm a bit older, but because I'm, how I present, I look quite a lot younger, I usually get mistaken for someone a bit younger. So, you know, before I started trans, socially transitioning, I looked, maybe about 18 or more. Now I'm sort of sitting in the 14–15 space. And even though I looked like a boy, a lot of the time, I am still experiencing more catcalling than when I looked older. So I think we really need to discuss this with our youth, because it is a lot of the time that youth are experiencing."

•

Asher, 17, Year 13, Girls' School

SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA: "I GET SOME PRETTY HORRENDOUS MESSAGES IN MY DMS"

Young women told us that they were regularly sexually harassed on social media. They received comments about their bodies and about their appearance, unsolicited sexual messages and images, and sexual harassment from men "who bait you to try to get a reaction". Gemma said she experienced a lot of sexual harassment "through social media, communication on Snapchat, again it's like harassing you for like, you know, sexual photos". In a Girls' High School focus group, Amber, Felicity and Geraldine talked with incredulity and laughter about the sheer volume of "Sugar Daddy" messages they receive from older men, and the different sexual fetishes they had come across – such as men asking for pictures of their feet. It had become such a common experience that they had even set up a group chat where they could share this content, a safe space, which also worked to diffuse some of the potential fear and tension associated with receiving this kind of content:

Amber: We always get those messages (laughter) from guys that are just like "Hey mama." (laughter)

Felicity: We've got a "Sugar Daddy" chat where all of like, every time we actually get sent a sugar daddy DM we like screenshot it and send it to the group chat and just be like "look at this." (laughter)

Geraldine: Yeah, but it's so common on Instagram, like all of us, we've got like, at least five like.

Amber: Yep.

Felicity: I've probably got like five in the last three months.

Geraldine: Yeah the weirdest stuff, like feet pics or like. (laughter)

(17–18, Year 13, Girls' School)

Many young women told us that they keep their social media accounts on private settings to try to limit this kind of harassment, and that they also had strategies in place for when it did happen. Generally these involved taking personal responsibility for 'managing it', as well as for dealing with the emotional impact. Reflecting the findings of other research in this field[5,6] these strategies largely involved deleting the messages, and blocking the account that had sent them. However this was often only a temporary solution since harassers could easily set up a new account to keep sending sexually harassing content. Whina shared her experience of the "most shockingly and upsetting sexual thing" she had "ever read" which was sent via Instagram messages. At first she tried to ignore the "guy" but he would at times "continuously" send her "really explicit and creepy messages". She then tried deleting and blocking messages but ultimately chose to keep them to "keep an eye on them" and "document it". The abuse escalated to cyber-stalking, messages referencing real people and places from Whina's life:

Whina: Like, insanely explicit, like sending me like weird videos and saying that they know me personally... getting these like extremely graphic messages, he was probably like the worst personal messages I've gotten, I got... this one's quite upsetting... Yeah, I don't know if that counts as sexual harassment (laughs) just out of the blue, like a complete stranger so that was, yeah. Message requests on Instagram, a very dark place. (20, 2nd Year University student)

[5] Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., Keller J. (2019) *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back Against Rape Culture.* Oxford:Oxford University Press.

[6] Ringrose, J., Mendes, K., Whitehead, S. and Jenkinson, A. (2021). Resisting Rape Culture online and at school: The pedagogy of Digital Defence and Feminist Activism Lesson, in Ylva, Odenbring & Thomas Johansson (Eds) *Violence, Victimisation and Young People: Education and Safe Learning Environments*. London: Springer.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT: "THE WHOLE FEAR FACTOR OF IT"

Fear, shame and intense discomfort were among the main reactions women talked about in relation to being sexually harassed. Whina described being understandably "freaked out" by her harasser-cum-cyber-stalker, even as she asked hesitantly if what she described 'counted' as sexual harassment. She talked about how her harasser's references to personal information about her life made her particularly afraid; she worried that he "knew me", that "he could see me". Callie similarly described a fearful experience in her high school years related to the After Party of her year 13 School Ball. This was a key social event that she was looking forward to, but just before it was due to take place a young woman from the year above her in school posted on Facebook:

Callie: A recount of the experience at the last year's after ball, and she'd been – like a guy had taken her behind several cars, and made her, essentially, like raped her by [making her] give a blowjob. And it was very horrendous. And she was like: no one helped, nothing, sort of, yeah, I was kind of isolated, and I went back in and no one. And I was kind of shut down, which was very scary... (22, 4th Year University student)

Callie and her friends had "a very frank discussion" about what they were going to do to protect themselves at the After Ball party and planned a strategy to "stick to groups" and not let one another be 'out of sight'. Young women often talked about 'looking out' for one another in efforts to prevent sexual harassment. But the feelings young women had were not always easily shared with anyone because of shame and/or discomfort, as Ruth experienced:

Ruth: I remember, was it last year I was walking home from the beach, and some guy sexually harassed me on the street, and it was something that I was like – and it took me a couple of, like a week or so before I like. I mentioned it to my therapist first, and then some friends, but it took like a while to like talk about and like verbalise and like discuss, because it feels uncomfortable and, like, why did they pick me to do that to, and that kind of thing. And so, you know, it takes a lot on those sorts of areas to build up to talking about. (22, 5th Year Postgrad University student)

Alongside feelings of discomfort and fear, expressions of helplessness were also frequently voiced. For example, Alexis discussed her reactions to a man's sexual comments when she passed him in the street one night:

Alexis: I was walking through town... I felt fine, like I was sober, and I was walking back to meet my group of friends and this guy just walked past me and was like, "You have big boobs" and I just didn't even know what to say, I was just like, I wanted to be like, hit him in the dick but I couldn't like, you just feel so like helpless in that situation, because you don't want to say anything back because you never know what the repercussions of that are going to be but then, like, you also really don't want to be like "Gee, thanks" you know, like, you just don't know what to do in that sort of situation. I just kind of like ran back to my friends. (21, 3rd Year University student)

FEAR OF BEING SEXUALLY HARASSED

Frankie: I saw this post, it was actually so like, true. And it was like, not every guy rapes but like, you're still scared of every man. It's like, not every bear wants to kill you, but everyone's still afraid of bears. And that's so true. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

As well as hearing many stories of sexual harassment experiences from Rainbow participants and young women, we also frequently heard about their fears of being sexually harassed. Inez commented that the lack of

knowledge before #MeToo offered a kind of protection from fears of being sexually harassed. On the other hand, #MeToo media played a clear role in heightening these fears through making participants highly aware of sexual harassment statistics and the volume of women telling their stories.

Rebecca: It almost made me scared, because you see all the statistics and it's like "50% of women are afraid to walk home at night" and it's stuff like that that influences me to be afraid because I know what's out there. So, I definitely think the whole movement had a positive effect of allowing people to share. But I also think that, because it came out when I didn't quite understand everything it was very big and scary and made me afraid, but also aware of what could happen which could make me more prepared. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Blue: I mean kind of thinking about it; I feel like it's almost like it just like without even realising it like reinforces the whole like I'm not safe. Like it could easily happen to me it's like oh no and it's happened to another person like another person's joined the 97% and it just like, reinforces that like it would be so easy for me to just be in the 97% kinda thing. (18, 1st Year University student)

The type of social media content that participants engaged with also played a significant role by exposing them to sometimes horrific situations. Noel mentioned hearing the "stories on social media about guys hiding under the cars and slashing your ankles and stuff" as an example of fear-arousing content she and other young women encountered. Hearing the details of other young women's experiences in very relatable situations, such as being on a date, was another aspect of how media could increase fears of being sexual harassed.

Amaia: And like again with TikTok, and social media and stuff, you see other people talking about their stories of them going on dates and it going badly and it and not like in like just a bad date way but in like an assault way. Like horrible things that, like people have done to them on their dates like when they've kind of trusted this person to meet up with them and then you've completely taken advantage of them and it just makes you wary that like this is like a real thing that can happen you're just meeting up with a stranger you don't know You don't know their intentions and you don't know them at all. They can do anything and it's kinda scary (18, 1st Year University student)

The gendered nature of fears about the possibility of sexual harassment were well understood; young women spoke about how men who are their friends or boyfriends couldn't understand why they would be afraid to walk anywhere alone in the dark. Unlike young men, the risk of being sexually harassed in particular settings was ever-present for young women. Abby and Eliza talked about their experience of having to walk past groups of boys:

Abby: If I have to walk down through all these groups of boys, I just really have to prepare myself I'm like, all right, shoulders back, head up. I whip out the septum piercing, make yourself look a little bit more scary. And I'm just like, blast music so you don't hear anything if they're gonna like shout at you or anything. Just you got to really prepare yourself.

Eliza: Yeah, and walking alone is like terrifying. Yeah, just don't want to do that at all.

(Eliza, 18, Year 13; Abby, 16, Year 12; Girls' School)

Amber: [The biggest one] this year was probably like as a course for SCC NZSCC, and they, the boys were like, it was dark, it was in (name of city), and I had no idea where I was going, and I had to walk to the carpark because that's where I was gonna get picked up to go to my billet's house and I was like, can someone like take me to, like I don't want to go to the car park by myself, it's like 8pm and (laughs), they were like "Why? Like, just go down" and I was like no, like I'm not gonna go down by myself and they were like completely shocked that they wanted me to come with, like, that I wanted someone else to be there with me and it was just, like, I don't know like they never, like they never compute in their mind that we... (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Participants' sexual harassment stories and fears focus us on the clear need to find effective approaches to stopping sexual violence and creating environments where young women can feel safe as they go about their everyday lives. As we will show throughout the remainder of this report, #MeToo did create some positive changes from the perspectives of all participants in the project. But these changes were limited and had quite different impacts for different genders.

"Yeah, I mean honestly, before the #MeToo movement, I didn't really even know what sexual assault was or, like, anything like that. I mean I was Year 8 when I found out about it so it wasn't really talked about then, it might have been talked about in high schools but I'm not 100% sure."

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Hallie, 17, Year 12, Girls' School

Section 4

#METOO: A POSITIVE EDUCATION ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Young people unanimously agreed that #MeToo made a significant difference to what people now know about sexual harassment. For some, #MeToo was the first time they had heard about sexual harassment, for others it filled often extensive gaps in the little they did know.

Some of the common expressions we heard from participants included metaphors such as "opened my eyes" and "a wake-up call". Young men were most likely to talk about #MeToo being their first knowledge about sexual harassment.

Sebastian: This is the reality of um the world we live in, that it actually happens, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Um and I kind of like, opened my eyes like, the progressive movement and the different hashtags and the different people saying, like, "yes, this #MeToo, this happened to me", was kind of like eye opening for me as to like, how many people this happens to, and then it kind of like helped me stand in the shoes of people in these situations. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

#MeToo provided knowledge about the sexual harassment experiences of women, but several participants also critiqued its overall exclusion of same-sex, non-white, and men's stories of sexual harassment. For young women and Rainbow participants, #MeToo broadened their knowledge about sexual harassment by filling in the gaps of a previously vague or sparse awareness.

#MeToo gave young women and Rainbow participants not so much first knowledge as greater *detailed* knowledge, for example enabling them to put a name to sexual harassment experiences they experienced during their high school years. #MeToo, and the conversations it opened, extended their knowledge beyond global terms such as 'rape' or 'sexual harassment' to knowing the range of practices these terms embraced.

Frankie: I think that's like, again, like it starts the conversation, and people feel more comfortable more to come forward with

it, so they say it. And then it's the people around them that say 'that was wrong, that what happened to you, that was like, you know', like, if you start a conversation, if somebody opens up a bit, and they're told that, and then there are like you know other people in the group that didn't know that was actually a bad thing. They go, wow, that's actually happened to me before. And I see that now. And then you can educate people on that, you know, learning about, like, we keep on talking about it, you know. The word rape and like sexual harassment it was always just one thing and now you know what lies under that. You know, like naming all the things that actually do count as rape and sexual assault, then there's the second that, you know, that that's happening, we can be like, okay, this is where it stops. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Ines: Oh yeah. I mean, maybe in some ways it's reinforced our understanding of what we can call unacceptable. Like when, rather than just being like, oh it's just boys figuring out their sexuality, being like, oh actually when someone's talking to you crudely and it's repeated behaviour especially, you're like, no actually that's a problem it's not just how the world should be (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Discovery about the extent to which sexual harassment happened to women, specifically, was a major topic in participants' talk about the new knowledge #MeToo created for them and others. Both the volume of #MeToo posts and statistics about numbers of women and girls who experience sexual harassment were key ways that participants learned about "how common" it was (Rihanna) and that it "happens everywhere" (Hallie).

Aidan: Like what the #MeToo movement did do was just – like some of the other guys said – kind of shape my perspective around the extent of the issue and how it's not something that only happens to like point five percent of women population but something that does happen to a lot of them and how major the issue is here. (16, Year 12, Boys' School)

Just Juice: I think like following it, like more recently, like this year, there was a thing that I saw on my social media. I think like you guys have probably talked about it, of um, this whole like, I think it was a study or something about how like 95% of women have experienced sexual harassment. So that was like all over my socials especially like TikTok and stuff like that. And so that did kind of like talk more about what exactly classifies as sexual harassment. And it like kind of like opened my eyes a lot to that sort of thing (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Knowledge about the extent of sexual harassment often had an emotional impact on young women and Rainbow participants. Emotions ranged from feeling overwhelmed to alarmed, confronted, shocked and sad. Sometimes these feelings connected with the heightened sense of vulnerability these participants experienced now that they knew the extent of women's sexual victimisation.

Ariana: Like when it happened we were doing speeches for school so I was like, 'Oh I'll do it on that cos you know, the most relevant thing, get people fired up.' And it was just, it was just like quite confronting cos this was, only in like Year 11 sort of thing and you're getting confronted with these statistics of women and girls who will, like experience this within their lifetime. And it was just like, it was pretty horrible to read cos of that whole thing with having your own bubble I guess. (16, Year 12, Girls' School)

Johanna: Yeah well going to an all girls school I think that definitely made it fire up here. I remember just hearing it at lunchtime, I could hear like heaps of people talking about it. Or like we'd have a meeting in the feminist club and literally we had to cut it off because we were like so late to class. And it's, when you hear the statistics and you're like sitting in a group, you can be like, 'Oh one of us would have experienced that, or two of us.' Which is kind of a bit scary. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Whereas young women shared the emotions they felt in learning about the volume of sexual harassment perpetrated against women, only one young man, Logan, explicitly described an emotional response, and this was framed in a general versus personal way.

Logan: I mean the stories we hear about in the media often aren't in New Zealand. So, it's pretty easy to feel bad, disgusted and stuff, but also detached from it, like saying that it doesn't happen in New Zealand. Generally disgust. (17, Year 12, Boys' School)

Participants viewed #MeToo as not only spreading knowledge and awareness, but as also shattering the silencing of sexual harassment. Many commented on how #MeToo helped to "normalise" speaking out about sexual harassment, making it easier for women to disclose their experiences of it. Celebrity stories played a key role in 'normalising' women speaking out, the Harvey Weinstein case being frequently mentioned as an example. Such stories were also seen as opening up conversations about sexual harassment between friends, in gatherings or classes, and in families.

Emilia: It's opened up the conversation.

Ariana: It's just no longer like a taboo sort of thing to bring up it's yeah people just feel more safe about talking about it, yeah.

(Emilia, 16, Year 12; Ariana, 16, Year 12; Girls' School)

Manish: And more people are speaking up.

Int: About their own experiences?

Manish: Yeah, because there's more people saying that they've been harassed, so it's easier to say that. And there's been heaps of famous people who have supported this, so people notice it also.

(16, Year 12, Boys' School)

Morgan: But I think it just definitely gave us opportunity to just share frustration with each other and to just, um you know, we we'd talk about one case with each other and how frustrated, we are and what we can do to help or blah blah blah. So, even if it wasn't you know directly talking about our experiences we – we were talking about it. And then in terms of family members um yeah I definitely had a lot more conversations about sexual assault during the movement with family members. Um. And a lot of yeah a lot of the conversations I had started, because I was very invested in it, but also a lot of the conversations were started by people who found um it really difficult as a topic, so I think that was really, really interesting and it just showed how much meaning the movement and how much you know influence the movement did have on people. (21, 3rd Year University student)

We frequently heard the word "empowerment" in participants' talk about #MeToo's positive role in the encouragement of women to speak out about their experiences of sexual harassment. Similarly, some participants drew attention to how #MeToo helped sexual harassment victims to feel less isolated, creating a "sense of solidarity", as Boris put it, with other victims. This creation of solidarity helped to validate women's experiences and counter victim-blaming.

Boris: I would say the meaning, for me was perhaps more empowerment, among survivors of sexual assault. And it's a sense of solidarity where because #MeToo is like, there's 'too' shows that yeah, there's more than just one person who's involved in or who has been assaulted or hurt in some way, so there's a sense of, there's a collectivism. And I think for yeah survivors of sexual assault, it's a sense of unity and, and knowing that you're not alone. (25, Research Assistant)

Rebecca: Cause I know that from what I've seen there are a lot of girls that have said they haven't come out with their stories of rape because they thought that they were the only ones and that it was something against

them. And so, definitely this movement made it more open for people to talk about it and make them feel like it wasn't their fault. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Abby: But it's more open on social media, people, like hearing other people's experiences makes you feel, like it's not normalised, because it's not a normal thing, but that you're not alone. Other people have these experiences. (16, Year 12, Girls' School)

Although participants strongly viewed #MeToo as both opening-up conversations about sexual harassment and empowering women to speak out, within their own worlds it didn't necessarily follow that they felt comfortable or empowered to talk about sexual harassment. Some of the young men we spoke with told us about their own or a general discomfort amongst young men in talking about sexual harassment.

Sebastian: I mean sexual assault and harassment is really uncomfortable for a lot of people to talk about, um and I know even like some of my fellow head students are really uncomfortable about talking about it, and even in the [schools action network] there are some people uncomfortable at talking about it. Either because um like they're men and they don't feel confident and comfortable talking about an issue that they feel effects women, or um they're women and they feel like really unsafe talking about those kinds of issues. And it's developing a culture within our schools where everyone is comfortable and safe to talk about these issues. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Mathew: To be honest, I don't think I've had a conversation about #MeToo with any of my friends, or any of my classmates. So I haven't really, no I haven't elaborated on much about it. But I definitely know what it is and that's kind of where I've left it at the moment.

Logan: I mean as a boys' school we haven't really talked about it amongst mates I think, but like if you asked us as a group we'd say, 'Oh yeah it's bad,' and stuff, but no one, we haven't really talked about it I guess.

(Matthew, 16, Year 12; Logan, 17, Year 12; Boys' School)

Discomfort talking about sexual harassment extended to other genders as well. For some young women, the difficult process following disclosure was a deterrent. For others, it was the enduring stigma of sexual harassment that makes women feel ashamed and to blame for the sexual harassment they experience. As Alexis put it "It's got a massive stigma around it".

Amber: Back to like #MeToo and stuff, I was like, um, I'd like to think that if I, if something like that happened to me, um, I would do something about it but I feel it would be likely that I'd just not. Because, I would talk to you guys about it but I'm not sure if I'd, like it's just so much to go through, the whole thing.

Elise: You'd also feel real ashamed, for no reason, you'd feel embarrassed.

(Amber 17, Elise 18, Year 13, Girls' School)

Several participants mentioned the added stigmatisation for victims when the sexual harassment related to the much less talked about and visible sexual harassment that involved a perpetrator and victim of the "same sex". Haley showed sensitivity to how people might be more ready to dismiss it compared with mainstream heterosexual sexual harassment. Logan talked about a two-fold stigmatisation for men: one because it is "same sex" and two because it is "de-masculating" for a man to identify himself as a victim of sexual harassment.

Haley: Like I don't even know how much of an issue like same sex sexual harassment is, I don't feel like it, I personally haven't found it very visible at all, like I haven't heard any stories.

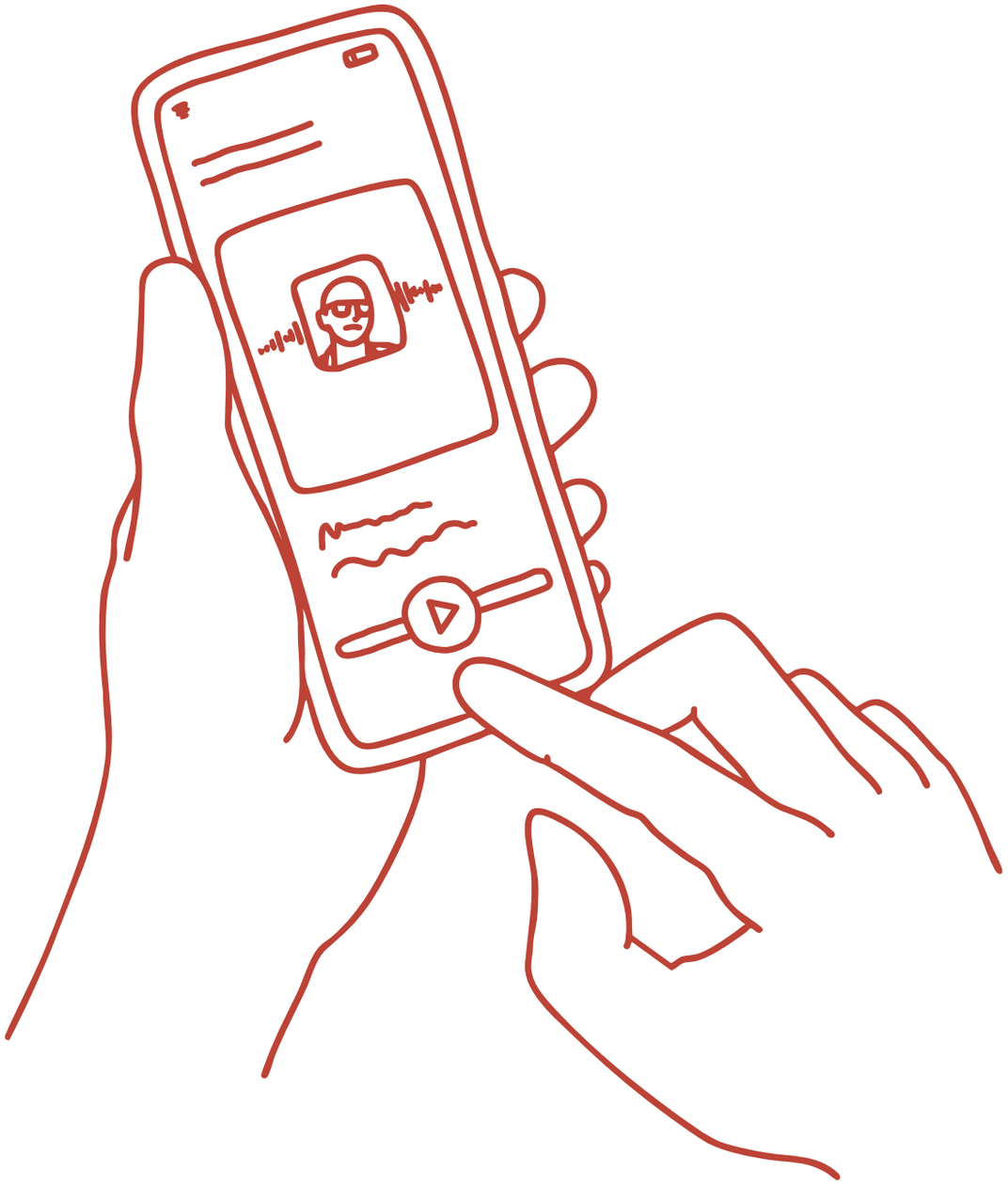
Dara: Same, I was just thinking that.

Haley: Like personally around like the people that I know in circles but also in #MeToo but I feel like cos you've got that added stigmatisation that it's same-sex and that people might dismiss it because it's not like heterosexual, it makes it even harder to come forward, yeah.

(Haley, 18, Year 13; Dara, 16, Year 12; Co-ed School)

Logan: I mean people can love whoever they want to love, but when it's something like sexual assault against a man I think it's quite demasculating and that comes a part of the problem, because for women it's like okay to come and put forward your opinion, but for dudes it's like 'Oh why didn't you just push them off or something?' and there's that part of it, like Terry Crews came forward and he's huge so that probably helped I guess break that image. (Logan, 17, Year 12, Boys' School)

For all of the participants in our research the knowledge gained from #MeToo was a clear positive but for young women the knowledge about the extent of sexual harassment brought an acute awareness of their own vulnerability to sexual harassment; this knowledge aroused anxiety. The missing voices of same-sex victims of sexual harassment was noted by some as a criticism of #MeToo and explained by others as an effect of stigmatisation. Although the "empowerment' of women to speak out about their harassment was collectively regarded as positive, this did not necessarily translate to participants' lived worlds where talk about sexual harassment could be "uncomfortable" and disclosure of experiences "embarrassing".



SOCIAL MEDIA: DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Although social media informed young people about sexual victimisation in positive ways – how common it was, what the term sexual harassment specifically meant etc. – many participants also talked about the use of social media to misinform and disinform users about sexual harassment.

These discussions were highly gendered in content: young men were extremely concerned about the spread of false allegations made by sexual harassment victims whereas young women were very critical of misinformation, both about the intentions of victims who disclosed sexual harassment and the ready dismissal of them as liars when disclosing their experience.

QUESTIONING SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION

Collectively, our participants were savvy about social media and critical of the information they access or receive; as Logan told us "...we have to kind of question everything we see on social media". One of the ways this questioning played out in our research was as a suspicion about the 'truth' of a victim's sexual harassment disclosure and this connected closely to the speed with which the post could 'go viral', the ease of posting something without 'proof', and young women's possible use of sexual harassment to increase followers or get themselves in the "spotlight" (Darby's term). Most of the questioning and concerns about the truth of victim disclosures on social media came from young men. A suspicious, disbelieving approach to victims' disclosures of sexual harassment has concerning implications, particularly in terms of support for victims and responses to perpetrators.

Tyler: Yeah and I guess some people become too concerned about their following and their followers and some people just make up these stories because they know that they can blow up on social media by using these stories and yeah that's definitely a negative that comes out of it that people can just, some people probably think they can make up

these stories and trying to get sympathy and followers and stuff.

Logan: There was a story against Keanu Reeves that the person who wrote it, couple of days later said that it was a social experiment when they released it.

Tyler: I mean on social media, everything's filtered so we have no idea what's real or what's fake you know.

Logan: Yeah I think with social media we've just kind of gotten so used to taking everything we see on social media, take it with a grain of salt and we always kind of have to question everything we see on social media, I think that's kind of some ways can damage a movement like #MeToo.

(Logan, 17; Tyler, 16; Year 12, Boys' School)

Hayden: Like, yeah, it certainly like, that gives a good platform to falsify information. It's sort of just send out whatever you want. Knowing that, more often than not, you'll get people that will just jump on it, which I guess it's scary in a way. (Hayden, 18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

FALSE ALLEGATIONS (MIS)INFORMATION

Much of young men's concern and uncertainty arising from social media sexual harassment content centred on false allegations. Throughout our discussions and interviews, young people often talked about high profile media cases as examples when they wanted to illustrate a point or add to someone else's comment in a discussion. This was particularly so for the media coverage of sexual harassment charges against major public figures such as Donald Trump and film producer Harvey Weinstein, but also Aziz Asari, Keanu Reeves and Johnny Depp. The Weinstein and Depp cases had ongoing, high profile media coverage, both of allegations against them and the ensuing court case. Unsurprisingly then, participants most often spoke about these two cases in discussions about false allegations. The wide sharing of such stories on social media ("blown everywhere", as Abby put it) works to support the idea that false allegations are very common (especially if young people don't have competing sources of information to draw on).

Abby: That's a, definitely a big thing because it's like those kinds of few stories, cos we know that it happens so rarely of like false allegations and stuff. They just get picked up by those certain groups of people and blown everywhere, it's like they're afraid of being falsely accused if they go "that's ridiculous". It's like that, I think it's a Margaret Atwood quote where it's like "men are afraid women will laugh at them, women are afraid men will kill them."

Lauren: I mean the whole thing with Johnny Depp, and I know that was a while ago, and his ex-wife or something, I didn't read a lot into it but I knew that she made false allegations against him, that was definitely a big thing that people would pick up and go: "well what if something like this happened, like da-da-da-da" and like.

(Abby, 16, Year 12; Lauren, 15, Year 11)

Alexis: I think for me, it just, when guys say that sort of thing, it just shows how uneducated, some of them are, like, you know, they are feeding into that false accusation, like narrative and, you know, they're just rehearsing like, something that they've heard online, or like, you know, they're like a parrot, like they just read one comment and that's their argument every time we try and talk to them about something like, "Oh but this person falsely accused this person" and it's like, okay, one time, it's the only story you've got to back up your opinion. (21, 3rd Year University student)

Many young men spoke of the unsettling anxiety-arousing responses they and/or other young men had about false allegations. In part, this related to the perceived ease with which women can make a sexual harassment claim on social media. But, as a few young men told us, it was also that young men found it much easier to identify with a perpetrator's false allegation position compared with a victim's perspective. This identification was largely because they could imagine themselves in the situation of facing an allegation, without having perpetrated sexual harassment. Adam and Logan, in the same focus group, were two of those young men who offered an understanding of why they and/or other young men might take more notice of false allegation stories despite there being many more "real stories" than "fake" ones:

Adam: I think like another reason why like the #MeToo movement has a bit of backlash is like as men it's kind of harder to see ourselves in the position of the people posting the #MeToo stuff, but then like the small, like the really small number of articles about how, like false allegations and stuff like that, that's like, as men, it's a lot easier to see ourselves in that, from that perspective, so that's probably why, even though like proportionally there's way more real stories than there are fake, it's just kind of harder for us to relate to those ones and put ourselves in their shoes kind of. (17, Year 12, Boys' School)

Logan: It could be a fear of someone's easily, because the blown-out of proportion allegations that you hear in the news and stuff just makes it more present in a guy's life because they'd remember that more because they related to it more I guess. (17, Year 12, Boys' School)

It was knowing that a young woman could post her allegation of sexual harassment on social media that most created "fear" because it could quickly spread, and a young man would feel powerless to stop it from being treated as true. Many young men viewed making an allegation as a kind of weapon that young women could use at will should there be some aspect of a young man' behaviour that displeased them.

Devdan: Most of the guys I asked, they found it almost some sort of evil – I wouldn't say evil force either, how would I put this? – they fear the fact that they could be targeted. Which was something I never really viewed into, but as I did a little bit of asking around with some of the students, especially some of the guys who I think are genuinely nice people, they are actually scared of the women because of what they say – thank God I don't know any of their names so I can't dox them here – what they say is that they feel like it's a very easy way for people who dislike them to easily slander them. And that is a terrifying thought, especially with such an age where whatever you say on social media – whatever you say in person means crap now – but whatever you say on social media is gold. (18, Year 13, Boys' School)

Taking more notice of false allegations media and relating more to content about them is troubling because of the misinformation and disinformation about sexual victimisation that such content shapes and reinforces. For example, false allegations content generally reinforces incorrect notions such as women lie about sexual harassment for personal gain. There are important implications here for sexual violence prevention education. More specifically, young men's existing critical stance toward social media should be acknowledged as valuable but it needs to be paired equally with a specific critique of ways social media shapes gendered misunderstandings about sexual violence.

INFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S POWER

In one of our young men's groups, the perception of women as now having the "power" to speak out about their sexual harassment created concern; they could use this power the "right way" (i.e. true allegation, "for justice") or the "wrong way" (false allegation). Implicitly, either of these perceived uses of "power" put men in a position of relative powerlessness.

Seth: The whole movement's about giving empowering, and it's just, if you choose to like speak out and use the power that you're given to, like get justice because of something

that's happened to you. Or if you use it, not for good to get back at something.

Hayden: Yeah just get back at you, for wasting my time.

Adrian: Just with that amount of power, the way you can change someone's life really badly, or really good.

(Seth, 17, Hayden and Adrian, 18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

The idea that women misuse the "power", that was seen to come from the #MeToo movement, surfaced in young men's talk in different ways. Revenge, as in Hayden's comment "get back", was one way mentioned by several young men, especially in a break-up situation where a girlfriend did not want a relationship to end.

Jay: Maybe, you know, a year after you break up and you have like bad feelings about your partner, this could be like one way to get back at them, you know, and because of circumstance where you can't prove that it's right or wrong. (24, University)

Seth: Yeah, and I have a mate who recently broke up with his partner, but he was scared because obviously they'd had sexual relations and he was scared to because he thought she might get like pissed off, and try and get back at him by filing for something which would be really scary. Because you know, it's essential it's essentially blackmail even though there was nothing said he was still scared to do it because of what she could do: ruin his life. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

A major way in which young men perceived a young woman's misuse of power was how she could, in Seth's words, "ruin" a young man's reputation or life. Stories of this kind abounded in social media, whether celebrity stories such as the Harvey Weinstein case, high profile media cases, or locally circulating stories within young people's social networks. With this media content in mind, it is not surprising that a "ruined life" narrative might readily shape young men's perspectives. Mostly the nature of the "ruin" was not elaborated, apart from "gaol". Jay though gave specific examples "for a 22 year old" (his own age) who might "lose Facebook friends", "have to write an apology" or "leave class" or more seriously become "depressed" or be in "despair" and not be able to fight for their reputation or "recover" from a false allegation. Adam also questioned the ability to "recover" from an allegation, true or false:

Adam: Yeah whether or not it's a false allegation, your reputation does get ruined, it's just like, you know, how much of it is ruined, and are you able to recover from that? I think that's the difference. (17, Year 12, Boys' School)

Collectively, young women and Rainbow participants were highly critical of how readily young men took up a false allegation "narrative". Their critiques particularly recognised the relative rarity of a woman making up an allegation and the very small number of false allegations that receive a disproportionate amount of media attention.

Just Juice: And yeah, I found like if you were talking about – especially with guys, like say if it was brought up in class or something like that a lot of the guys would be like, 'well, what about the false allegations'? And a lot of guys would lean back onto that and say, like, well, they could be lying, you know.

Frankie: They look at like one false allegation.

Just Juice: Yeah and like that one should go to jail longer for like ruining this person's life, you know?

Avery: Yeah, the one lie out of like, a thousand truths will make everyone start questioning.

(Just Juice and Frankie 17, Avery 18; Year 13, Co-ed School)

Explaining the failure of "guys" and "girls" to do some research rather than take one comment about a false allegation as fact, Alexis saw lack of education as the key issue:

Alexis: That's not just guys, it's like you see it with girls as well, even like girls that are like all, 'blah blah blah false accusations rah rah rah', and yeah, I'm like, if you do a little bit more research, you'll find that we are disproportionately exposed to false accusation stories and things like that and like yeah, it's definitely like a lack of maybe education and, like, exposure. (21, 3rd Year University)

DEFENSIVE REACTIONS

False allegations loomed large as a concern for both young men and young women but, as the findings above show, in very different ways. Together with fear and anxiety associated with false allegations, young men also talked about feelings of being 'under attack' in the wake of #MeToo. A few young women, too, suggested that the volume of #MeToo disclosures could potentially be experienced as a gendered attack by young men. Several critically aware male participants observed defensiveness to be a reaction by young men to feeling attacked and/or powerless.

Dave: And again that's a benefit of the #MeToo movement in the second ripple of it because it's forcing us to ask more questions about why men get so defensive like that. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Young women and Rainbow participants were particularly attuned to the defensive reactions of young men in response to raising the topic of sexual harassment. One of the reasons for being so attuned was that most tried to educate young men in their friendship networks and/or heterosexual relationships about sexual harassment. However, such attempts often resulted in counter claims (e.g. 'men are abused too'), personal attacks ('feminazi', over-reaction) and minimisation of sexual harassment, amongst other negative reactions.

Morgan: But then again, people do that whole like "It's not all men" or "men get sexually assaulted as well", it's like, we're not trying to draw attention away from that but all you're doing right now is drawing attention away from women and that just, it very, to me, very clearly reveals their intentions of not like actually caring about what's happening to women but they're just like, yeah, don't want to be assassinated for just being a man, it's like that's not what we're trying to do but, okay. (21, 3rd Year University student)

Gemma: There's a time where guys bring it up, like, but 'Oh, but men get sexually assaulted too', normally it's brought up when we are talking about, like, women being assaulted and it's like.

Felicity: Yeah they only bring it up when they want to minimise like or diminish what our feelings are about things.

Geraldine: Oh my god, that's just horrible.

Amber: And also, like #MeToo recently turned into like 'Not all men', and shit like that and I was like mm okay we never said it was all men but, like, the vast majority of you are horrible, so like, I don't know yeah, but they get very defensive.

Felicity: Or if they talk about like how men can be sexually assaulted too it's like but 99% of the time that is also men doing that to other men.

Amber: And we never said we don't support men being sexually assaulted it's just the fact that we are the most.

(Gemma and Felicity 18; Geraldine and Amber 18; Year 13, Girls' School)

We heard many similar sentiments from other young women about young men's defensive responses to their attempts to have a conversation about sexual harassment. If discussing the topic of sexual harassment with young women can raise such defensiveness, then this gives us an important message for education about sexual violence prevention. Methods of delivering such education

"I think #MeToo has done something where its sparked a realisation in a lot of young men, but not all of them, and so #MeToo for some young men their response to it is like a lack of understanding for those power contexts and a lack of understanding of what actually happens. And for a lot of young men, you always hear it when someone says 'Not all men', it's like they feel attacked when we talk about these issues, they feel insecure and undermined when these issues are talked about."

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Sebastian, 18, Year 13, Co-ed School

need to consider creation of safe environments that enable young men to critique the misinforming bases (e.g. media content; what peers say) for "feeling attacked" and their defensive responses to that feeling.

RAPE MYTHS AND VICTIM BLAMING RESPONSES

Much of participants' talk about false allegations and questioning of women's truthfulness centred on ways young men have reacted to young women's perceived empowerment to use sexual harassment as a retaliatory tool. But some participants also spoke about how difficult it can be for victims to disclose at all, and then to face harassment and victim-blaming when they do. Devdan identified the "horrible backlash" of victims and Boris the scepticism and criticism that sexual harassment victims confront when they do disclose sexual harassment online.

Boris: Yeah, I think victims of sexual assault or sexual violence, it's an extremely brave thing to come forward and just tell somebody in private, let alone come forward as a celebrity, for example, on social media and to yeah, go to make that public because there's so much tension and scepticism and criticism that one faces when doing that. (25, Research Assistant)

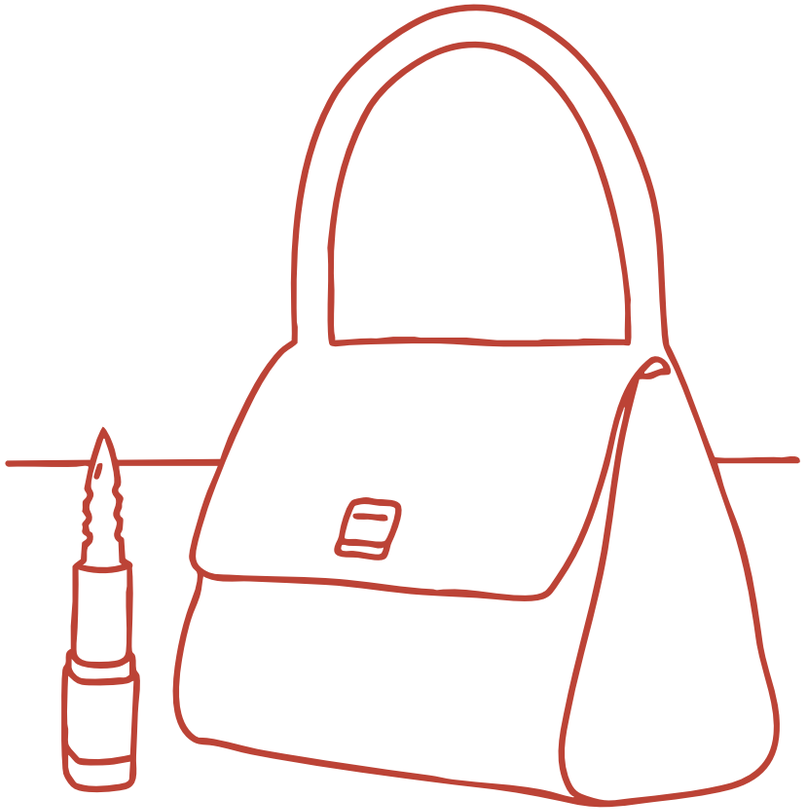
Devdan: But the response to it [#MeToo], particularly from men, has given us many more questions to answer, not just, 'who's doing the sexual harassing and why?' but it's also opened up questions of what is it that makes certain people blame the victim more somehow? You know, the phenomenon of victim-blaming, the phenomenon of being concerned about a false accusation, you know how that affects all of this. Yeah, if we're able to answer the questions that that's posed – why is it we don't want to believe the people who are alleging something that's a problem, why is it that we, you know, why do we resist that? (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Addressing the "why" of victim blaming requires taking a step back to look at the culture from which such practices have evolved. Relatively few participants talked about culture (e.g rape culture) despite the impressive level of gender analysis many, primarily young women and Rainbow participants, showed in their talk. But those who did very clearly pointed to a normalisation of rape culture and of making women responsible for their sexual victimisation via messages about what they ought not to do or wear.

Noel: And also there's a lot of other factors that people use against you like if you're drinking and intoxicated or if you are dressing a certain way. And like I've, definitely had older, like parental figures in my life say 'don't get drunk, otherwise like it will happen' and 'it's like obviously not your fault but technically you're still asking for it because you're intoxicated or you can't dress that way you're just asking for it' blah blah blah and I remember seeing on social media – again, I don't know how true this was – but it was a case in Ireland where the lawyer defending the guy who apparently assaulted the woman held up the underwear that she was raped in and said she was asking for it if she was wearing this. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Inez: You have to... take that step back to analyse what it's (#MeToo) actually representing about society and that kind of the idea of the culture of rape and how that's kind of normalised and kind of almost seen as the way that you know men and women are expected to express their sexuality and that's just part of the experience. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Inez and Noel's comments highlight key areas for education and intervention: changing long-standing gendered cultural norms and practices sustaining sexual harassment is a challenging but essential task and requires intervention in many forms: institutional and government policies, community education, school education to name a few. Here we limit recommendations to policy for the provision of sexual violence prevention education in schools.



A GENDERED EDUCATION ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

We heard very similar perspectives from young people about social media's educational potential to inform and misinform young people. But it was only young women and Rainbow participants who talked about a gender divide in becoming *educated* about sexual harassment.

All of this talk about gendered differences in sexual harassment education centred on young men's lack of education, some focused on social media and yet other talk focused on the education specifically targeted to girls and young women about preventing their own sexual harassment.

YOUNG MEN'S LACK OF EDUCATION

Young women and Rainbow participants used a range of expressions to describe what they saw as young men's lack of education about sexual harassment. For example, we heard the term "uneducated" and, less gently, "ignorance". Some participants put more emphasis on education for "guys" and showed some empathy about them not accessing education.

Just Juice: Like I feel like a lot of guys still have this idea that rape is something that happens from a certain person who is a rapist and it happens in these certain situations where, like in reality, you know, they could end up in something like that without even realising what they're doing, you know.

Krystal: Like your intentions might be like harmless but like you don't realise how much it's impacting someone.

Molly: Yeah. And like, part of it is because guys aren't educated. If they were even in that situation they might have not even realised that what happened was not consensual.

(Just Juice and Molly 17, Krystal, 18; Year 13, Co-ed School)

More often though, participants criticised young men for not making an 'effort' to educate themselves. We often heard about participants' frustration and irritation with how, in the absence of young men's self and school education, they and other young women shouldered responsibility for educating young men about sexual harassment. This education could be in the context of a dating relationship but equally in friendships with young men.

Amber: It's pretty normal like, we're like, when you think about it, women are responsible for basically educating the man, cos if they're straight they decide to have a relationship with, it's kind of like expected that you are meant to educate them on women's problems and like all that kind of stuff cos they just don't know that, they should just really be able to go into a relationship and be on a level playing field with respect to everyone. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Abby: And I guess I thought this (the research) was a really good opportunity to contribute to something like Eliza said, because I feel extremely frustrated by the state of the world and how as young women its feels like our duty to be educating the young men and that's quite frustrating. (16, Year 12, Girls' School)

"Educating" generally meant trying to have conversations with young men about sexual harassment which were very often responded to with defensiveness rather than appreciation or wanting to hear more.

Morgan: I think generally, sometimes people are just like 'Oh it's a touchy subject' like 'don't bring the mood down', don't like whatever. I'm like 'no, this is an important issue' that happens a lot, like it's widespread, like it should be talked about but sometimes, especially with boys, they're like 'don't bring the mood down like it's a buzzkill'. Like, I'm like, 'okay'. (21, 3rd year University student)

Eliza: And personally I'm yeah. I make an effort to see it from their point of view, from their place of ignorance, and what I could, how I could, you know, word it when I try to have these conversations that makes them feel less defensive, so that they can actually hear what I'm saying but they don't make that same effort. (18, Year 13, Girls' School)

GENDERED SOCIAL MEDIA EDUCATION

For many of the young men, high profile celebrity stories of sexual harassment on social media were the primary (often only) information about sexual harassment they had seen. There was consistent acknowledgement that they generally didn't view or engage with sexual harassment content. Oscar talked about "scrolling past" and "not looking in any depth" at it and Tyler said he didn't "engage with it a whole lot". Others explicitly told us they didn't engage at all: Patrick commented "I haven't engaged with it online" and Adam, "I don't interact with it really". Aidan told us "I don't engage with it" and also that he "definitely wouldn't share" sexual harassment content. Sebastian summed up young men's relationship with sexual harassment media content as equally being one of disinterest and social media algorithms.

Sebastian: I think there are a portion of boys who do engage but it's quite a small portion and then I think for a lot of other young men, one, obviously the algorithm if they're liking things like games and I don't know, whatever young men are interested in on social media. Then they won't get much content focused on this activist kind of stuff. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

We found astute awareness among young women and Rainbow participants about how these two interconnected factors – interest and algorithms – resulted in a highly gendered "splitting" (Just Juice) of what sexual harassment content different genders consume. Young men's lack of "investment" (Darby) means less sexual harassment content appears in the feeds of users whereas young women's engagement with sexual harassment content feeds more of it to them.

"Yeah I have a similar perspective um, yeah I'm not really sure if it was like the algorithm of my social media kind of like you know, putting that stuff more towards me but I yeah I generally get the feeling that men get a lot less of this kind of content or maybe are less invested in it, somewhat than women are, which is just you know, like, I guess, a by-product of like just like sexism, and you know that kind of thing. Yeah, or maybe they just wouldn't feel comfortable talking about it with their mates I feel like whenever I've been around conversations between men talking about sexual assault it's usually kind of like dissecting it as opposed to like sharing their own experiences or empathising with it I guess, yeah."

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Darby, 20, 2nd Year University student

Algorithms, then, sustain a highly significant gendered pattern which provides young women but not young men with information on which to build their understandings and ways of relating to sexual harassment.

Just Juice: Just kind of like, I guess what you interact with? So say if you, you know like the way the social media algorithm works. So yeah –

Frankie: Girls definitely see those more than guys.

Just Juice: Yeah 100 percent. Which I guess is like the bad thing about it is that like, if you're obviously interested, so like obviously girls will probably be interacting with stuff like that more. So, they're getting more education on it, where guys aren't going to be interacting with as much as they're not getting educated on this sort of thing. So, I guess, like with that sort of thing, like, social media is definitely splitting like, you know, ideas and stuff like that, and cos it's like, showing what you want to hear and see, you know, and so, yeah.

(Just Juice, Frankie, 17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Another dimension of young women and Rainbow participants' interest and engagement with sexual harassment content was sharing the content widely through posting and re-sharing content on their own social media accounts. Felicity and her friends spoke clearly about a distinct gender difference, not only between girls and "guys" but also between "popular straight like white guys" and "gay guys".

Felicity: Yeah, like, I feel like an interesting thing is a lot of the time things are shared like on Instagram, like people might post a post on their story, or like reshare something that's to do with sexual assault even if it's not in New Zealand. I know a lot of the ones like I don't know, just the most recent one I remember is when they were talking about how in Alabama the charge for getting an abortion after getting raped is higher than the actual charge for rape. But if you see – like some of the big posts every girl is like sharing it, like that kind of information and you don't see like a single guy doing that unless they're from like a certain demographic, like you see sometimes the gay guys sharing stuff like that. But like most of the popular straight like white guys – like they don't like, unless someone gets called out on that stuff and then you see them making the effort. (18, Year 13, Girls' School)

A minimal or zero engagement with sexual harassment content, and/or engagement in response to one being "called out on that stuff", are significant aspects of the gender 'gap' in young people's access to knowledge about sexual harassment.

GENDERED SELF-PROTECTION EDUCATION

There are strong 'educational' messages for girls and young women about learning to protect themselves from sexual harassment. Self-defence courses for girls are important but they might also convey a message that girls are responsible for stopping sexual violence. Participants spoke about the various ways they were given instruction on how to protect themselves. We also heard about learning from observing the differential treatment around boys' freedom to come and go as they please in contrast to curfews placed on girls about what time to be home or not allowing them to go out at all.

Krystal: Boys get taught like such different things. Like, when I had a boyfriend a couple years ago, like, he could just do whatever he want. He could go out at any time at night, but like me: always like nine o'clock, like I was younger then. But like, he could just do whatever he wanted and stuff, but I had like such different rules. And when I was younger, I used to walk down to her house and like walk home, and mum was like never go through the schools because like the school are always dark and quiet. And at night-time, she'd be like always walk on the street in front of people's houses so people can see you, and she'd always like, write my, her name on my hand – oh and like her phone number on my hand and stuff. But like there are so many rules and be like, that would never like, people who would never do that to their like sons, I feel. (18, Year 13, Co-Ed School)

Just Juice: And like I remember being like, maybe like 9 or 10. And my mum was like telling me that she saw a post or something about how like, if you're walking like you shouldn't wear your hair in like a ponytail because it's easier to grab and stuff like that was like never like walk with headphones in and it was telling me all these things like a 9 year old. And like ways to like protect myself, you know, which is just like, you know, a lot for like, and that's like still, like stuck with me I think about that like a lot that like, you know, it's all about like how you need to protect yourself. (17, Year 12, Co-ed School)

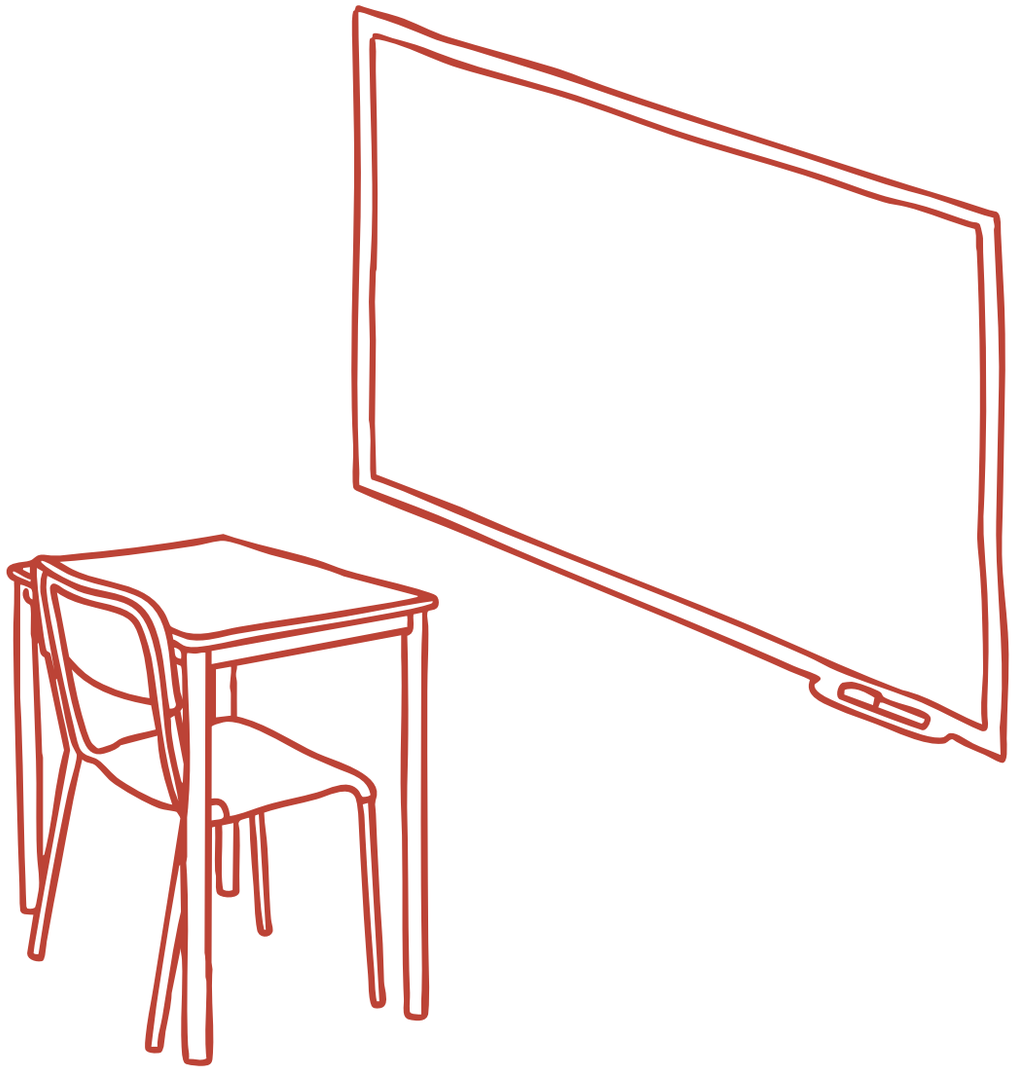
Some of the social media content that the young women interacted with reinforced that women need to protect themselves and contributed to a sense that this was what every young woman needed to do. Content described by participants often had a sensationalised depiction of self-protection methods. Red described strategies such as hiding a knife in a lipstick and using a taser hairbrush. Rather than building a sense of confidence about being able to protect themselves these methods seemed to nurture fears about the possibility of sexual harassment.

Red: Yeah I think like social media has also promoted ways of being safe. Like when you see videos of like here's how you hide a knife in your lipstick, or hold your keys like this, or here's the taser hairbrush. So I guess also like seeing those types of videos on social media has made it even more relevant because, like 'oh yes, women are carrying these around and protecting themselves' and so it makes you more aware and then when you encounter situations where people seem to be following you or doing something unusual and you automatically do get kind of tense and go 'oh my god what's happening'. So that's happened to me in other situations, not recently, but it's like it is ingrained I guess.

Blue: And it's like just so normalised the fact that there's like ways to keep yourself safe. And like it's normally aimed at women – here are things you can do, like things you can carry in your purse that you can use, like stuff to protect yourself. But it's like you see it and you're like 'oh yeah that's helpful information', you don't think like it's so bad that that's something we have to be taught or just like you said you're like 'oh yeah that's normal', like you watch it or you skip it, like you just don't really think twice about it, it just there, it's normalised kinda thing.

(Red, Blue, 18, 1st Year University students)

The social messages that girls learn from a young age about protecting themselves from sexual harm are strengthened through their subsequent interactions with sexual harassment social media. Normalisation of young women's need to protect themselves risks shifting the focus from where it needs to be: teaching boys from a young age about respectful relationships toward women and Rainbow people and teaching young men about their responsibilities in preventing sexual violence.



SCHOOL CULTURES, GENDER, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION EDUCATION

Our participants collectively endorsed and advocated for sexual harassment education in schools. Young women made the point that whereas they used social media as their main information source, young men tended not to; school, therefore, might be the only place where every boy can receive an appropriate education.

The role that schools play in both sexual harassment prevention education and the provision of a culture intolerant of sexual harassment, were key aspects of participants' talk about schools. Their critiques and expressions of concern centred on schools that fail to include education (sexual consent in particular) or that include education content seen as inadequate. In addition, several participants were highly critical of schools that fail to address sexual harassment issues impacting students, sometimes when every effort had been made by them to have a school do so.

Eden: I think my response to the #MeToo movement and what I search [online]is more, like, how we educate people about it ...I still think it's like something that we as women just have to educate people about that... I think it's really, actually, quite bad in high school. I think if we don't address it in high school, it's just going to get worse going forward. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

"TOXIC MASCULINITY" AND BOYS' SCHOOLS

Boys' schools received intense criticism from young women and Rainbow participants who viewed them as often fostering an environment that enabled and/or condoned sexual harassment. Some participants had been in situations where they, and many other girls they knew, had been sexually harassed by students at boys' schools when going to or from school. Others had heard of incidents reported in national news media or within their social networks. Several boys' schools in different parts of New Zealand attracted national press coverage because of students' participation in sexual harassment practices.

“During the start of like the #MeToo movement or whatever, I was in like an all boys private school. So, I was like immersed with all that kind of toxic masculinity and like I’ve heard all the things that guys would say about girls and they’re just really like uneducated on just how to be respectful towards women and like their views on like, all the different things like all sexual assault and like rape and stuff. And I’d like hear all the stuff that happens at parties from the guy’s perspectives, and it was just terrible.”

Molly, 17, Year 13, Co-ed School

Alexis, for example, talked about “one where they were taking photos up teachers’ skirts and things like that”.

Young men in our research who attended boys’ schools infrequently talked about school cultures or sexual harassment by students at their school or other schools. One group did talk about the failure of their school to include sexual harassment among other “big issues” that were discussed with students. Adam told us that they were “never really hearing it” talked about at school despite #MeToo being a “big issue” and, in contrast, they did hear about other “big issues”. On the other hand, young women and Rainbow youth talked about the “toxic masculinity” in some boys’ schools, a term they used to denote the level of disrespect for women within some young men’s peer cultures.

Adam: Yeah, I feel like (school name) has a really toxic like culture around that stuff. I had a really long conversation about it with (girl’s name), one of my friends who moved to (school name) and she said the culture is like absolutely awful. And like a lot of the time you don’t experience it first-hand because it, because it has transitioned from a boys’ school like the guys aren’t used to like censoring as much stuff like around the same people. So I think it is actually like quite a clear like way to actually see a lot of the like culture that some of the boys’ schools have.

Molly, a transgender participant, provided a particularly insightful perspective as a student who had been in a boys’ school and experienced the culture within it (left).

Within any school culture, there will be norms that shape behaviour thought acceptable to a group, or to the wider school community. The problem with a culture of “toxic masculinity” is not just that sexually harassing behaviour is seen as ‘normal’ but also that young men condone the sexual harassment they see friends (or others) engaging in. Several young women critiqued “letting the friends get away with stuff”(Frankie) and Alexis also commented how, if someone in the group does speak out, others are quick to dismiss it rather than take it seriously (“oh but he’s one of the boys” or “he’s harmless”). Addressing the influential force of “lad culture” (Alexis’s term) norms on young men’s behaviour needs to be a key element in sexual violence prevention efforts.

Frankie: This is, it’s not funny, like, they just laugh about a lot. It’s usually like, just the boys who, you know, they’re doing nothing wrong, but they’re just letting the friends get away with stuff, which is kind of, like they stand up for their friends who have done something wrong. And I think that’s probably like, a big issue, where as if they had that education there’s heaps of potential for them to, speak up about it and stop it and – then we won’t hear as many stories. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Alexis: Yeah, and like you know, the fact that if you’re the only boy in the group to call him out what happens then? All the other guys are like ‘oh nah, he’s fine’ and then, they’re like ‘okay, well, I’ll never speak out again’. And so, it’s like the fact that all of them have to be willing to call someone out kind of thing. And it’s like that with girls as well, like, but I feel like, we’re more likely to just like, band together and call out behaviours and stuff and a lot of guys won’t. (21, 3rd Year University student)

CO-ED VERSUS SINGLE SEX SCHOOLS

Several discussion groups talked about the differences between co-ed and boys’ school cultures. One young women’s group in their final year at a girls’ school discussed how the separation in single-sex schools led to more online communication between girls and boys and that this communication was “inherently sexualised’. The group also discussed whether boys attending a co-ed school might develop more respect and engage in less sexual harassment and sexist practices because of being among girls. Both Gemma and Felicity understood there to be a “massive difference” and “vastly different”

attitude in the way boys at co-ed schools treat women. Both participants talked about the "inherently sexualised" messages boys at a single sex school sent via Snapchat:

Gemma: I don't know, maybe like another thing, online, thinking, is again, with the, you know, guys and girls, like how each get separated going into single-sex schools, a lot of it through social media, communication on Snapchat, again it's like harassing for like you know sexual like photos or you know like, talk like that, you get it a lot.

Felicity: Like a lot of interaction between the single-sex schools is purely, like over platforms such as Snapchat is, like pure – like inherently sexualised or, like, like, if a guy talks to you like online or hits you up on social media, you're going to assume that's like not like for a friendly context.

(Gemma, Felicity 18, Year 13, Girls' School)

Ethan, a participant in one of our young men's groups who attended a co-ed school expressed a view that agreed with these young women's perspectives:

Ethan: I think you do notice like when talking to someone from a single sex school versus a co-ed, like a change in like dynamic of how they see like females versus males and that, like less relationship-oriented and that kind of stuff. (16, Year 12, Co-ed School)

CONSENT EDUCATION

We did not ask participants about sexuality or consent education in schools but it came up in many focus groups, mostly our high school groups but also amongst some university participants. The inadequacy or complete absence of consent education and the gendered delivery where it did happen in school were the key topics of discussion. In the absence of school-based education young women turned to social media. Gemma told us, "I had to watch those TikTok like information series", later adding, "I don't learn this through school". Inadequacies of content included aspects such as omitting any discussion about the relationship of power to consent as in a limited "no means no" (Mireia) or "say yes or no" approach. Young women and Rainbow participants especially critiqued lack of consent education for young men and often viewed any understandings young men did have as partial or lacking specificity.

Just Juice: I feel like a lot of guys, like, would say, like, you know, like, they, like, kind of talk the talk about consent, but then they still will, like, and to be honest they've still got the idea that like a different idea of what consent is, and so they, like, you know, will like, you know, I only if it's consensual, but they still got the whole idea that consent is yes or no. And so they in their minds, they're, you know, being like, all advanced and like, you know, like consent, but in reality, it's like really not you know. If that make sense? (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Young men's critiques of consent education were less heard in our research and limited to one group who spoke directly about having 'done' "that consent". Their critiques organised around two main ideas: the wrong approach, which resulted in boys in the class not taking it seriously, and a gender bias seen to position them as abusers, ignoring that they can also be recipients or victims of sexual assault or harassment. In the first part of their discussion, the group talks about an educator's use of humour to talk about consent:

Aidan: Oh yeah we did that consent –

Logan: Oh yeah the consent –

Adam: Yeah –

Aidan: The consent talk with some woman that came in, about the c-word, which is consent. (laughter)

Logan: It probably wasn't styled the best for a boys' school though it had a good core message, but the way they kind of gave it across made it kind of like a joke for some people like, saying the c-word's consent and stuff. Like she asked everyone, 'What's the c-word? Shout it out boys!' (laughter)

Aidan: It's fine, it's fine, it's what they want.

(Adam and Logan, 17; Aidan, 16; Year 12, Boys' School)

The discussion moved on to talk about another approach in the session where the educator explained the need to ask for consent every step of the way. Again, "people were kind of like taking the mick out of that" but there was some disagreement in the group about whether metaphors were "the way to do it", as was also the case with the "tea video" (which uses the metaphor of steps taken to find out if someone wants milk and sugar in their cup of tea). The young men's discussion highlights how very easily our best efforts in education can sometimes miss the mark altogether because adult perspectives about what might appeal to students do not align with what will resonate with the worlds of young men.

In a more general way the group also expressed discontent with what they saw as a gendered approach that always positions them as potential abusers. Logan said, "It feels like the boys are the only ones who need to give consent in that case, it wasn't like it's a two-way thing". He later gave the example of "gaslighting" as an abuse that young men might experience in a relationship "which we've never talked about". A couple in the group also questioned the idea of asking for consent "every single time you walk" (from the metaphor of steps) or "do an action". The perspectives of these and other young men participating in our research underline the importance of consulting with young men about the kind of information they need to know but also, perhaps more significantly, ways they think this information can be best delivered.

Although not specifically related to sexual consent education, the importance of considering how, inadvertently, approaches can have a gendering effect is also apparent in Rebecca's story. At both her primary and intermediate schools, Rebecca took part in the self-defence courses which, she told us, were compulsory for girls.

Rebecca: So, we had these self-defence courses but we never actually had that conversation about why it was important or anything else. We never had a talk about the rape culture or sexual assault. We were kind of just taught that if a guy comes up to you, this is what you do. So, I think that was a massive almost learning opportunity gone. And also at my primary school, it was just the girls that did it. It kind of meant that from a young age, we were thought to be the victim and we were the ones who needed to learn to defend ourselves and the guys didn't. So, they had that knowledge that they were the ones that, I don't know how to explain it, but they were the ones who do it. (17, Year 13, Girls' School)

Self-defence courses provide a valuable tool for girls and women but Rebecca's story illustrates how, at the same time, they might send a message that girls and women are vulnerable, potential victims and men are potential perpetrators. They could also play into myths such as 'rapists are strangers', 'you can fight back', victim blaming and making women responsible for their victimisation. For all of these reasons, self-defence courses don't have a place in sexual violence prevention education.

WHAT CONSENT EDUCATION IS NEEDED AND WHEN?

High school participants shared thoughtful, informed perspectives about when consent education should start. Those who gave their views were all in agreement that consent education should begin "real young" as Frankie put it, by teaching children meanings of consent. Sebastian, an activist in sexual harassment prevention in schools spoke at length about teaching children they can have agency over their bodies:

Sebastian: And I think it's just like, it's the starting point, where it needs to start from

when students first enter into education, from year 1, all the way up until year 13, and even in early childhood education as well. Just the whole idea of like young people learning about consent and it's not just consent around sexual activity and things like that, it's just consent around anything like 'can I touch you, can I pick you up?' 'yes you can'. That kind of stuff with children is so important, like they need to have the ability to say yes and no to things that we ask them. And that's where they learn consent, and that's when they learn how to ask people 'is this okay?' (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Other participants expressed similar views to Sebastian, seeing a key role for parents. Just Juice commented that parents might think "oh my son would never like rape someone" and so not talk to their sons whereas they should be having such conversations. In the same discussion, Krystal added it should be "a massive" part of the "birds and bees chat" parents have with their "kids". Schools, though, were viewed by most as the key place for "sex-ed" and participants had particular perspectives about what schools could offer and when.

Frankie: Sex-ed in schools I think that has heaps of potential to just, even if you know them themselves are not hurting people, for them to see somebody else hurting someone or doing those things. And be like, you know, this is wrong. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Lisa: I'm not trying to bash the school or anything, because it's not them, but I feel like even in Year 12, we don't have health class. And I'm guessing this is around a lot of schools, which to me seems ridiculous because that 16–17, I feel like it's the ages where we should be learning about this because most of us – well I feel like it's at the point where it is important to know, but we're not... I feel like it's so important that we have health class. I mean, we have it in Year 7, 8, 9, and maybe Year 10. But it's not quite you know. (16, Year 12, Girls' School)

As Lisa points out, it is not schools that have made the decision about the timing of mandatory sexuality education although some schools might decide to extend education in some form beyond Year 9 and 10. Nor is sexual consent education necessarily addressed as part of existing classes or courses. Both extension to Year 13 and specific provision of sexual consent education need to be on the agenda for a systematic inquiry into sexual violence prevention education in schools. Regardless of the school level where such education takes place, it is imperative that full consideration be given to providing a safe forum for enabling discussion. Sebastian spoke about this regarding young men but making students feel safe is equally important for young women, a good number of whom will have already experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lives.

Sebastian: I mean sexual assault and harassment is really uncomfortable for a lot of people to talk about and I know even like some of my fellow head students are really uncomfortable about talking about it, and even in the [schools network group] there are some people uncomfortable at talking about it. Either because like they're men and they don't feel confident and comfortable talking about an issue that they feel effects women, or they're women and they feel like really unsafe talking about those kinds of issues. And it's developing a culture within our schools where everyone is comfortable and safe to talk about these issues. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Section 8

YOUNG WOMEN AS SEXUAL VIOLENCE EDUCATORS

Many young women felt that they had to take responsibility to educate others, particularly boys and young men, but also wider society.

But for the young women who took part in the interviews and media sharing part of the research, educating others about sexual harassment was a strong commitment. The educational work these participants undertook was diverse and varied. In one school, two young women were using their role as prefects to educate and inform their peers. As Eva told us,

Eva: I run the wellbeing committee as part of my role as, um, prefect of wellbeing, and so we do tackle a lot of these themes (sexual harassment) because it is such a huge topic for women's wellbeing within the school. (Eva, 17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Several young women were gathering data and raising the issue of sexual harassment through doing surveys about sex education or about experiences of sexual harassment within their schools or universities. Some were involved in feminist clubs or societies at their school or university, and many were actively using social media for their own and others' education around this topic. Young women's talk about their education work showed their energy, care, thoughtfulness and, especially, the multiple responsibilities they placed on themselves. These wide-ranging responsibilities included: educating themselves about different experiences and minority group perspectives; considering what kinds of content might be 'triggering' for some people; considering others' mental health; protecting 'safe' spaces; and posting 'positively' in ways that might enable involvement and change.

REACTIONS TO EDUCATION EFFORTS

In different ways, all the young women educators experienced negative reactions to their education efforts. Many felt they were rarely listened to, despite their knowledge and expertise and their attempts to educate and inform others and bring about change. Whina, for example expressed intense

"For me what's really important is intersectional feminism... I've been trying to educate myself like um, educate myself more recently in like Māori and indigenous knowledge kind of thing and opinions because I feel like I'm lacking in that more than I should be."

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Eliza, 18, Year 13, Girls' School

"I decided not to share it (post about rapist Jayden Meyer's sentence) because I just felt like maybe I'd been sharing too much of that kind of thing recently and I don't want to upset people by only sharing negative news."

•

Olive, 22, Freelance Journalist

"I think everyone has a platform online and it's like, am I thinking about this? And do I care about this? Like is it thoughtful?"

•

Eva, 17, Year 13, Co-ed School

"I always put content warnings if it is, but I mean, I personally, I know there are people in my life who have struggled with their mental health who are following me. So I just want to keep my – I don't know. You know, like, I don't want to expose people to anything, too yeah graphic like that."

•

Eliza, 18, Year 13, Girls' School

frustration with the men being influenced by social media influencers Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson who "never listen":

Whina: I find it really disturbing... that they will never listen to women when we say 'oh that guy does hate women' and they'll be like, or it's like when I give them an example it's 'oh well you're taking that out of context.' (20, 2nd Year University student)

Eva told us about feeling discounted at her school: "we're definitely not as respected as male counterparts". She described how she once asked a male prefect in a parallel role to do a speech in assembly on the topic of sexual harassment – not because she lacked conviction or confidence but "because I knew they wouldn't listen to me". Later in the joint interview with Eden, the pair expressed their "frustration and hurt" with how they felt treated by the school. Their efforts to launch a sexual harassment campaign in the school were criticised by a senior male staff member for not having gone through 'the proper channels'. The pair said they had used these channels repeatedly only to be completely ignored – an experience they attributed to their age, gender and lack of power.

Eva: We just don't have the power, like we try to have the power and we try to take action but –

Eden: No one trusts high school students.

Eva: Yeah and so teenage girls as well are not super-recognised in wider society.

Eden: Yeah.

Eva: Sorry we're not like listening to boy bands and watching Twilight like you hoped (laughter)

(Eva, Eden 17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

These two young women also faced attacks, more particularly from other students but also from some staff members. From male students they encountered sexualising comments about them and other girls in their school year such as "who's more fuckable". Eva summarised the other kinds of comments made to them and how these, as well as not being taken seriously, "devalued" them and created a sense of "vulnerability".

Eva: [W]e get called 'bitches' and things like that for commenting, standing up, and saying there's an issue, we get that even from like, some staff members, not to like a swearing extent, but like "Why are they whining? What are they whining about?" And I think that's where the fear lies, of not being taken seriously or being devalued as a person in all these areas because of this action and actually standing up and being like oh this puts you in a place of vulnerability to be torn down by others. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

ONLINE REACTIONS

The scope for attack on social media is well-known. Young women trying to educate others about sexual harassment are particularly vulnerable to the worst kinds of social media attack be it hate speech, trolling, stalking or sexual harassment. Most of the educators spoke about the "meanness" of comments on social media.

Eliza: I deleted them straightaway. I really wanted to keep the page safe, um a safe space, and I didn't want any of that hate. (Speaking about the comments after posting results of the school sexual harassment survey online) (18, Year 13, Girls' School)

Eva: I hate it. I hate being in the comments so much because people are just like, plain mean, people troll. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Ruth: People on the internet seem to be able to be like unnecessarily mean (laughs) and aggressive... really rude. (22, 5th Year University student)

Olive, who had been raped as a teenager by an adult in a position of responsibility and trust, spoke about the nasty comments she

experienced when she eventually took the step of making a post about her experience.

Olive: I said 'uh you know this has happened to me, and um, it sucks that there is no real law to put – put people in place' kind of thing, and this person (laughs) messaged me saying um 'oh god you whinge a lot, like what do you want a – a contract every time a woman puts out?' (22, Freelance Journalist)

The attacker then sent the rolling eyes emoji, a lewd sexual suggestion, and subsequently followed up with a message saying, "everyone's tired of hearing about your problems". Olive described the interaction saying, "this was actually the most negative comment I've ever come across on Instagram". She discussed her response to the troller (seemingly a woman), saying: "are you, you know, I hope you don't have to go through anything similar but you've gotta understand that this was quite triggering for me".

Another form of negative online reaction often spoken about was the dismissal of women's experiences of sexual harassment or violence. Dismissal could take many different forms such as condemning women for "whinging", suggesting that they are attention-seeking (as in a post Whina saw, "did she go to the police or did she just make sad TikToks about it") or comments that suggested others are "tired of hearing about your problems". Participants told us that they frequently felt dismissed and patronised by the repeated suggestion that women lie and make false allegations about sexual attacks, or that they somehow deserve what happens to them.

Whina: I have to try really hard not to get into internet arguments with the guys who comment you know shitty things like 'maybe they deserved it' or 'well girls lie all the time' like 'oh my second cousin's best friend's brother's uncle he got falsely convicted' eh okay. Okay... Seeing all these people just so flippantly, you know, say that they're innocent or say that all the girls must be lying. (20, 2nd Year University student)

"BURNOUT" AND EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

Many of the young women we spoke to described feeling overwhelmed, fatigued and emotionally exhausted from their online engagement with sexual harassment media content. The most significant factors in this emotional impact were the upsetting and sometimes traumatising content they interacted with, as well as their constant exposure to it. Eva said she was on "therapy Instagram" on which she saw and read an ongoing stream of stories about "harassment", "horrible relationships", and "sex trauma". Callie had a similar experience on a different platform, telling us "mental health TikTok can get very dark". By way of example, she described a 30 second video she saw by a girl who had been choked in a sexual situation and was visibly distressed.

Callie: That one really affected me because of like the physicality of it, like she was shaking, I think her voice cracks a few times, or sometimes she starts tearing up or there's definitely visible elements of being scared. Um and that definitely hit me way more than most of the other [videos I've seen] to just, because of the like, the emotion behind, where it's like you can tell she's terrified, but she's still, like, 'I need to say this and make this public and do all these things to try and bring whoever it was to justice or attention to it.' (22, 4th Year University student)

Like the young woman in the video Callie described, Olive told us that she felt "a sense of responsibility" to educate others, but she also found social media content "very hard emotionally "and "very triggering". Eliza also commented on how distressing it is to engage with this issue, particularly when you are seeing posts from people you know:

Eliza: One of the hardest things earlier this year, because it was often, like, people I knew posting their stories and even if it was anonymous I could kind of work out whose experiences it must have been. And that was like, really, like awful because I know these

people, so, it became really personal, so it's sad, like, it's upsetting and shocking. (18, Year 13, Girls' School)

For many, the emotional impact of engaging with media about sexual harassment was particularly powerful because of the feeling that, as Stella put it, there is still "so far to go". Knowledge and education could be empowering but also upsetting and even "disenfranchising", creating a sense of "defeatism" (Stella).

Constant exposure to this kind of content as well as stories in the media (e.g. the Amber Heard/Johnny Depp trial) was extremely hard for many participants. Maria said of a case involving two rappers:

Maria: Made me feel so gross. Like so sick. And I just couldn't really consume any more of those, like any more of that media, because I was just like, that's like, it's just, it's just really like harrowing to me. (21, 4th Year University student)

Many girls and young women said that nothing had prepared them for the kind of deeply distressing content that they encountered continually on social media.

Callie: I don't have any, like, idea how to react to this because it's just so overwhelming, you're just like 'I feel so horrible for you.' (22, 4th Year University student)

So that they could continue their work of trying to keep others, and themselves, informed, young women had necessarily developed strategies to manage the emotional challenges of their activism. Maria spoke about how it was important to "not let it affect you to a point where you can't, like, function, you know, or that its negative, negatively, like impacting you, and your like, day to day". And Eliza put it simply as: "it's draining... you've gotta preserve your energy". Participants talked about three main strategies:

i. Using the filtering tools in their social media accounts (e.g., Whina filtered out the names Johnny Depp and Amber Heard on her TikTok so she wouldn't see "any more edits of the trial").

ii. Limiting the topics that they chose to engage with.

Eden: I can't cope with all of it... you can't be active in every single social aspect area, every single social cause, like, you choose the cause that you associate yourself with, which is what I've done. I associate myself with LGBTQ issues and I associate myself with feminism, and like mental health, equal rights, sort of thing and that's my niche. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

iii. Disengaging altogether from social media centred on sexual harassment.

Eva: I get so exhausted sometimes, I have to actually put down my phone for a few days and like, I don't delete the apps but I hide them, like in folders and away cause I just can't do it, or I'll um, yeah, or just like favour another social media outlet for that same kind of brain candy effect, like Netflix or something for a few days and then binge something, and then go back. (17, Year 13, Co-ed School)

The young women educators in our research were committed, invested and driven to try and make a difference, however a "small but incremental" change might come from their work. They undertook this education largely unsupported, to the contrary often experiencing attacks or being ignored. Yet the responsibility they felt kept them committed and the strategies they used to cope with the emotional impact helped to sustain them in a continuing role as educators and activists.

Section 9

WHERE TO FROM HERE?: TAKING OUR LEAD FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

We asked participants in discussion groups and interviews to talk with us about the positives and negative of #MeToo and also to consider whether they thought #MeToo had changed anything.

Most often, the negatives related to perceptions that #MeToo had made little difference. We heard multiple examples of what #MeToo had and had not changed but positives were largely overshadowed by the lack of what Morgan called "actual change". Many participants pointed out that sexual harassment has continued since the 'movement' began and in some comments there was a sense of helplessness and hopelessness about ever being able to stop it.

Rain: I think that, yeah, there's been a framework provided of the right conduct like there's regulations that have been updated, which is a good thing. I guess. The negative thing is just humans have not caught up. Like, they're still it's like five, it was 2017 or something, really bad at math, like four or five years on there is still sexual harassment, there is still bullying. So it still happens, which is I don't want to say can't be helped, because it can. (25, Legal Administrator)

Abby: And that's the thing. That's what I feel like, with the #MeToo movement at the time, it was like so profound, everyone was like, wow, so shocked, just like what's happening at our school. But then in the future, people are still shocked. And we're like, nothing's changed. It's still the same as when the movement started. (16, Year 12, Girls' School)

Abby: Like it's a place where women feel validated, and that's great. But I feel like a lot of that change hasn't happened because history is repeating itself over and over.

Lauren: Yeah, it's sad. Yeah.

(Lauren, 15, Year 11, Girls' School)

Morgan: Yip, and I feel like each time one of those cases comes up, #MeToo is brought up again like specifically, they'll be like, you know, #MeToo was a huge movement, huge amount of influence, in terms of like people coming forward but then quite often, there'll be like, a little comment about like, 'but has it really changed anything? Women still feel unsafe' and it's like, 'mm okay, yeah, fair'. So like...

Alexis: No, you're definitely right.

Morgan: I think it brings a lot of attention, I don't know if it brings a lot of actual change.

(Morgan, Alexis, 21, 3rd Year University students)

EDUCATION AND POLICY MUST LEAD CHANGE

We heard many thoughtful comments from our participants about what might be needed in order to prevent sexual violence. Many of the critiques we heard clustered around the idea that not enough was being done to stop sexual harassment from happening but also not enough to create an environment in which women could feel safe.

Harrison: I definitely think that we still need to change the mindset a little bit more around that. Try to get to a place where we're in a safe environment and people can say hey, I have been harassed and we can say we need to make sure that doesn't happen again to anyone. (16, Year 12, Boys' School)

In the earlier section 'Schools and Sexual Violence Education' we showed how highly critical many participants were about the lack of sexual violence education, its inadequacy, and its ineffective approaches, especially for young men. So it is not surprising that many participants' reflections about #MeToo focused on the failures of education and social policy to address sexual violence prevention in effective ways. Other critiques took a broader social view , such as recognising hollow support which failed to accompany support with action. Jayde critiqued the response from men, in particular, as "very performative" as when perpetrators are simply given "a slap on the wrist" or where employers go through the motions because of the "new policy" without any "empathy" for victims.

Alexis: Mm yeah, like, all those conversations are good, but like, words only do so much.

Morgan: Is policy being changed? Is like education being changed? Are we sitting here with our young men and our young people and doing something about it, instead of just being like "Oh, if this happens to you, come forward" Because well it's like, we want it to not happen in the first place, at the end of the day.

(Alexis, Morgan, 21, 3rd Year University students)

Briana: I think we still have a long way to go (all participants agree) and yeah I think the movement definitely helped, but it wasn't the solution. In my opinion the overall solution you know, long term.

Jayde: Yeah I mean I think people who are victims have done everything that they can do and it's up to policy change and law change, it's up to education change like that sort of stuff I feel like we have to just take what we've learned from the #MeToo movement and keep that momentum going and keep the education happening, otherwise it's just going to be something that happened in 2017–2019. But yeah, there's a huge way to go, but it definitely did encourage us to you know, keep working, yes.

(Jayde, 19, 2nd Year, Briana, 21, 1st Year, University students)

Young men in one of our groups also identified education as key to bringing about change but also expressed some pessimism about its effectiveness for prevention of "sexual assault".

Logan: Education for the young people to grow up and be better than the old.

Mathew: Yeah.

Adam: I mean you can do that, but likelihood is there's still going to be some cases, regardless of how much education there is.

Aidan: Yeah I feel like, as long as there's like murder and as long as there's like thief, there's going to be sexual assault. So yeah, it's just about education I guess, just decreasing.

Tyler: Yeah cos there's only so many laws you can make about it saying that it's wrong and bad and stuff like that, but it's more yeah, more about educating and more about getting people to understand, but even with as much education as you want, you can probably never really stop it.

(Logan, 17; Adam, 17; Aidan, 16; Tyler 16; Year 12, Boys' School)

WE NEED A FOCUS ON CULTURAL CHANGE

Although there was a strong focus on education as key to bringing about change, some participants also brought attention to the need for wider, cultural changes. Some recognised the role of culture in enabling and sustaining sexual harassment (and as key for prevention). "Lad culture" and "rape culture" (Schools and Sexual Violence Prevention Education section) were two examples discussed by young women. Others talked more generally about culture, such as stepping back to consider why sexual violence is an issue at all and the need to take a "preventative measures" at the cultural level.

Sebastian: The hard parts about the movement though that it is also bringing to light how rarely things actually do happen, how rarely the consequences or that there is some kind of resolution to these issues, like it's more like, 'this is what happened,' and then I guess in that regard being able to recognise that something is a problem is really good, but there's still, it seems pretty unclear – and that's also I guess that's part of the issue of the whole culture around it – that there aren't really clear steps that you know what it's going to be taken to. Not even just the idea of punishment, but of actually stopping this from continuing to happen. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Dave: I think my interpretation of the thing was that the purpose was never to just have – you know, that statement '#MeToo' or any of the ones that came after it, 'Don't guess the yes,' or 'No means no,' any of that sort of thing – to have that just be a phrase that would pop into someone's mind when they're about to sexually harass someone and think, 'Oh no, don't do that,' but I think the point was that it would change the whole culture of it, you know, that you would instead of having to address it with these things, you'd prevent it in the first place by doing that. (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Haley: I don't know, I think that because a lot of it is about coming forward so it achieves that first step of showing what a big issue it is and showing that it happens and normalising coming forward, but I don't think it does the best job of like talking about, you know, why is this such an issue in the first place? Or what are we supposed to do from here? (18, Year 13, Co-ed School)

Darby: And furthermore there's not like enough preventative measures in place to stop that from happening in the first place (Jayde: Yeah), I feel like always like reactionary yeah like, how do we deal with the problem after it's happened (Jayde: Yeah) not how we stop the culture before it creates like you know, rapists. (20, 2nd Year University student)

Aidan: Yeah cos I think it's more, the climate change is more about I guess, stopping carbon, like fossil fuel emissions and stuff like that, but with the #MeToo movement it's more about changing a whole culture and a whole mindset. (16, Year 12, Boys' School)

As much as these and other participants recognised the need to address the culture which enables and sustains sexual harassment for effective prevention work, several also understood the challenges and the considerable time needed to bring about meaningful social change.

Adam: Like there's been laws for there are, has been and are laws to prevent sexual assault but people are still going to break them and yeah there's no concrete path that we can take to stop it outright.

Logan: Yeah so it's more about like changing a mindset than like changing the behaviour or to change the behaviour, we have to change the mindset yeah, I think that's a real key thing and that's quite hard to measure, so it's going to take time.

(Adam, 17; Logan, 17; Year 12, Boys College)

Tyler: I guess it's going to be a slow thing throughout generations, like it's not something like climate change where you can just change a few laws and restrict companies and stuff. (16, Year 12, Boys College)

Alexis: Obviously, we know that it's not that easy to just like, change something like that, especially when it's like, so deeply rooted in like, you know, things like that, patriarchy, like as a whole, like, it's just so deeply rooted in our society and like, it's hard to uproot those, like values in a lot of people and like, it takes time. But like, yeah, there's obviously the conversation like 'How fast should it be happening?', like, it's obviously not gonna happen overnight and one movement isn't gonna necessarily, like, change everything straightaway, but like, and that's where the whole like continual change has to like happen, like it's baby steps kind of thing. (21, 3rd Year University student)

We have seen, in this final section of our findings, examples of the thoughtful and often concerned responses of our participants as they reflected on both the lack of change and the need for change to prevent sexual harassment post #MeToo. Their voices call for changes at multiple levels: education, policy and culture. Earlier in this report we have seen the efforts of young women and Rainbow participants to try and bring about change through education. But, as a number of participants in our research commented, change isn't something they can achieve unsupported; it requires 'us' adults to lobby for, and initiate, prevention education and policy, as well as to actively demonstrate support for young people in their endeavours to critique, challenge and protest against the ongoing sexual harassment of young people.

Concluding Comments

Our research gathered views, knowledge and understandings about #MeToo and related sexual harassment media from diverse young people in schools and universities. Findings from our analyses of young people's talk highlighted the gendered nature of not only knowledge about sexual harassment, but also the impact of #MeToo and experiences of sexual harassment. Young women and Rainbow young people's sexual harassment experiences were commonplace and they were knowledgeable about sexual harassment because of their engagement with sexual harassment media content. Young men not only engaged very little with educational sexual harassment media content, but the media content they did view tended to misinform and reinforce rape myths. Young people's voices were united in the pressing need for sexual violence prevention education in schools, especially for young men.

It is our hope that young people's calls for change in this research will be heeded. They call to:

- Stop sexual harassment and 'make #MeToo count'
- Be heard
- Provide sexual violence prevention education in schools
- Be supported in their own efforts to educate others about sexual violence