Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Violence against women is preventable. To stop this violence before it starts, we need to address the social conditions that drive it – the four gendered drivers. **Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women** is one of these drivers, where men and boys seek to form relationships and bond with each other by proving their masculinity through actions that are sexist, disrespectful or hostile towards women.

What this driver can sound like

Sexist 'locker room talk' that disrespects women viewed as harmless and normal

Fear of rejection by male peers if they take a stand against their friend's disrespect of women

Believing it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends
(34% of Australians agree)[1]

When aggression, sexism and disrespect towards women is normalised and important for being 'one of the boys', it creates a culture where violence against women is more likely to be used, supported, excused or ignored.[2]

What are the gendered drivers?

The evidence base tells us that gender inequality creates the social conditions for violence against women to occur. There are four key expressions of gender inequality that have been found to predict or drive this violence. To prevent violence against women, we must focus our efforts on addressing these drivers.[3]

1. Condoning of violence against women

2. Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships

3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

4. **Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.**

This tip sheet is one of four designed to support people working to prevent violence against women. The tip sheets should be read together as each driver is interrelated and equally significant.

What male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women can look like in daily life

Addressing different levels and contexts in prevention

Looking at how this driver manifests within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play can help you to plan your approach to addressing it. The more areas across society that support and strengthen equal and respectful relationships between genders, the more influence and positive change we will create.

Societal level

Online communities that are built on demeaning or humiliating women are allowed to remain active due to lack of enforceable standards to shut them down.

All-male sports commentary panels where degrading or demeaning talk about women is laughed off or ignored.

Institutional / systemic level

Sexualised objectification of women used as a marketing strategy, particularly around 'typical male' bonding activities such as sports and gambling.

The belief that sexism, gender discrimination and sexual harassment are inherent parts of male-dominated workplaces and professions (e.g. police, emergency services, construction and mining industries) and that this cannot be changed.

Organisational / community level

College chants, hazing and initiation rituals which allow and promote abuse and disrespect towards women.

The norm that some things are 'okay' to talk about in male peer groups but not acceptable in 'mixed company'. For example, 'locker room' talk in male sporting clubs.

Individual / relationship level

Men telling degrading jokes about women or bragging about their sexual 'conquests' as a way to bond with their male peers.

Boys and young men consuming and sharing hard-core, violent pornography or circulating photos of women without consent.

How can we change this?

To prevent violence against women we must take action to address the gendered drivers.

Actions that will prevent violence against women:

1. CHALLENGE
condoning of violence against women

2. PROMOTE
women's indepedence and decision-making

3. CHALLENGE
gender stereotypes and roles

4. STRENGTHEN
positive, equal and respectful relationships

To address male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women we must take action to **strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys**. This means challenging peer relations between boys and men that involve disrespect or hostility towards women.[4]

For example:

- implementing a whole school approach to respectful relationships education

- implementing organisational policies that send a clear message that gender discrimination and sexual harassment is not tolerated.

- delivering training programs to men and boys encouraging bystander action in highly masculine/male dominated work or peer environments

cat calling

sexist joke

c'mon guys, that's not okay

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[1] ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Sydney, NSW.

[2] Our Watch, (2017). *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*, Melbourne, Australia.

[3] Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia,* Melbourne, Australia.

[4] Our Watch, (2017). *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*, Melbourne, Australia.