

Sexual violence against female university students in the U.K.: A case study

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Riassunto

In questo articolo presentiamo i risultati di una ricerca effettuata negli anni 2009-11 sulle aggressioni sessuali commesse a danno di studentesse frequentanti una università inglese.

I risultati di tale studio riguardano i seguenti aspetti: la natura e la numerosità dei casi di aggressione sessuale (molestia sessuale, aggressione e altri comportamenti sessuali violenti), l'identità degli aggressori, i luoghi in cui le aggressioni sessuali sono commesse, la comunicazione delle avvenute aggressioni alle autorità universitarie e di polizia, la natura delle misure di prevenzione adottate e le pratiche operative delle autorità universitarie rivolte ad affrontare questo fenomeno, la sensibilizzazione e la motivazione delle studentesse ad utilizzare le risorse universitarie esistenti per assistere le vittime e le modalità previste al fine di migliorare la presa in carico di questa utenza da parte delle autorità universitarie. I dati ottenuti da questa ricerca provengono da tre fonti: 1) un questionario online rivolto alle studentesse; 2) un focus group effettuato con un gruppo di studentesse e incentrato sul fenomeno in questione; 3) interviste con testimoni significativi universitari e non universitari.

I risultati di questa ricerca sono analizzati in rapporto alle politiche universitarie e alle pratiche operative.

Résumé

Dans cette étude, nous présentons les résultats d'une recherche effectuée dans les années 2009-11 sur les agressions sexuelles commises contre les étudiantes fréquentant une université Anglaise.

Les résultats de cette recherche portent sur les aspects suivants : la nature et la prévalence de l'agression sexuelle (harcèlement sexuel, agression sexuelle et autres comportements sexuels violents), l'identité des agresseurs sexuels, les endroits où les agressions sexuelles sont commises, le dévoilement des agressions sexuelles aux autorités universitaires et policières, la nature des mesures de prévention prises et les pratiques courantes des autorités universitaires pour faire face à ce phénomène, la sensibilisation et la motivation des étudiantes à utiliser les ressources universitaires mises en place pour assister les victimes et les moyens afin d'améliorer la prise en charge de ce phénomène par les autorités universitaires. Les données sur lesquelles les résultats de cette recherche sont tirés proviennent de trois sources : 1) un sondage en ligne des étudiantes, 2) une discussion effectuée sur le phénomène en question avec un groupe d'étudiantes, et 3) entrevues avec des professionnels oeuvrant ou non à l'université.

Les résultats de cette recherche sont discutés en lien avec les politiques et pratiques universitaires.

Abstract

In this article we present the results of research conducted in 2009-2011 on sexual violence against female university students at a mid-sized English university.

Included are findings on: the nature and prevalence of sexual violence (sexual harassment, stalking and sexual assault and other coercive sexual acts); the identity of perpetrators; most frequent victimisation locations; extent of, and reasons given for and against, disclosing victimisation to university authorities and police; nature of prevention and response policies, institutional arrangements and practices at the university; female student's awareness of, and willingness to access, available services for victims; and suggestions for improvements in the university's responses to this problem. All findings are based on data from (i) an online survey of female students, (ii) a small focus group discussion with female students, and (iii) interviews with 'key stakeholders' within and outside the university.

Implications of the findings for university policies, institutional arrangements and practices are discussed.

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1. Introduction.

In this paper we present the findings of a survey of female students' experiences of sexual violence while studying at an English university. The research was conducted during a three-year period (2009-2011), and was part of a broader research project, funded by the European Union, in which researchers from four other European countries¹ also took part.

Sexual and other violent victimisation of university students has been the subject of a considerable amount of research during the last thirty years. Most of this research, however, has focused on the victimisation experiences of university students in the United States of America². There are good reasons, however, to think that findings from U.S. research on this topic may not be readily applicable to British universities. Not all British universities are campus-based universities similar to those where such research has been undertaken in the U.S., and in many cases it is much less common for students to be living in university residences during their entire time at university; frequently, students will be in university student residences for only one or two (and sometimes none) of their three or four undergraduate years, living away from university premises (e.g. at their family homes or in rental accommodation, often with small groups of other students). The social

environment of students at British universities is thus not very similar to the rather closed or bounded social environment of a U.S. university campus; the fraternity and sorority houses, for instance, which have featured prominently in the U.S. research³, have no counterparts at British universities, at which most socialising is more likely to take place in student union premises or in local pubs and night clubs that are not frequented only or primarily by students⁴. One might expect that this would have implications for the nature and context of British students' social and sexual relations while pursuing their university education⁵.

It is only much more recently that the experiences of female students at British universities have been the subject of much in-depth empirical research. In recent years there has been a plethora of UK-based research into sexual violence, its nature and prevalence, and policy approaches towards ending gender-based sexual violence⁶.

³ Sanday P., *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*, New York University Press, New York/London, 1990.

⁴ Chatterton P., "University students and city centres - the formation of exclusive geographics", *Geoforum* 30(1), 1999, pp. 117-133.

⁵ We note, too, that the legal 'drinking age' varies between England and several U.S. jurisdictions - 18 in Britain, but 21 in many U.S. states.

⁶ E.g. Kelly L., Regan L., *Rape: The Forgotten Issue? A European research and networking project*, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, University of North London, London, 2001; Walby S., Allen J., *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the British Crime Survey Home Office research study 276*, London, 2004; Barberet R., Fisher B., Taylor H., *University student safety in the East Midlands*, Home Office Online Report, London, 61/2004, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100413151441/http://homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr6104.pdf>; Kelly L., Lovett J., Regan L., *A gap or a chasm? Attrition in reported rape cases*, Home Office research study 293, London, 2005, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hors293.pdf>;

Payne S., *Rape: The victims experience review*, Home

¹ Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain. The report from the larger project can be found at www.gendercrime.eu

² E.g. Koss M., Gidycz C., Wisniewski N., "The Scope of Rape: Incidence and Prevalence of Sexual Aggression and Victimization in a National Sample of Higher Education Students", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55(2), 1987, pp. 162-170. The U.S. research has been most recently reviewed in Fisher B., Daigle L., Cullen F., *Unsafe in the Ivory Tower: Sexual Victimization of College Women*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2010.

There has also been invaluable discussion around sexual violence due to the introduction of the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* and other important policy documents including the Stern Review⁷, the former Labour government's *Together we can end violence against women and girls*⁸ and the current coalition government's *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls*⁹ and subsequent update¹⁰. Furthermore, the British Crime Survey (BCS) has consistently shown that young women aged 16–24 have a higher risk of being a victim of gender-based sexual violence and violent crime compared with older women¹¹, as well as sexual

victimisation impacting on social freedom and autonomy¹².

Despite this recent interest in the topic of sexual violence against young women, however, almost no research has addressed the nature and extent of sexual violence as experienced by female university students in the UK, and what is being, and might be, done to address and respond to the specificity of this phenomenon. Indeed, our research was some of the first to systematically explore this topic. The only other comparable research to have addressed U.K. tertiary education students' experiences of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault has been a nation-wide survey-based project carried out by the National Union of Students, which was undertaken contemporaneously with our research, the results of which were published in a report entitled *Hidden Marks*¹³. Discrepancies between the findings of the NUS research and those of our own research presented in this paper may well be accounted for by the much lower response rate in the NUS research, and the fact that the research presented here was based on the experiences of students in only one university¹⁴. This is discussed further below.

Office, London, 2009; Phipps A.E., "Violent and victimised bodies: sexual violence policy in England and Wales", *Critical Social Policy* 30(3), 2010, pp.359-383; National Union of Students (UK), *Hidden marks: a study of women students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault*, National Union of Students, London, 2010; National Union of Students (UK), *That's what she said: Women students' experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education*, National Union of Students, London, 2013; Gunby C., Carline A., Bellis M., Benyon C., "Gender differences in alcohol-related non-consensual sex", *BMC Public Health*, 12(216), 2012, pp. 1-12.

⁷ Stern Review, *A report by Baroness Vivien Stern CBE of an independent review into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales*, Home Office, London, 2010. The Stern Review was commissioned by the former Labour government as an independent review into how rape and sexual assault complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales. Baroness Stern was directed to consider how to encourage more victims to report incidents of rape and sexual assault, how to improve the response of the criminal justice system to victims, and how to increase victim and witness confidence and satisfaction in the criminal justice system's the handling of cases.

⁸ H.M. Government (UK), *Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls*, Cabinet Office, London, 2009.

⁹ H.M. Government (UK), *Call to end violence against women and girls: action plan*, Cabinet Office, London, 2011.

¹⁰ H.M. Government (UK), *Call to end violence against women and girls: Taking action - the next chapter*, Stationary Office, London, 2012.

¹¹ British Crime Survey, *Crimes in England and Wales 2009-2010: Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime*, Home Office, London,

2010,

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf>

¹² National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*; Walby S., Allen J., *op.cit.*

¹³ National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*

¹⁴ The NUS research involved an online survey of female students aged between 16 and 60, studying at one of 115 tertiary education institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The findings were based on data provided by 2,058 respondents, representing a tiny fraction of the female students who were eligible to participate in the survey. National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*

2. The research.

The research reported in this article was focused on exploring the nature, incidence, and prevalence of gender-based sexual violence (defined as including sexual harassment, stalking, and sexual assault and other coercive sexual acts) against female university students at a medium-sized English university. The university at which the research was conducted is a rural, campus-based university with a student population of approximately 9,000, approximately 60% of whom live on the campus during term time¹⁵. In this respect it is more readily comparable to many campus-based U.S. universities than most British universities are.

The principal aims of the research project were: to improve information about the nature and extent of gender-based sexual violence against female students and about the nature and perceived adequacy of the responses of the university to such issues; and to contribute to the development of improved responses to such problems, including access for victims to support and services.

A mixed methods approach included three main methods: (1) An online survey of all female students at the university¹⁶; (2) focus group

discussions with a small group of voluntarily participating female students; and (3) in-depth interviews with 'key stakeholders' (i.e. those in authority at the university who have, or might have, some responsibility for addressing these issues). The on-line survey elicited responses from 580 female students¹⁷ (approximately 9% of all female students at the university at that time). One focus group discussion was held with 7 female students, and in-depth interviews were held with 15 'stakeholders'¹⁸.

2.1. What is gender-based sexual violence?

We asked our focus group participants about their understanding of what 'gender-based violence' connotes¹⁹. They understood gender-based violence as including a range of actions, physical and otherwise, where the intent is to hurt (broadly defined) women, and which is done against the will of women. It was agreed that gender-based violence is any form of aggression and coercion, physical or otherwise, that is based on an unequal

the Student Union President's Facebook page. Posters were also put up at strategic places on the campus to advertise the survey and all female students were sent a follow up e-mail message a month after the survey went online.

¹⁷ Because the survey responses were anonymous, we had no way of definitively ensuring that all respondents were female, as they claimed to be. Questions were included in the survey, however, to improve our chances of identifying responses that were in fact not by female students. We did not identify any such responses.

¹⁸ Those interviewed included: University Registrar and Head of University Discipline; Head of Security; Deputy Head of University Governance; Student Support Adviser and Anti-harassment officer; Head of student discipline and complaints; Quality assurance and academic audit manager; Head of Department of Social Sciences; Residence Hall managers; Student Union Gender Officer; Women's Society Officer; University Student Counsellor; University Chaplain; a local Police Constable; and National Union of Students - LGBT Officer.

¹⁹ The definitions used in the online survey are set out in footnotes 29 & 31, below.

¹⁵ Our survey respondents were not entirely representative in this respect: only 41% of them indicated that they lived on the campus during term time; 22% shared a flat or house off campus (probably with other students in many cases), 15% lived in a flat or house with their partner and/or children (only 6%, however, indicated that they had children), 5% lived in a flat or house on their own, and 16% lived at their parents' home.

¹⁶ All female students at the university were initially contacted via an e-mail message which included an invitation letter and the link to access the survey, as well as general information about the research and its objectives. Male students did not receive this e-mail message. The survey was online for just over two and a half months, and every two weeks, it was advertised on

power relationship, socio-cultural notions of 'being a man' and machismo²⁰, breaks a woman's sense of self-worth, and has consequences for her material and psychological well-being.

Based mainly, but not exclusively, on their own experiences, participants defined gender-based violence in the following ways:

"For me gender violence is rape, domestic violence and sexual assault. Also stalking and cyber-stalking".

"Violence is not just physical; it is emotional as well.... If a woman feels vulnerable, it is violence".

"Insecurity, discrimination, the inability to leave an abusive partner is all about violence. It's not only rape".

"Slapping, being pushed, spitting, forms of drunken behaviour".

"Offensive words... Also my ex would use a loud tone of voice and this scared me as much as it would if he hit me".

While the participants were aware of the many different types of gender-based violence, however, when describing personal incidents, they chose not to label such incidents as violence. Instead participants used such phrases as "the thing happened to me", "I was attacked", and "I don't know if it was sexual violence, it was a power thing". This is consistent with other research that indicates that young people (i.e. age group 16-30), and especially young women, rarely use the terms 'sexual assault', 'rape' or 'abuse' to

describe unwanted sexual experiences, and they can have difficulty naming an incident as violence or recognizing behaviours to be serious enough to constitute offences²¹. Three explanations have been offered for this. First, a relationship that is presumed to be based on trust and care can leave the victim unable and unwilling to recognise an act as violence. Secondly, commonly held myths about violence can lead young women not to regard an incident as 'violence' even if it would legally be classified as harassment, stalking or sexual violence²². Such myths include beliefs that gender-based violence always involves the use of physical violence and that the perpetrator is always a stranger. Thirdly, there is some evidence that students do not fully understand the law on this issue²³.

2.2. "While at university"

Because the online survey was conducted during the first six months of the academic year, and first-year undergraduate students are over-represented among those students living on campus during term-time, a significant proportion of our respondents (35%) had been at the university for less than six months²⁴, and 59%

²¹ Hird M., "An empirical study of adolescent dating aggression in the UK", *Journal of Adolescence*, 23, 2000, pp. 69-78; National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*; Powell A., *Sex, power and consent: Youth culture and the unwritten rules*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2010.

²² Stanko E., "Theorising about violence: observations from the Economic and Social Research Council's violence research programme", *Violence Against Women*, 12(6), 2006, pp. 543-555.

²³ National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*; Gunby C., Carline A., Bellis M., Benyon C., *op.cit.*

²⁴ 49% of the 44% of respondents who reported having experienced sexual harassment since coming to university, however, indicated that the most serious incident had occurred during their first year.. Comparable figures for stalking were 52% of the 22% of respondents who reported this, and 58% of the 8%

²⁰ Of those who provided information in the online survey about the most serious incident of sexual harassment that they had experienced since becoming a student at the university, 4% identified the perpetrator as another woman. In the case of stalking, 7% identified the perpetrator as another woman. In the case of sexual assault, 100% of perpetrators were identified as men.

were not resident on campus when they completed the survey. We cannot therefore claim with confidence that those who responded to the survey were entirely representative of female students enrolled at the university at that time²⁵. Our survey made it clear, however, that by “while at university” we intended while actually present at the university or travelling to or from the university.

Our survey asked respondents not only about their experiences of sexual violence²⁶ victimisation “while at university”, but also whether they had experienced such victimisation before coming to university. Our interest in doing so was to ascertain to what extent respondents had been protected from such victimisation during their teenage years before coming to university, and whether those who had experienced such pre-university victimisation were more or less likely to report victimisation while at university. The findings on this matter are presented in Table 1.

These data indicate that most of our respondents who reported victimisation had experienced such victimisation before coming to university, and that prevalence of such victimisation was lower while at university than before respondents came to university. This suggests that female students arrive at university not as ‘vulnerable ingénues’ as far as experience with sexual victimisation is concerned, and that they are not at greater risk of such victimisation while at university than they were when in their home and school environments

before coming to university²⁷. Certain important considerations need to be taken into account in drawing conclusions from these data. In the first place, as noted earlier, a disproportionate number of our respondents had only been at university for a relatively short time when responding to the survey. Their exposure to risk while at university, therefore, will have been shorter than prior to coming to university. Secondly, since the majority of our respondents (61%) were not living on the campus while attending university, the exposure to risk “while at university” will have been less for many of them than while they were not at the university. The idea that coming to university exposes women to risks of sexual violence from which they have been protected before coming to university, however, is not supported by these data. Universities may actually provide a safer environment for women, or women may already have developed skills to better protect themselves against victimisation by the time they go to university, or men who go to university may be less prone to victimise women²⁸, or some combination of all three of these factors may have been in play at this university.

2.3. Victimisation while at university.

Respondents who reported victimisation while at the university were asked a series of questions about the “most serious” incident in each category (sexual harassment, stalking and sexual assault) that they had reported. It is the responses to these

of respondents who reported having experienced sexual assault since coming to university.

²⁵ Our 9% response rate for the online survey (see above) also raises the issue of just how representative these data may be.

²⁶ For definitions, see footnotes 29 & 31, below.

²⁷ A survey of teenage girls’ experiences of sexual violence in the UK, published by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in 2009, indicated that such experiences are very common (“1 in 3 teenage girls tell of sexual abuse by their boyfriends” *The Guardian*, 1st September 2009, p. 8)

detailed questions about the “most serious” incidents (as defined by the respondents) that provide the data in the following sections of our paper.

(a) Sexual harassment²⁹.

44% of our respondents indicated that they had experienced some form(s) of sexual harassment since becoming students at the university. 47% of these identified the perpetrator of the most serious incident³⁰ as a fellow student, 19% as a partner, ex-partner or someone they had had a date with, and 16% as someone in their group of friends. The overwhelming majority of respondents identified the perpetrator as someone they knew.

(b) Stalking³¹.

22% of our respondents indicated that they had experienced some form(s) of stalking since becoming students at the university. 24% of these identified the perpetrator of the most serious incident as a fellow student, 50% as a partner, ex-partner or someone they had had a date with, and 11% as someone in their group of friends. Again, the overwhelming majority of respondents knew their stalker.

(c) Sexual assault and coercive sexual acts³².

8% of our respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of sexual assault or coercive sexual acts since becoming students at the university. Almost half (46%) of these (3.7% of all our respondents) indicated that they had

²⁸ As noted below, our respondents indicated that the perpetrators of their victimisation were overwhelmingly men.

²⁹ Sexual harassment was defined broadly in the survey to include any of the following: someone exposed themselves to me to harass or frighten me; someone harassed me via telephone, SMS, e-mail or letter by saying things that were indecent or threatening; I was harassed by being whistled at, having dirty comments directed at me, or being stared at; someone made me feel uncomfortable by making comments about my body or my private life, by making sexual innuendos, or by making sexual advances in a pushy way; someone got unnecessarily close to me, e.g. bent over me too closely or pressured me into a corner in a way I perceived as pushy; someone told me lewd jokes and spoke to me in a way that made me feel pressured sexually; someone groped me or tried to kiss me against my will; someone walked after me, followed me or pressured me so that I became scared; someone made it clear to me that it could be disadvantageous for my future or my professional development if I didn't agree to have sex with him/her; someone showed me pornographic images or pictures of naked people in inappropriate situations; I have experienced other situations involving sexual harassment.

³⁰ Respondents were only asked to answer these more detailed questions with reference to the incident that they had identified as the most serious of any they had experienced while at the university.

³¹ Stalking was defined in the survey to include: unwanted telephone calls, letters, e-mails, SMS or messages over an extended period; sent me things I

didn't want (e.g. mail order items, "gifts", pornographic material); visited my home uninvited/lurked outside my home, at the university, at my work place; spied on me (e.g. via fellow students, neighbours, acquaintances); broke in or attempted to break in to my home, gained unauthorised access to my e-mail account, intercepted my post, listened in to my telephone conversations; harassed my family, friends, fellow students, neighbours; threatened to harm me, to break me psychologically, or to destroy things that belong to me; threatened self-harm or suicide; deliberately destroyed or damaged things which belong to me or mean something to me; threatened to injure me physically or to kill me; physically attacked me and committed bodily harm; threatened to harm someone close to me (e.g. children, parents, partner); attacked or put at risk a person close to me (e.g. children, parents, partner); failed to abide by a police restraining order or a court safety order; other incidents involving harassment, threats or terrorising actions (defined as such by respondent).

³² These were defined in the survey to include: someone forced me to engage in sexual intercourse and used their penis or something else to penetrate my body against my will; someone tried, against my will, to penetrate me with their penis or something else, but it didn't happen; someone forced me to engage in intimate touching, caressing, petting and similar acts; I was forced to engage in other sexual acts or practices that I didn't want; someone forced me to look at pornographic images or films and to act them out, even though they knew I didn't want to.

been raped³³, and a further 9% indicated that they had been a victim of attempted rape. 29% of those who reported some form of sexual assault or coercive sexual acts identified the perpetrator of the most serious incident as a fellow student, 42% as a partner, ex-partner or someone they had had a date with, and 13% as someone in their group of friends. Again, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents knew the perpetrator.

A number of features of these data are noteworthy. In the first place, the proportions of women reporting victimisations while at university in our study are significantly lower than those reported in the contemporaneous NUS survey³⁴, and this despite the fact that the definitions of sexual harassment³⁵, stalking³⁶ and

sexual assault and other coercive sexual acts³⁷ used in the two surveys, while not identical, were not substantially dissimilar. There are a number of possible explanations for this disparity. In the first place, the response rate for the NUS survey was extremely low (2,058 respondents out of all female students at 115 British tertiary education institutions who were eligible to participate), so the findings may be quite unrepresentative. Secondly, while in its report the NUS described these incidents as having occurred “on campus”³⁸, respondents were in fact asked: “Whilst you have been a student at your current institution, have you ever experienced any of the following?” It is likely, therefore, that some respondents reported incidents that had not occurred while they were on or around university premises³⁹. Alternatively, the lower figures in our study may reflect the fact that the university at which our research was

³³ The wording of the category of assault which they indicated was: “Someone forced me to engage in sexual intercourse and used their penis or something else to penetrate my body against my will.”

³⁴ 68% of respondents in the NUS survey reported having experienced verbal and physical harassment while on campus; 12% reported having experienced stalking; and 25% reported having experienced sexual assault. National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*, p. 11.

³⁵ The NUS survey used the term “Harassment”, defined to include: someone making comments with a sexual overtone that made you feel uncomfortable; someone wolf whistling, cat calling, or making noises with sexual overtones; someone exposing their sexual organs to you when you did not agree to see them; someone groping, pinching or smacking your bottom when you did not agree to them doing so; someone groping, pinching or touching your breasts when you did not agree to them doing so; someone lifting up your skirt in public without you agreeing; someone asking you questions about your sex or romantic life when it was clearly irrelevant or none of their business; someone asking you questions about your sexuality when it was clearly irrelevant or none of their business; taken photo or video footage of you without your consent; circulated photo or video footage of you taken without your consent; shown naked or semi-naked photographs or video footage of you to other people without your consent; filmed you naked or semi-naked without your consent; attempted to share pornography with you when you didn’t agree to see it.

³⁶ The NUS survey used the term “Unwanted obsessive behavior or stalking”, defined to include: has anyone repeatedly followed you, watched you, phoned you,

texted, written, e-mailed, communicated with you through social networking sites, or communicated with you in other ways that seemed obsessive or made you afraid or concerned for your safety?

³⁷ The NUS survey used the term “Unwanted sexual experiences”, defined to include: have you ever had sexual intercourse when you didn’t want to because you were, or felt, unable to say no?; sexual contact (this could include kissing, touching or molesting you including through clothes); attempted sexual intercourse (when someone has tried to have oral, anal or vaginal sex with you but has not been successful); assault by penetration (this means someone putting an object, such as a bottle, in your anus or vagina); sexual intercourse (this means someone putting a penis in your mouth, vagina or anus); other unwanted sexual experience not described above.

³⁸ National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*, p. 11.

³⁹ In the case of harassment, this question was prefaced in the survey with the words (in smaller font) “In this section we ask you about your experiences of harassment on campus”. But the questions on “Unwanted obsessive behavior or stalking” and “Unwanted sexual experiences” were not prefaced by similar wording. The questions on unwanted sexual experiences, for instance, were prefaced by the words: In this section you are asked about any experiences of unwanted sexual contact you have had *during your time as a student*” (emphasis added).

undertaken (a medium-sized, rural campus-based university with 62% of its students living on the campus⁴⁰) is not representative of the wide range of tertiary education institutions that were included in the NUS survey. This deserves further investigation to ascertain whether the kind of university at which we did our research does in fact provide a safer environment for women than other kinds of tertiary education institutions.

Related to this, we may compare the results of our research with data on sexual victimisation of women in the general population in Britain. Findings of the British Crime Survey indicate that 27% of respondents claimed to have been victims of rape or some other form of sexual abuse since the age of 16 (8% of our respondents reported such sexual violence). 22% of our respondents, however, reported having been victims of stalking, compared with 19% of BCS respondents⁴¹. Comparable data for sexual harassment are not available⁴². These data are consistent with the findings of our research that

the majority of incidents reported by our respondents occurred before they came to university, again suggesting that women may be safer from the most serious sexual violence while at university than when in the general community. 33% of victims in the British Crime Survey, however, reported that the perpetrators were known to them, compared with 83% of victims in our survey - an indication that mixed student accommodation and the close-knit social life at the university may pose particular risks for female students.

Secondly, although data on this are not presented above, our findings indicate that except in the case of sexual assault, the majority of the incidents reported by our respondents were at the lower end of seriousness⁴³. While significant numbers of female students reported sexual harassment or stalking, very few reported acts of actual or threatened physical violence. It seems possible that this accounts for the fact that most victims do not report these incidents to university authorities or police (discussed below).

Thirdly, it is clear from our data that the great majority of perpetrators of sexual violence against women university students are fellow students, current or former partners, or others known to the victim⁴⁴. Noteworthy, we think, is the fact that academic or other university staff were identified as perpetrators in only 2% of the “most serious”

⁴⁰ We should note here that in this respect our survey respondents may not have been entirely representative of students at the university, since only 41% of them indicated that they lived on campus during term-time. We were not able to ascertain, however, whether the proportions of students who do so varies by gender.

⁴¹ These differences in rates of victimisation must be considered in light of the fact that our respondents were almost certainly generally younger than the BSC's respondents. As we noted above, however, this would lead us to expect that their experiences of victimisation would have been higher, rather than lower, than those of BSC respondents.

⁴² These data are derived from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, *How Fair is Britain? Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations 2010: First Triennial Review*, E.C.H.R., Manchester, U.K, 2011, http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/how-fair-is-britain/full-report-and-evidencedownloads/#How_fair_is_Britain_Equality_Human_Rights_and_Good_Relations_in_2010_The_First_Triennial_Review, which was based on British Crime survey data for the years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

⁴³ As Kelly & Regan (Kelly L., Regan L., *op.cit.*) have argued, however (rather like the ‘Broken Windows’ theory that was first put forward in 1982 by Wilson & Kelling), less serious offences may be the foundation for a culture that supports and leads to more serious victimisations.

⁴⁴ The NUS findings on this point were similar (National Union of Students, UK, *op.cit.*, p. 19).

incidents⁴⁵ of sexual harassment, and in none of the most serious incidents of stalking or sexual assault or coercive sexual acts⁴⁶. This has obvious implications for university responses and prevention initiatives with respect to such incidents, discussed below.

2.4. Risky places, risky behaviours, and feelings of safety.

We asked our respondents whether they agreed with the statement: “In general I feel at ease with the social atmosphere here at [the university]”. 39.4% agreed “completely”, 52% agreed “more or less”, 5% did “not really agree” and 3.4% did not agree at all. When asked how safe they felt when walking alone on the campus in the dark, 11% responded that they felt very safe, 48% that they felt “more or less” safe, 21% that they did not feel very safe, and 6% that they did not feel safe at all⁴⁷.

The university had a parking area that was exclusively for the use of women, but 77% of our respondents indicated that they were not aware of this, and a further 19% indicated that since they did not drive this was not relevant for them. When asked about how safe they felt when in eight other areas on the campus⁴⁸, the great majority

(typically from 80-95%) responded that they felt very or “more or less” safe in these areas.

So while the majority of our respondents considered the university a relatively safe environment, a significant minority did not feel safe in open areas of the campus after dark, or when travelling alone on public transport to and from the campus.

Our respondents who reported having been victims of sexual harassment while at the university indicated that the most common locations for the most serious incident were at a disco, party or café (24%), in outdoor areas of the campus (14%) and on the street (13%). The most common locations of the most serious incident reported by victims of stalking were in or outside the student’s flat, house or student residence (38%). 54% of respondents who reported having been victims of sexual assault or coercive sexual acts indicated the most common locations of the most serious incident as in their own or someone else’s flat, house or student residence (54%) or at a disco, party or café (9%).

We asked those who reported having been victims of sexual assault or other coercive sexual acts whether they thought that the perpetrator in the most serious case had been under the influence of alcohol and/or a drug at the time of the incident; 47% responded yes. When asked whether they (the victims) had been under the influence of alcohol or a drug at the time of the incident, 37% responded that they had⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ It will be recalled that respondents were only asked about perpetrators in the most serious incidents that they had reported. We do not have data on perpetrators in other reported incidents.

⁴⁶ We cannot think of any reason why respondents would have been more reluctant to report abuses by staff, given that responses to the survey were completely anonymous.

⁴⁷ The figures for feelings of safety when travelling alone on public transport (essentially buses to and from this university) were: 8% very safe, 55% “more or less” safe, 21% not very safe, and 5% not safe at all (10% indicated that they did not use public transport).

⁴⁸ Lecture theatre/seminar room, library, staff offices, student areas, canteen/cafeteria, sports hall/changing area, toilets and lifts/stairs/corridors.

⁴⁹ Notably, none of our respondents who reported having been victims of sexual assault or other coercive sexual acts claimed to have been a victim of a “date rape” drug such as Rohypnol, although two of them indicated that they were not sure whether or not they had been.

It appears from these data that parties (many of which were probably in Student Union premises and/or in the campus pub), at which both perpetrators and victims may have been under the influence of alcohol, and student accommodation, are the most common occasions and locations in which the most serious sexual violence against female university students occurs, although sexual harassment also commonly occurs in outdoor areas on or near the campus. These findings are significant, as they suggest that the more serious victimisations most commonly occur in locations and on occasions at which capable protective guardianship⁵⁰ is relatively easy to organize (given that students who do not live in student residences nevertheless commonly share accommodation with other students). We discuss this further below.

With respect to outdoor areas, participants in our focus group identified “hotspots” of vulnerability where they feel most unsafe during the evening and night. These included: outside the Student Union building; the wooded areas outside the sports centre; outside the halls of residence; and a wooded area leading up to the Postgraduate Students Association’s building (which includes a bar and areas for socializing). Students were concerned about the lack of foot-patrol at night on campus by campus security and/or police personnel. One participant who lived on campus and worked late most nights of the week highlighted her “feelings of insecurity when leaving [a particular administration building where

she worked] and walking to the halls of residence”. When asked about the reason for this insecurity, she noted “the lack of people on campus during that time of night and especially security patrol” as the contributing factors.

We discussed the role of alcohol and drugs in these victimisations in more detail with the participants in the focus group that we held. Participants spoke of specific socialisation rituals at the university. They described in detail the ways in which women and men are “initiated into university”. Seen as a coming of age and rites of passage into manhood and womanhood, participants noted that “boys become men at university”. This “becoming a man” takes the form of binge drinking, drinking games where men are egged on by their peers to go and “kiss a woman”, and aggressively pursuing female students⁵¹. One participant noted that when new male students want to join university societies such as the rugby club or the men’s football club, they are expected to engage in acts which are women-unfriendly. These include “dressing up as a woman, wearing women’s underwear and parading around the campus” and “distributing FHM magazines and other pornographic material to new recruits in their welcome pack”. When this participant, who narrated the incident, registered a formal complaint with the university rugby club about the distribution of pornographic material, she was told by the male members to “lighten up,

⁵⁰ Reynald D., “Guardianship in Action: Developing a new tool for measurement”, *Crime Prevention & Community Safety: An International Journal*, 11(1), 2009, pp. 1-20; Powell A., *Review of bystander approaches in support of preventing violence against*

women, VicHealth & LaTrobe University, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton, Vic., 2011.

⁵¹ None of the participants in the focus group were aware that socialisation rituals such as these are violations of the university’s Code of Conduct relating to student society social events and the practice of ‘initiation ceremonies’.

learn to have some fun and understand what boys get up to”⁵².

It was clear from these discussions and the survey responses that the excessive consumption of alcohol⁵³ and the relatively low cost of alcohol on campus was of concern to many female students and elevated their fear of violence as well as lowering their sense of on-campus security.

2.5. Disclosure.

(i) Sexual harassment.

Two-thirds of those who reported having experienced sexual harassment while at university indicated that they had disclosed the most serious incident to someone else after the event. Of these, the overwhelming majority (94%) had disclosed it to family or close friends⁵⁴. Only 13% indicated that they had reported it to some person in authority at the University. 10% had reported it to the police, 4% had reported it to a doctor, and 5% had reported it to a therapist⁵⁵.

Of those who had not reported the incident: 45% indicated that they didn't think the incident was serious enough to justify reporting it; 30% indicated that they considered that it was a 'one-off' event and 'done with' as far as they were concerned; 21% indicated that they just wanted to be left alone and forget about it; 17.5% indicated that they didn't know who they should talk to

about it; 10% blamed themselves for having misjudged the situation and contributed to the incident; and 9% indicated that they didn't think anyone or anything could help them.

Of those who had reported the incident to university authorities, two-thirds were very or quite happy with the response; one-third were not very or not at all happy with the response from the University.

(ii) Stalking.

73% of those who reported having experienced stalking while at university indicated that they had disclosed the most serious incident to someone else after the event. Of these, the overwhelming majority (97%) had disclosed it to family or close friends. Only 12% indicated that they had reported it to some person in authority at the University. 14% indicated that they had reported it to the police. 9% had reported it to a therapist.

Of those who had not reported the incident: 34% indicated that they didn't think the incident was serious enough to justify reporting it; 22% blamed themselves for having misjudged the situation and contributed to the incident; 22% indicated that they considered that it was a "one-off" event and "done with" as far as they were concerned; 19% indicated that they just wanted to be left alone and forget about it; 9% indicated that they didn't know who they should talk to about it; 6% indicated that they had been in a state of shock and couldn't do anything about it; 6% indicated that they had felt ashamed and couldn't find the words to describe what had happened; 3% indicated that they didn't think anyone or anything could help them; and 3% indicated that they feared reprisals from the perpetrator.

⁵² National Union of Students (UK), *op. cit.*

⁵³ 32% of our survey respondents agreed completely or "more or less" with the statement: "The excessive consumption of alcohol at parties bothers me."

⁵⁴ Kilpatrick D., Resnick H., Ruggiero K., Conoscenti L., McCauley J., *Drug-facilitated, Incapacitated, and Forcible Rape: A National Study*, Medical University of South Carolina, National Crime Victims Research & Treatment Center, Charleston, SC, 2007, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/219181.pdf>; National Union of Students (UK), *op. cit.*; Gunby C., Carline A., Bellis M., Benyon C., *op.cit.*

⁵⁵ Multiple responses to this question were permitted.

Of the few (11 respondents) who had reported the incident to University authorities, none were very happy with the response; 45% quite happy with the response; 55% were not very or not at all happy with the response.

(iii) Sexual assault and other coercive sexual acts

Only half (50%) of those who reported having experienced sexual assault while at university indicated that they had disclosed the most serious incident to someone else after the event. All of these had disclosed it to family or close friends. Only 13% indicated that they had reported it to some person in authority at the University. 22% indicated that they had reported it to the police. 21% had reported it to a doctor, and 17% had reported it to a therapist.

Of the 50% who had not reported the incident: 44% indicated that they just wanted to be left alone and forget about it; 39% blamed themselves for having misjudged the situation and contributed to the incident; 30% indicated that they had felt ashamed and couldn't find the words to describe what had happened; 26% indicated that they considered that it was a "one-off" event and "done with" as far as they were concerned; 26% indicated that they had been in a state of shock and couldn't do anything about it; 21% indicated that they didn't want to put their relationship with the perpetrator at risk; 17% indicated that they didn't think anyone or anything could help them; 17% indicated that they didn't know who they should talk to about it; 13% indicated that they didn't think the incident was bad enough to justify reporting it; 9% indicated that they had been scared of facing unpleasant questions; and 4%

indicated that they feared reprisals from the perpetrator.

27% of these victims indicated that they did not report the incident to the police because they felt that they "wouldn't be believed or taken seriously". The same percentage did not report the incident to the police because they feared that they had "insufficient evidence"⁵⁶.

These data raise a number of issues. In the first place, the unwillingness of most female victims of sexual violence at university to report their victimisation to university authorities or the police makes it difficult for the university to be aware of victimisation trends and develop appropriate responses to them. Surveys such as we conducted may need to be undertaken periodically (every few years or so) to overcome this difficulty. Secondly, some of the reasons given by victims for not reporting their victimisation to university authorities or the police - especially those indicating self-blame, shame, fear of reprisals, or concern that they will not be believed, or because they had been drinking at the time of the incident⁵⁷ - should be a matter of concern for

⁵⁶ Fisher B., Daigle L., Cullen F., Turner M., "Reporting sexual victimization to the police and others: Results from a national-level study of college women", *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 30(1), 2003, pp. 6-38; Kilpatrick D., Resnick H., Ruggiero K., Conoscenti L., McCauley J., *op.cit.*; National Union of Students (UK), *op.cit.*; Gunby C., Carline A., Bellis M., Benyon C., *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ Participants in our focus group discussion suggested that if women were themselves drinking before an incident, they would feel responsible for "leading up" to it, and be hesitant to report the incident to those in formal authority. Other researchers have argued that "whereas alcohol and drugs function to the advantage of sexually violent men, making them less responsible for their behavior, it is used to discredit victims and to make them more responsible for the acts" (Scully D., *Understanding sexual violence: A study of convicted rapists*, Routledge, New York/London, 1994, p. 123; see also Gunby C., Carline A., Bellis M., Benyon C., *op.cit.*). LeGrand (LeGrand C., "Rape and rape laws:

university authorities. Of particular concern is that these kinds of reasons are more commonly reported with respect to the more serious than the less serious forms of victimisation. As is well known, however, these kinds of reasons for not reporting serious sexual violence to the authorities are certainly not unique to female university students⁵⁸.

Universities should probably be prioritizing strategies to encourage more victims who give these kinds of reasons for not reporting their victimisation to the authorities, to do so. Respect for victim autonomy, however, arguably dictates that victims who are unwilling to report their victimisations to the authorities for other reasons, but prefer to deal with them informally with the support of friends, family or fellow students, should not be pressured to report more of these victimisations to the authorities. We note that the great majority of victims in our survey are in this latter category.

2.6. Awareness of, and resort to, sources of support at the university.

The majority of our respondents (from 50-60% depending on the service) were unaware of four sources of support for victims of sexual violence at the university that we asked them about⁵⁹, and a further 15-21% indicated that although they knew about these services, they would not use them.

Sexism in society and law", *California Law Review* 61(3), 1973, p .928), citing U.S. data from the 1960's, noted that among rape complaints filed by victims who had been drinking, 82% were classified unfounded. This of course may not still be the case in the U.S., and may not have been the case elsewhere.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Kelly L., Lovett J., Regan L., *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ University Equal Opportunity Office, General or Departmental Students' Committee, Self-help Group or Centre, and Women's Advice Centre/Women's Emergency Hotline.

When asked about three other sources of support at the university⁶⁰, 43-46% were not aware of them, and a further 19-21% indicated that although they were aware of them, they would not use them. Only a tiny minority of respondents (from 1-5.5%) indicated that they had actually used any of these services. Although the great majority of respondents were aware that they could consult a doctor or a minister/pastor⁶¹ for support or help, only 17% had actually consulted a doctor, and only 1.5% had consulted a minister or pastor⁶².

3.University policies and responses.

Our stakeholder interviews revealed that a complex combination of disciplinary, crime prevention, other preventative, and post-incident policies were in place at the university to respond to and address incidents of violence (including sexual victimisations) against students. These policies, while in principle predicated on overlapping areas of responsibility and action, are ultimately within individual ambits of responsibility.

In 2007 the university promulgated a 'Gender Equality Scheme', which was revised in 2010. The university regards this scheme as part of the suite of schemes, policies, and practice initiatives underpinning its commitment to equality. The Gender Equality Scheme focuses on eliminating

⁶⁰ Other advisory service, crisis hotline and therapeutic service.

⁶¹ There were three of these (of different denominations) on the campus.

⁶² 37% indicated that they belonged to the Christian faith, 7% other faiths, and 53.6% that they did not belong to any religious faith. cf. Fisher B., Daigle L., Cullen F., Turner M., *op.cit.*; Kilpatrick D., Resnick H., Ruggiero K., Conoscenti L., McCauley J., *op.cit.*; National Union of Students (UK), *op. cit.*; Gunby C., Carline A., Bellis M., Benyon C., *op.cit.*

unlawful sex discrimination and harassment, and promoting equality of opportunity. Furthermore both the University's core mission and the Gender Equality Scheme are strongly underpinned by the University's core values as a "diverse, inclusive and professional academic community that respects individuals and enables them to strive for success in order to contribute positively and sustainably to the local region, wider society and the national economy."

Where an allegation of harassment, stalking, or sexual assault against a perpetrator who is a member of the university has been substantiated by the police or is the subject of a student complaint, disciplinary action may be taken against the perpetrator under the university's *Code of Behaviour*. Dismissal and expulsion are the highest penalties available to the university. While the *Code* does not speak specifically of violence, paragraph 2 states that disciplinary action (up to exclusion from the University) may be taken in response to:

"(d) behaviour which endangers or threatens to endanger the health, safety or well-being of any officer, employee, student, including themselves, or guest of the University, or which might reasonably be expected to have such a consequence;

(e) behaviour which fails to respect the rights of others to live in an environment which is conducive to study and/or work;

(k) behaviour which constitutes harassment as defined by the University;

(u) breaches of the University Code of Conduct relating to student society social events and the practice of 'initiation ceremonies'."

Stakeholders noted that the disciplinary policy with respect to gender-based violence on campus comes into force after a formal complaint has been lodged by the student. When we asked about the process of lodging a complaint, most said that they were unaware about the formal procedure⁶³. Instead they said that students could either directly speak to the university's disciplinary officer or that a complaint comes to the attention to the disciplinary committee via a third party such as a residence manager or Student Union representative with the expressed consent of the victim.

One stakeholder noted that sometimes while an incident is being investigated by the police or security personnel on campus, residence managers remain in contact with those within the disciplinary committee, keeping them abreast of the case and its developments. Whoever is investigating the case will then inform the disciplinary committee and the University Student Discipline Officer. The Officer will then prepare the case and put it to the university and manage that process, making sure the case is "heard at the appropriate sort of level of discipline" by getting meetings organised and, dealing with the outcome and penalty that might have to be undertaken. Students alleged to have breached the *Code* are entitled to appear before a disciplinary committee or a representative of management.

Asked if the current disciplinary policy and procedure in place were adequate, stakeholders agreed that they were adequate in principle. However, one stakeholder noted very cogently:

"One of the key things, and it is something that we've learned from the last case where we had the

⁶³ Of the 13 university-based stakeholders, only 2 were aware of the disciplinary policy and procedure with respect to gender based violence.

bullying and harassment between a group of girls, is that it's important to try and deal with [this] as early on as possible and have something in place that the minute it starts it can be dealt with. The lesson that we learned from the one I have described ... is that it'd been going on from November last to March this year and it gradually built over time and escalated and then the violence had come in because it hadn't been dealt with. I don't think enough people are made aware that these policies are there and that there will be zero tolerance on it" (Stakeholder interview).

Stakeholders who were aware of the disciplinary policy with regards to gender-based violence noted that the role of such a policy in addressing and preventing violence is based on cases being directed to the disciplinary committee and that it is very rare for the victim to come directly to committee or know of the policy's existence. A stakeholder noted that incidents of gender-based violence come to the disciplinary officer and committee "via formal channels, not the victims" and are dealt with through the disciplinary process as "sexual violence is a breach of discipline and a criminal offence".

The university also has a preventative strategy focused on raising awareness by making clear, through the distribution of free pamphlets and reading materials, workshops, and meetings, the unacceptability of sexual harassment, stalking, and sexual violence. Meetings with students at the start of term are organised by the head of campus security, a local police constable, the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the four residence managers. They aim to inform new students about issues relating to safety and action to be taken during a time of emergency. Further,

during the start of term the Students Union, along with its Gender Officer and the Women's Society's president, carry out activities such as informal talks and group discussions with invited third-sector workers and activists on campus safety. These talks centre around alcohol awareness, awareness of the existence of the university safety bus, as well as letting new students know a little more of the types of support services available within the university environment. The Students Union also has links with women's advice centres in the nearest city. Activists and advice workers from rape crisis centres and women's refuges have been invited by them to talk to university students. However, as one stakeholder noted, these talks "are hardly well attended, in fact one or two people attend. I suppose because we do not have the funds to advertise them as well as we could. So there are mechanisms in place but a handful of students know that". It emerged from the interviews that the preventative strategy is geared around the start of the academic term at the university and talks and meetings are in place for a few months (i.e. September-November) and not year-round.

4. Suggestions for improvements: what female students want.

Participants in our focus group discussion elicited the following 'wish list' with respect to what they wanted from the university by way of more effectively responding to the problem of sexual violence on the campus:.

1. Better communication by university officials about services available to women on campus. Participants wanted the university to make more visible its presence on campus so that

“female students know that it cares about its students and their issues”. Participants wanted clear and precise information on campus “about the processes that are in place for women”.

2. All areas of the campus should be well-lit at night. This would greatly contribute towards lowering the levels of anxiety and fear that women feel.
3. Visible foot patrol, especially at night, by security personnel.
4. More safety on buses at night within the campus.
5. Alarms/panic buttons in halls of residence and in the Student Union areas.
6. More student involvement in ensuring safety. Participants said that they wanted “Social spaces and events where students can find each other and air their issues” and “More involvement by the Students Union in student welfare”.
7. More social education. One participant said that she wanted “Obligatory freshers lectures in raising awareness, run by students and the head of security, as a team”⁶⁴.

5. Conclusions.

Our research findings provide a portrayal of the problem of sexual violence against female students at this university which differs in significant ways from the portrayal of this problem which arises from much of the U.S.

⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that most of these suggestions are directed to addressing outdoor victimisations (more likely by perpetrators not previously known to their victims), whereas the research findings such victimisations do not constitute the most common risk for female students at this university. This perhaps reflects how influential popular ideas about sexual violence (as stranger violence in public places) still are.

research on the topic⁶⁵. Specifically, it portrays female students as having had considerable experience of sexual violence before coming to university; it indicates lower levels of victimisation at university than is indicated in much of the U.S. literature (and in the contemporaneous NUS UK survey), and indicates that most of such victimisation involves offending at the lower end of seriousness. This suggests that this university may actually provide an environment which is safer for its female students than their previous home and school environments. This, however, deserves further investigation.

Our research indicates that victims much prefer to deal with most victimisations informally, by seeking assistance and support from family members, friends and fellow students, rather than invoking more formal processes involving university authorities or police. It does reveal, however, that victims who would like a more formal response nevertheless often do not report their victimisation to such authorities because of fear of reprisals, a belief that they were to blame for the incident, shame, concern that their complaints will not be taken seriously or that they will not be believed, or that more formal processes will expose them to secondary victimisation. Furthermore, although the university had substantial policies and institutional arrangements in place designed to prevent and adequately respond to victimisation, student awareness of, and/or willingness to resort to, these was low.

Our research suggests that there are limits to the extent to which universities may legitimately be

held legally or morally responsible⁶⁶ for the extent of sexual victimisation of their students, and for their responses to such victimisation, because much of this probably occurs off university premises, in situations over which universities have no effective control or influence. Nevertheless, our respondents suggested a number of practical ways in which the university's responses to this problem, both prevention- and response-oriented, could be improved. These included not only classic "guardianship" measures⁶⁷, but also educational and socialisation measures, aimed at both potential victims and potential (typically male student) perpetrators, as well as university staff with responsive responsibilities. Our focus group participants and stakeholder interviewees suggested that it does not follow from the fact that victimisation occurred off university premises that the university does not have at least a moral responsibility to provide support and assistance to victims who are studying at the university at the time, especially as our research suggested that such victimisation has the potential to impact negatively on emotional and social well-being and academic progress⁶⁸.

An important limitation of our research is that we did not include male university students in it⁶⁹.

This meant that neither perpetrator perspectives, nor male student sexual victimisation, were explored in the research. These are matters that certainly deserve further research.

⁶⁵ Koss M., Gidycz C., Wisniewski N., *op.cit.*; Fisher B., Daigle L., Cullen F., *op.cit.*

⁶⁶ In earlier days, educational institutions were considered to be *in loco parentis* with respect to their students. But since the age of majority was lowered to 18, this has ceased to be the guiding principle governing universities' responsibility towards their students (Moodie G., Eustace R., *Power and Authority in British Universities*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1974, reprinted by Routledge, London, 2012.).

⁶⁷ Reynald D., *op.cit.*; Powell A., *op.cit.*

⁶⁸ National Union of Students (UK), *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ At the time we joined the EU project of which the research reported here was a part, the other European members of the research team had already decided that male students would not be included in the research.

We did not have time to secure additional funding to allow us to include them in our own part of the project.

	Before university (% of respondents)	While at university (% of respondents)
Sexual harassment	80%	44%
Stalking	54%	22%
Sexual assault	29%	8%

Table 1: *Victimisation (at least one incident) before and while at university.*

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