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Abstract

As awareness of and frustration with sexism in academia grows, so too do strategies of resistance. This chapter explores the concept of 'resistance' in relation to gender-based violence (GBV) in universities. In this context, 'resistance' includes work, much of it inspired by a feminist analysis, to prevent GBV, to hold institutions to account, and to change university cultures so that they no longer invisibilise or condone GBV. Resistance to such efforts also comes from those who would support the status quo and those critical of the framing of anti-GBV campaigns. This chapter will explore how the 'backlash' against feminism and post-feminist equalisation discourses comprise types of resistance to radical attempts to eradicate this form sexism in the academy.

Introduction

Gender based violence (GBV) in universities is well-established as a matter of concern in policy, political and academic environments in the US (eg Fisher, Daigle and Cullen, 2010) and Canada (eg DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2011). In Europe and elsewhere, attention to it has developed more recently (Anitha and Lewis, 2018). Hand in hand with that attention, comes resistance to all the forms of GBV, defined here as 'behaviour or attitudes underpinned by inequitable power relations that hurt, threaten or undermine people because of their (perceived) gender or sexuality' (Anitha and Lewis, 2018:1). This chapter explores the different kinds of resistance that are emerging, including attempts to eradicate GBV (by

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national bodies, higher education institutes (HEIs), campaigning groups and activists) as well as the strategies of resistance by those whose actions can be characterised as comprising a 'backlash'[1] to (perceived) feminist gains and an attempt to hold onto a gendered status quo.

Gender based violence in universities

Scholarship has generated a robust evidence base demonstrating the prevalence, nature and impacts of GBV in university environments, although it has tended to focus on sexual violence and harassment, rather than other forms, such as homophobia, intimate partner abuse, and violence and abuse towards trans people. Research from the US (Cantor, et al, 2015), sampling 27 higher education institutions and 150,000 students found that 23% of women experienced sexual contact involving physical harm or incapacitation and 62% experienced sexual harassment. Across Europe (Spain, Italy, Poland, Germany and the UK), Feltes et al (2012) found that 35% of women experienced sexual violence during their time at university and 61% experienced harassment. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2017) surveyed 30,000 students across all 39 universities about their experiences over the previous year and found that 63% of women students were sexually harassed and 10% were sexually assaulted in 2016. In the UK, the *Hidden Marks* survey (NUS, 2011) found that 14% of women students experienced serious physical or sexual assault and 68% women experienced verbal harassment during their time at university. Overall, despite differences in methodologies and definitions of the behaviours investigated, rates are fairly consistent across geographical boundaries; between a tenth and a quarter of women students have experienced some form of unwanted physical sexual experience and about two thirds experience sexual harassment. Where surveys investigate men's experiences too, they reveal that women are significantly more likely than men to be victimised (eg Australian Human Rights Commission (2017) found women were three times more likely to be sexually

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assaulted). This is clearly a gendered phenomenon; the vast majority of victims are women who are victimised by men, which reflects the prevalence of other forms of GBV in society (Walby and Tombs, 2017; Office for National Statistics, 2018a).

GBV also affects other groups of students. Research that surveyed 4,205 LGBT students and support staff in England, Wales and Northern Ireland found that 31% of LGB students had experienced homophobic abuse, while 7% received physical abuse (Valentine et al., 2009). An 'out in sport' report published by the NUS (2012) revealed that 14.3% of LGBT university and college students had experienced homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia which put them off participating in sport. Almost a quarter of trans students have been bullied or discriminated against since starting university. Such accounts perhaps help explain why 20% of LGB students and 28.5% of trans students have taken time out of their course (Valentine, 2009: 25).

These are not isolated incidents but suggest patterns or cultures of GBV in universities. Phipps and Young's research with the NUS about 'lad culture', 'a group mentality residing in behaviours such as sport, heavy alcohol consumption, casual sex and sexist/discriminatory 'banter', …found that many of the behaviours collected under this banner actually constituted sexual harassment' (Phipps, 2018:42). Such problematic cultures affect women and sexual minorities' experiences on university campuses, in social spaces such as nightclubs (Brooks, 2011; Nicholls, 2015), in online communities and on social media (Lewis et al, 2017; Jane, 2017), and in the teaching and learning contexts within universities (Jackson and Sundaram, 2015; Jackson et al., 2015).

In addition, recent events and research have revealed that GBV by staff against students is also a feature of university life. In the UK, attention to this was brought by the resignation

from Goldsmiths, University of London by Professor Sara Ahmed in protest at the institution's failure to take action on reports of sexual misconduct by staff. As Ahmed noted, '[t]o resign is a tipping point, a gesture that becomes necessary because of what the previous actions did not accomplish. There are now many more people who know something more about what has been happening' (Ahmed 2016). Another tipping point was the failure of Sussex University to take action against lecturer Dr Lee Salter, after he was convicted of assault against Allison Smith, a postgraduate student at the university, with whom he was in a relationship (Pells, 2017). Staff sexual misconduct has also been covered repeatedly through investigative journalism in the mainstream press, sometimes with an unfortunately alarmist tone (for example, the headline, 'Sexual harassment at "epidemic" levels in universities', (Batty et al, 2017)). Given the importance to universities of protecting their reputations, particularly in an increasingly competitive environment, wherein numerous league tables rate universities' performance, it is likely that this national news coverage has some impact on university management and decision-making.

Research evidence about GBV by university staff against students has been provided by campaigning organisation, the 1752 Group, named after the sum given by Goldsmiths, University of London for a conference on the topic, 'as a reminder of the low value placed upon the experiences of students within the university, and the investment of both time and money required to address institutionalised, entrenched cultures of sexual misconduct and the explicit behaviours of staff' (Bull et al, forthcoming), In collaboration with the National Union of Students the 1752 Group surveyed 1839 current and former higher education students and conducted focus group with 15, and found that the majority of those who experience 'sexual misconduct' by a member of university staff reported that the institution did not respond adequately to their complaint (NUS 2018). In India, a list naming 72

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academics at Indian universities who were reported to have committed sexual harassment or violence was compiled from first-person accounts by women who responded to Rayar Sakar's post on Facebook (see Chowdhury and Deep, 2017). The list has met with considerable attention in India and beyond, including resistance from some feminists in India who argue we should use institutional policies and procedures to seek justice, rather than public exposure. Others argue that it is the failure of 'due process' to provide protection or justice for victims of GBV in universities that has led to people taking action such as compiling the list (see Anitha, Marine and Lewis, (forthcoming) for a fuller discussion). This debate and the list itself have undoubtedly fuelled the growing public attention to GBV in universities and the exposure of institutional failures to take action against it. It has also revealed the various forms of resistance to it, which we discuss in the following section.

Resisting GBV in the UK and beyond

In the UK, efforts to resist GBV in universities have taken several forms, including policy initiatives by national bodies and HEIs as well as Students Unions, project-based activities, such as bystander interventions[2] and consent training, and activism by students and staff. Given that no single approach can provide a panacea to the problem of GBV in universities, together they comprise a vital 'jigsaw of strategies' (Lewis and Anitha, 2018). While we cannot do justice here to the variety of such initiatives, a brief overview indicates the energy and resources currently expended on tackling this problem in UK universities.

Although they were not the first initiatives to emerge in the UK to tackle GBV in universities, national policy developments are important because they signal political attention. In response to increasing attention to this issue by media, and campaigning by student groups such as the NUS, in 2015, Universities UK (UUK) - a representative organisation for UK

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universities whose members are university vice-chancellors and principals - was tasked by the UK Government with examining the issues of harassment, hate crime and sexual violence. Prioritising the issues of sexual violence and harassment, the UUK Taskforce's report, *Changing the Culture*, (UUK2016) recommended a series of actions to improve responses to and prevention of GBV in universities. However, the Taskforce failed to adopt a broad definition of GBV, excluding intimate partner violence despite growing evidence of young people's experiences (ONS, 2018b), and failed to consider GBV committed by staff on students or staff. Despite its shortcomings, the report and its recommendations represented a major overhaul of previous approaches in higher education. A year on, UUK published a follow-up report (UUK2017) which found universities had made 'significant but highly variable progress' (p. 6). This progress was aided by a £2.45million funding stream provided by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to tackle sexual harassment on campus. While this has been an important catalyst for initiatives, it remains to be seen whether institutions will continue to fund and support such initiatives once this funding stream dries up. Additionally, although the NUS survey (2010) uncovered different forms of GBV including domestic violence, the HEFCE funding stream limits efforts to a particular manifestation of GBV, sexual violence, which also reflects recent media focus in the UK (albeit the funding recognises intersectional aspects of identity such as race, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability).

Within HEIs a range of initiatives developed, some of which predated the national attention to the topic. For example, Rachel Fenton and colleagues, funded by Public Health England (an executive agency of the government Department of Health and Social Care), developed the first UK version of bystander interventions, *The Intervention Initiative* (Fenton et al, 2014, 2016), which addressed both sexual and domestic violence. In Scottish HEIs, Scottish

Women's Aid piloted the first bystander interventions (Hutchinson et al 2018), 'Get SAVI' ('Students Against Violence Initiative'), which was based on a feminist understanding of GBV and drew upon US-based bystander initiatives, particularly the Green Dot Programme (Coker et al, 2011). In a pioneering move, Durham University instituted a Sexual Violence Task Force in 2015 to examine their existing university policies and to devise a set of policy responses to this problem (Towl, 2016). Since then, it has led the way by establishing a new dedicated full-time role, believed to be the first in the country, of Student Support and Training Office (Sexual Violence and Misconduct). Throughout the UK higher education sector, institutional initiatives to address GBV are becoming more common but the focus often remains only on sexual violence[3] and, as UUK (2017) notes, progress is patchy.

The National Union of Students (NUS) has led campaigns and research to address GBV in universities. Their survey of women students' experiences, *Hidden Marks* (NUS 2011), provided the first and, to date, the only national prevalence data in the UK. Since then, they have collaborated with academics to conduct further examinations of particular expressions of GBV such as 'lad culture' (Phipps and Young, 2013*)*, and GBV by university staff (NUS, 2018). These reports, and other NUS communications about this topic, are generally well covered in the national media, bringing attention to the issues from 'the voice of students'. In addition, the NUS has developed campaigns and interventions to tackle GBV. For example, the 'I heart consent' initiative in 2014 provided consent workshops for students to foster knowledge, conversations and campaigns about sexual harassment and assault. The '#StandByMe' campaign in 2015 lobbied universities to improve their responses to GBV by providing services for victims, and training staff about how to deal with disclosures. The Scottish NUS have operationalised a broader definition of GBV by campaigning to raise awareness of coercive control in intimate relationships and to push universities to improve

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their responses. Prompted by the suicide of student, Emily Drouet, whose boyfriend, Angus Milligan, also a student, was abusive to her, the '#emilytest' campaign uses some of the text messages she sent friends, which are full of self-blame – 'It's my fault.' 'I made him so angry' 'I deserve it' (see Brooks, 2017; https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-scotland/campaigns/tackling-gender-based-violence). The aim is to draw attention to the dynamics of abuse and to help students and staff see beyond victim-blaming to recognise GBV. This issue has received closer attention and funding from the devolved Scottish government, where there has been greater focus on prevention than in the rest of the UK (Donaldson et al, 2018; Hutchinson, 2018).

Individual universities and Students Unions have also taken action against GBV. Jordan et al (2018) present findings from the 'Stand Together' action research project at the University of Lincoln, designed to challenge GBV in the university. The project was comprised of bystander intervention training, awareness-raising campaigns, a domestic abuse conference, and a theatre project. The project was funded by the university, implemented by academics supported by the Students Union, and involved collaboration with voluntary sector groups (Scottish Women's Aid, a domestic violence charity; the White Ribbon Campaign, the global campaign for men to take responsibility for GBV; and Tender which uses theatre to work with young people to address GBV). Other Students Unions have, for example, adopted 'zero tolerance' policies, supported 'It Happens Here' campaigns (designed to raise awareness of sexual violence and support for survivors), and implemented bystander intervention training with their student societies. While anecdotal evidence suggests that these kinds of interventions are increasingly common, in the absence of a reliable, centralised source of information about such interventions, it is unclear how widespread they are, to what extent

they are institutional responses or student-led initiatives, what techniques are used or what impacts they have.

In addition, student activists have been challenging GBV in their universities and beyond. More recently, they do so in the wider context of a sharp increase in attention to issues of gendered abuse of power, in the light of exposes of GBV by Harvey Weinstein, other men in the entertainment industry, in politics and other sectors and the subsequent development of the '#MeToo', '#HimToo'' and #TimesUp' campaigns. For those of us who have worked for decades to resist GBV, the extent of this awareness of the issue is startling; the extent of the GBV itself is not. As there is no reliable source of co-ordinated information about students' grassroots activism against GBV, the extent, nature and impact of such activism is unknown. However, some scholarship does explore students' activism. For example, Lewis et al, (2018) report the range of activities feminist students engage in to resist sexism and 'lad culture' including: zines to challenge dominant ideas about sex and sexuality; drama performances; feminist discussion groups; 'Slutwalks', and advocating for sexual assault centres. This activism has extended to challenges to the curriculum, as some students call for teaching about trauma - such as sexual violence and racism - to be more sensitive to the effects on students. The debate that has emerged in response (which rages particularly strongly in US media and scholarship; see, for example, the collection of papers in *First Amendment Studies*, 30 (1)), includes depictions of students as 'coddled' (Lukianoff and Haidt, 2018), who are 'precious snowflakes', unable to deal with the harsh realities of life, 'embedded in a culture of victimization' (Robbins, 2016). Lewis and Marine (2018:133) ask what purpose is served by these debates; '[t]he attention to a particular range of activism (calls for no-platforming, safe spaces and trigger warnings) focuses attention away from other forms of student activism against GBV (such as awareness-raising campaigns, demands for support services,

fund-raising for services) and simultaneously trivialises students' demands.' Such responses to anti-violence activism undermine campaigns against GBV and highlight the resistance activists face, discussed in the following section.

Resistance to resistance

Work to resist GBV in universities and to change the status quo has been met with resistance from a number of forces that invoke a variety of connected arguments. The first set of arguments utilise a post-feminist, neo-liberal perspective that minimises men's violence against women as a social problem and includes feminists who denounce constructions of women as victims. The second set of arguments is framed within neo-liberal discourses of individual freedom and expression, including sexual expressions. We can think of these sets of arguments as 'resistance to resistance' or 'defensive resistance'. Each is discussed in turn below.

The first set of arguments, using a post-feminist neo-liberal perspective, is comprised of a number of different claims. A common and enduring claim is that the focus on women as victims of men's violence is misguided because men are also, or equally, victims of violence. In recent decades there has been a turn towards gender symmetry in research on intimate partner violence, informed initially by the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) to measure the prevalence of intimate partner violence in a manner that quantifies acts unconnected to their contexts, motivations, meaning and impact. As a result, a punch, for example, that results in feelings of fear (common for women victims,) and a punch that results in laughter (common for male victims) are measured as equivalent acts (see Hester, 2009; Barter, 2009 for gendered responses). This approach has been robustly criticised (Dobash et al, 1992); its appeal to 'objective science' masks the reality that such an approach is devoid of broader

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analyses of gendered power imbalances in society and so misrepresents the gendered nature of this form of violence. Where closer analysis of data is undertaken, including attention to context, motivations and consequences, gender asymmetry becomes very apparent. For example, Walby and Towers' (2017) analysis of data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (a victimisation survey which produces the most reliable national prevalence data[4]) reveals that '82% of domestic violent crimes are against women' (p18), 87% of domestic violent 'high frequency' (ie more than 10 crimes in a year) crimes are committed against women, and 91% of domestic violent crimes resulting in injury are against women. Despite the significant methodological flaws on which they are based, claims that intimate partner violence is gender symmetrical are particularly attractive to men's rights and anti-feminist groups. This approach also holds some appeal to policy makers because of its apparently 'equitable' gender-neutral approach; the UK Conservative Government's *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-20* (HM Government, 2015) uses a gender-neutral definition, unlike the Scottish government whose national strategy, outlined in *Equally Safe* (Scottish Government, 2016) 'conceptualises GBV as both a cause and consequence of gender inequality' (Donaldson, et al, 2018).

An alternative framing of defensive resistance is that attention to GBV is not necessary because we have, to a large extent, achieved gender equality. This is a form of post-feminist discourse that recognises the importance of feminism in the past but considers that equality has been achieved in the present and so feminism and its campaigns are redundant. This framing is bolstered by the claim that the 'real' problems lie elsewhere around the globe where women experience 'real' oppression and exploitation, or that we have gone beyond equality and 'women are now on top' (Moore, 2017). Within post-feminist discourses that posit that the battle for gender equality has been won in the West, any remaining misogyny or

violence against women and girls is constructed as a remnant of the past or the pathological behaviour of some individuals that is unconnected to broader socio-cultural norms. At the same time, violence against women and girls within ethnicised communities in the West and in other parts of the world is constructed as rooted in 'their' culture (Volpp, 2000). It is within such discourses that conservative groups have articulated resistance to teaching sex and relationships education in schools for all children as a means of combatting GBV, at the same time as they support prevention education initiatives and targeted campaigns which presume such violence to be the norm in Black and minority ethnic communities (Anitha and Gill, 2015).

The suggestion that men are now the victims of women's progress is what Lessard (2011) describes as an 'inversion' (p182). In her examination of the media 'backlash' in response to exposés of sexual harassment in universities in the 1990s, she derides notions that 'feminists brandishing newly "feminized" legal weapons threaten our basic institutions' (p164) and sees such notions as part of 'the rhetorical signature of conservative backlash discourses, namely the application of concepts and images of powerlessness and discrimination to describe the situation of relatively powerful persons, social groups, and institutions'(p182) while victims and their advocates are 'portrayed as powerful forces able to capture and corrupt not only university policy discourses but also legal discourses' (p188). Concerns expressed in the media that the drive for equality, and, in particular, the campaign against GBV, has 'gone too far' (Saul and Taylor, 2017; Foroohah, 2017) reflect their growing visibility more than their achievements to date. They also, perhaps, reflect, a sense amongst some men, heightened by the 'construction of white middle class young women as ideal neoliberal educational subjects' (Phipps, 2018:47) and the inversions that Lessard (above) refers to, that their power and privilege are being challenged. This is not simply a gendered backlash against women's

progress; as Phipps notes, consideration of the classed relations in these struggles reveals the complexity in the changing dynamics of power, resistance and social change; '[t]here is a distinction between *being* dominated as a working class young man navigating a middle class education system, and *feeling* dominated as a middle or upper class young man dealing with a loss of privilege' (Phipps, 2018: 47).

It is not only those seeking to retain masculine privilege who claim the campaign against GBV in universities is unnecessary. Scholarship and media commentary from women, some of whom align themselves with feminism, also criticises the growing momentum or direction of work against GBV. For example, Mott (2017: no page) argues that in the drive to tackle GBV on campus under Obama's Presidency, which she sees as a campaign that served 'larger political demands', university staff were 'indoctrinated as "responsible employees", and trained to see criminality in the most ambiguous situations.' Her concern is that, in the drive to hold institutions to account, students did not receive the 'sensitivity and fairness' they deserved. For others, the concerns are about the focus on women as victims that underplays women's agency and clouds sexual relations in anxiety, or 'paranoia' (Kipnis, 2017).

The concepts of victim, agency, and choice have long been debated in feminist scholarship and commentary in response partly to the neo-liberal construction of the subject unencumbered by broader power relations (see, for example, Lamb, 1999; Schneider, 1993). In this neo-liberal perspective, reminders of women's victimhood disrupt this construction of the agentic woman and so are rejected. For example, Germaine Greer's recent comments on 'women who spread their legs' build on the binary notion that women who act with agency (by 'accepting' the sexual advances of powerful men who can influence their careers) cannot also be victims (Edwards and Nagouse, 2018). These discourses manifest in women's lives

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and conceptualisations of themselves; scholars such as Scharff (2012) and Baker (2008) note young women's reluctance to identify with the idea of being a victim, even while they describe their own or other women's victimisation. For Scharff, this is part of their 'repudiation' of feminism. The reluctance to identify with the 'victim' position is heightened by flourishing neo-liberal 'responsibilisation' rhetoric and values that depict individuals as all-powerful agents creating their own circumstances; people are victims because of their limited resilience and capacity to avoid or overcome adversity. In a world in which 'empowerment' can be bought as a pair of trainers or a session at the gym - what Silva and Mendes call 'empty empowerment located within consumerist choice' (2015: 6) - the idea that we can avoid victimisation if we simply make the right choices flourishes. In the reluctance to acknowledge victimisation, a distinction is often made between the experience and the subsequent identity. In a neo-liberal world in which victims are seen as deficient, 'I'm not a victim' has become a common and popular refrain in response to harmful experiences.

Feminist scholars have also made more nuanced analyses of the interplay between agency, choice, victimisation, oppression and power which recognise the complex reality of gendered power dynamics. For these scholars, agency and victimisation are not an oppositional binary but co-exist; for example, Lewis et al (2000) recognise both agency and victimhood when they conceptualise women's responses to domestic violence as 'active negotiation and strategic resistance' (p180). Similarly, Mirza (2018:41) recognises South Asian women's experiences of family abuse as 'agentive behaviour best understood in the context of subordination and oppression that created the conditions of its enactment.' Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's concept of 'situation', Vera-Gray (2016: no page no.) argues 'all agency is situated'. Feminist approaches to these debates conceptualise agency as expressed

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within the limitations of wider structural, economic, political and social contexts; no choices are entirely 'free', some less so than others. Agency does not preclude victimisation, nor does victimisation preclude agency.

The second set of arguments that comprise 'defensive resistance' stems from concern that anti-GBV campaigns shroud sexual relations in a sense of danger and risk. Laura Kipnis, whose work has focused on love, pornography and ecstasy, bemoans the introduction of more restrictive staff conduct policies to prevent staff's sexual harassment of students, which, she claims, infantilise students and depict professors as powerful predators; 'sexual paranoia reigns; students are trauma cases waiting to happen' (2015:15). Similarly, Merkin worries that the public conversation about sexual behaviour and consent that has been prompted by #MeToo amounts to 'the re-moralization of sex, not via the Judeo-Christian ethos but via a legalistic, corporate consensus.' She muses that 'we seem to be returning to a victimology paradigm for young women, in particular, in which they are perceived to be — and perceive themselves to be — as frail as Victorian housewives' (Merkin, 2018: no page). There is no doubt that ideas about coercion and victimisation in sexual relationships sit uncomfortably with a focus on sexual pleasures and freedoms. However that discomfort points to the reliance on binaries rather than acknowledging that students may seek sexual pleasures *and* protection from sexual harms.

A further form of resistance to anti-GBV campaigns in universities manifests in claims that contemporary students' attempts to rid the campus of misogyny, racism and other forms of oppression threaten freedom of speech and reveal them as precious snowflakes who cannot handle attitudes and behaviours they find 'offensive'. Accusations that students are closing down freedom of speech have come in relation to the practice of 'no-platforming' external

speakers. No-platforming was originally used by left-leaning groups to restrict far-right organisations' access to public platforms, and thereby to close opportunities for them to express their hatred of Black and minority ethnic people, amongst others. More recently speakers involved in gender politics (for example, Germaine Greer in relation to her comments about trans people) as well as anti-Islamic and 'extremist' Islamic speakers have been 'no-platformed' by Students Unions seeking to protect their students from 'hate speech.' While we applaud the desire to rid campuses of hate, we are also mindful of 'feminism's long and proud history of saying the unsayable – usually "offensive" things for which women were expected to carry the blame and the shame, such as men's violence, menstruation and childbirth, women's anger, and their sexual desires' (Lewis et al, 2016: 58-59). Balancing the important principle of freedom of speech with the equally important work of feminism (and other progressive forces) to expose and articulate harms, as well as with the feminist desire to protect women from further harms, is undoubtedly challenging. However, the claim that hitherto marginalised groups are compromising the principle of freedom of speech fails to take into account the power dynamics between the groups that are speaking, being spoken of or being ignored. It reflects another 'inversion' (Lessard 2011:182), suggesting that marginalised groups are wielding extensive and impactful power on campuses and beyond. For centuries, universities have been the preserve of elite white men; the portraits hanging in most university boardrooms are a reflection of that longstanding history. The marginalised groups that have only recently been allowed access to universities are now expressing their desire to adapt campuses and curricula to better reflect the diversity of the human race; adjustments are required to make universities fully accessible to these groups. We note, though, that some of these initiatives to take up space in previously male-dominated environments are criticised from both within and outside feminist politics, reminding us that feminism is not homogenous but is comprised of diverse voices and positions.

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Moreover, freedom of speech has been both defended and challenged by established powers, such as the UK government. On the one hand, the UK Universities Minister has called on institutions 'to recognise the importance of freedom of speech and the role it plays in ensuring open debate… to ensure students are exposed to a wide range of issues and ideas in a safe environment without fear of censorship, rebuke or reprisal' (gov.uk, 2017). On the other, government legislation - the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and guidance (Prevent Duty Guidance for higher education institutions in England and Wales, 2015) - has been criticised for its 'chilling effect on intellectual debate and inquiry at universities' (Grove, 2015). Under this Act, universities are required to engage with the government's anti-terrorism work by anticipating whether views expressed at events with external speakers will constitute criminal offences (such as encouragement of terrorism and proscribed organizations), and to demonstrate willingness to train staff to recognise changes in behaviour and outlook which might indicate 'radicalisation'. Freedom of speech has become a banner under which both powerful and marginalised groups claim the right to speak.

Accusations about freedom of speech are part of wider challenges to the role and practice of contemporary universities. For example, we have seen persistent claims by right wing groups and certain media outlets (Turner, 2017; Buffet, 2017) about universities' 'left wing bias' and marginalisation of views and scholars from other positions on the political spectrum. In a broader political climate where neo-liberal view dominate, universities play a vital role in providing spaces for expressions of critical thinking that challenges established dogma.

Conclusion

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We have analysed how, in a context of increasing recognition of and resistance to GBV in university communities, there has also been a proliferation of resistance to (the possibility of) these changes. These different forms of resistance to anti-GBV campaigns are often couched in terms of equality, based on neo-liberal and post-feminist assumptions that equality is more or less achieved and that power relations are not compromising the academy and those who participate in it. This anti-feminist resistance has received insufficient attention in the broader project to challenge GBV. The need to harness men as potential and crucial allies in the anti-violence project for change, or as imagined silent bystanders amenable to 'pro-social' behaviours if taught the skills and knowledge to take a stand against GBV has shaped some of this neglect. In some respects, the failure to anticipate the inevitability of such resistance leads to compromises and negotiations in the hope of minimising such resistance. In the case of prevention education initiatives, this can take the form of a reluctance to foreground a gendered feminist analysis of the problem, in the hope of keeping men 'on board'. In US-based programmes, this has entailed the shift from a 'gender based' conceptualisation of violence into a 'power-based' understanding, as the programme has been adopted and rolled out by students resistant to the idea that gendered structural inequalities form the basis of violence (Katz et al, 2011). This shift can be explained by the perceived need to increase the appeal of the programme to men who may be resistant to the explicit discussion of patriarchy and calls to relinquish their (collective) privilege through individual/collective actions such as bystander interventions in the face of GBV. However, the persistence of patriarchy and misogyny requires us to pay close attention to the contours of this resistance, not least in order to mount an effective response to it.

We see the attempts to challenge GBV and the cultures that support it as a clear challenge to these discourses; by pointing to the continued existence of inequalities, they demonstrate that

victimisation is not a result of individual idiosyncracies but reflect and uphold gendered inequalities in society, and hence require concerted efforts towards change. Moreover, we see the resistance to campaigns about GBV as a clear indication that unequal power relations continue to mar the academic landscape, creating 'chilly climates' for those groups who have only recently been allowed access. Demands made by students and staff for policies and action for better prevention of GBV are part of attempts to re-imagine and recreate the university environment. They are part of a newly-restarted as-yet unfinished conversation about sex, sexuality, gender and power which will continue to play out as long as gendered power relations continue.

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[1] We use the term backlash with caution, for the reasons detailed in Chunn et al (2011).

[2] Bystander interventions are based on the recognition that there is a connection between acts of GBV and problematic gender norms. They seek to change the dominant cultural norms that underpin GBV by equipping people - 'bystanders' - with the skills and confidence to recognise gendered, violence-tolerant norms and situations where acts of GBV may take place and to intervene effectively and safely. For further discussion, see Fenton et al (2016).

³ It is useful to ponder the focus on sexual violence to the exclusion of other kinds of GBV. Arguably, attention to this phenomenon appeals to actors across the political spectrum, from feminists and Leftists who explain it in terms of patriarchal and structural power and oppression, to the Christian Right, who see it as evidence of a moral decline associated with sexual liberalisation. Moreover, it is a 'sledgehammer' event (E. Stanko, (1985) *Intimate Intrusions: Women's Experiences of Men's Violence* London: Unwin Hyman) that is more widely recognised as harmful, especially if perpetrated by strangers in public places, in comparison to the private, hidden nature of intimate partner violence. As sexual violence has traditionally been depicted as conducted by predatory men who attack strangers, it can also be seen as the preserve of a few exceptional 'monsters', so wider gender relations are not implicated. The consideration of lad culture provides a counterpoint to this tendency by focusing on social norms rather than individual acts, but the focus remains on sexual harassment and violence rather than other forms of GBV.

⁴ However, Walby et al (Walby, S., Towers, J., & Francis, B. (2015). Is violent crime increasing or decreasing? A new methodology to measure repeat attacks making visible the significance of gender and domestic relations. *British Journal of Criminology*, *56*(6), 1203-1234) highlight a significant flaw in its methodology – the 'capping' of high frequency victimisation, which under-counts intimate partner victimisation.