Preventing sexual violence?

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Introduction

The success of feminist campaigns to place sexual violence on the agenda of the state has resulted in significant social policy advances in Australia. The focus of social policy reform over the last twenty years has challenged community and government beliefs that intimate sexual violence is a 'private' matter which has no place in the 'public' work of the state. A successful challenge to this by feminist activists has resulted in a persistent focus on 'tertiary' levels of intervention - providing sympathetic and victim centred care *after* the sexual assault reducing further harm. The development of apprehended violence orders, sexual assault law reform, the provision of refuges and sexual assault and domestic violence services, the refinement of policy and procedures for the care of victims post assault are all examples of tertiary intervention. While all these are important initiatives and may contribute to the prevention of further harm or the reduction in repeat offending, they constitute an intervention after the initial offence, and thus do not embody a primary preventative potential. Other social policy initiatives have placed hope in education programs in schools and universities, mass media campaigns and in crime prevention strategies. The success of these social policy initiatives in preventing intimate violence has been little researched.

This paper critically evaluates several examples of social policy commonly believed to prevent sexual violence. We have chosen to explore this topic as there has been little research on it, compared to the evaluation of domestic violence and

child abuse prevention programs (see Cohn Donnelly 1991, I'Anson & Litwin 1996, National Crime Prevention Reports 1998, 1999; Dobash & Dobash, 1997 for example). Our analysis has also grown out of a piece of research in progress that is attempting to identify what might actually prevent intimate sexual violence.

Rape becomes a policy issue

During the 1970s and 80s feminists engaged with the state and obtained significant allocation of resources to combat sexual violence (Franzway, Connell & Court, 1989). The early success of this process can be attributed to a combination of factors; the power of collective action supported by a broad based political movement, sympathetic Federal and State Labor parties in office, a buoyant economy and the combined efforts of radical and liberal feminists. This saw increasing numbers of femocrats entering state and federal bureaucracies to represent the women's agenda and push through reforms (Carmody, 1995; Sawyer, 1990; Summers, 1994; Yeatman, 1990). In this era of top down policy initiatives, politicians learnt they had to support their commitment to the demands of the women's lobby by allocating resources to address feminist concerns about violence.

In the struggle for a fairer deal for the victims of sexual and physical violence, anti-violence feminists have had to learn how to compromise and how to renegotiate the shifting discourses on the role of the state, while continuing to work with bureaucrats and politicians. That struggle has been marked by not only trying to hold on to what resources were already allocated but to gain more resources as the increasing complexities of the manifestations of sexual violence were understood. At the same time anti-violence feminists have had to continue to compete for space on the policy agenda with other social issues.

In some limited respects there has been considerable success. The current

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Federal government for example has allocated 41 million dollars under the Partnerships in Domestic Violence Strategy with a primary focus on prevention. While awareness of domestic violence is high on the Federal government's agenda the issue of rape has all but disappeared[1]. In addition, resistance by conservative groups has added to the complexity of the picture as they argue for men's recognition as victims of violence and assert that too many interest groups have captured the policy agenda. Reflection over the last thirty years of governmental efforts like these, now raise questions about the usefulness of social policy as a tool in addressing complex issues involving sexual violence.

The focus of political action in the early years of feminism was gaining acceptance that sexual violence should be of concern to the public and the state. In this sense we can point to many important social policy initiatives and be proud. However, despite the long and hard battles this took, still little has been achieved by way of the prevention of intimate sexual violence.

Why is Sexual Violence so difficult to prevent?

Combating sexual violence is disagreeable to easy quick fix solutions so popular among politicians and crime prevention specialists. The reasons are complex but would include some if not all of the following factors. The first is that much sexual violence still remains hidden, or unrecognised, and thus remains outside the social infrastructure of normalisation. Studies have consistently shown that sexual violence is heavily under-reported, although estimates of the level of under-reporting vary (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, 1997; Bargen, Fishwick, 1995, NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1993, Salmelainen, Coumarelos, 1993). The New South Wales Crime and Safety survey found that only one quarter of women over 18 reported the assault to the police (NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1993, p. 15-16). The International Crime

Survey estimated that only 5.4 % of women reported to the police (Salmelainen, Coumarelos, 1993, p. 2). Figures, such as these, based on victim report surveys while notoriously imprecise nevertheless provide an indication of the extent of unreported sexual violence. Fear of reprisal, of not being believed, of being stigmatised and further harmed, are some of the reasons why so few victims report to the authorities (Carrington, 1998, p. 171). While so much sexual violence remains outside of the effective means of social intervention, little can be done to prevent it.

Second, those who are most vulnerable to victimisation tend also to be among the populations in the community with the least social resources to do much about it when they experience intimate sexual violence. They are disproportionately young women, concentrated in rural regions or metropolitan areas marked with social disadvantage. Women aged 16 to 20 have an estimated victimisation rate of 113.1 per 100,000 compared to an average of 38.8 per 100,000 (Salmelainen, Coumarelos, 1993, p. 7). There are perplexing regional differences with sexual assault rates on the whole higher in rural areas (Hogg, Carrington, 1998, pp. 163-165), especially in the Far West, the Central West, the Northern Western and the Murrumbidgee statistical divisions of NSW (Salmelainen, Coumarelos, 1993, p. 4).

Thirdly, intimate sexual violence remains relatively invisible and normalised in everyday relationships. This is despite persistent efforts over the last thirty years to render it a visible public concern by challenging the idea that it is a private matter. At least half and as many as two-thirds of known victims of sexual assault are acquainted with or know their attacker (NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1993, p. 9). Consequently most instances of sexual violence occur in the ordinary context of intimate heterosexual encounters, with attacks by perverts or strangers being rare (Hogg, Brown, 1998, p. 64). Yet sexual violence between intimates has attracted little attention in the crime prevention policy discourses

(Pease, 1994). Ironically it has been violence between strangers that has attracted by far the greater public policy focus in crime prevention circles (Stanko, 1990; Radford & Stanko, 1991; Egger, 1997). In addition, the overwhelming focus of crime prevention policy has been directed at reducing property crimes associated with drug related stealing and break and enter offences (Carrington, 1997). Preventing sexual violence barely rates a mention in the crime prevention manual produced by the NSW Attorney-General's department. The bulk of the case studies, funded projects and prevention strategies relate specifically to preventing juvenile crimes such as graffiti, public order offences and malicious damage, and property crimes such as break and enter and shop-lifting (NSW Attorney-General, 1998). Sexual violence requires a different kind of public policy response from the usual recipe of crime prevention, designed primarily around the priority of reducing property offences. Addressing the tangible socio-economic ingredients of citizenship, such as levels of employment, community prosperity and quality of housing, while important in reducing levels of theft, public order, juvenile crime and other offences associated with socio-economic disadvantage, are not public policy measures likely to have much impact on the crimes of the powerful, such as commercial crime, cyber-crime or intimate sexual assault[i]. Sexual violence is not confined to certain classes of men and its incidence has much more to do with gender and power than with poverty or disadvantage. Likewise situational crime prevention strategies, such as the provision of street lighting and safe public transport, while laudable, would have little if any preventative impact on acts of sexual violencethat occur in private between intimates.

Fourthly, much misplaced hope has been invested in legislative reform as a means of preventing sexual violence by acting as a deterrent to potential offenders. This has resulted in extensive sexual assault law reform in the state of NSW and in other jurisdictions over the last two decades (Mason, 1995; Bargen, Fishwick, 1995). However the law reform approach embodies virtually negligible

preventative value, as it represents an intervention after, not before the incident. Despite immense efforts to reform the criminal and legal process to render it more sensitive to the needs of the victims of sexual violence evaluations of its impact have produced some devastatingly negative results (Edwards, 1981; Heath & Naffine, 1994; Mason, 1995; Puren, 1995, Smart, 1989; Threadgold, 1993, Carrington 1997, Young 1998).

Research commissioned by the Department of Women, NSW (1996), and published as a report titled *Heroines of Fortitude* reported the following findings: Of 111 sexual assault trials heard in NSW in 1994, in 82% of cases complainants were accused of lying, 57% were questioned about sexually provocative behaviour, 59% were asked about whether they were drinking on the day of the assault, and 42% were asked about the way they dressed at the time of being assaulted (Dept of Women, 1996, p.7). The hearings were interrupted in 65% of cases due to distress of the women giving evidence (Dept of Women, 1996, p.4). Less than a third of the cases resulted in a conviction of the accused (Dept of Women, 1996, p. 3). Evidence relating to sexual experience was admitted in 84% of the trials, and evidence of a complainant's sexual reputation, according to this report, was raised in 12% of trials, despite the existence of legislation [S409B (2) *Crimes Act* 1900 NSW] ruling such evidence inadmissible (Dept of Women, 1996, p. 10). While these figures have been disputed on methodological grounds, there should have been no admission of sexual reputation evidence whatsoever[ii]. The implication of these findings, which echo the conclusions of the studies referred to above, is that for the majority of rape victims who report their sexual attack to the authorities, the legal remedies they seek may lead at best to disappointment, or at worst add to their trauma.

Lastly, studies in Australia and the UK have estimated that attrition rates for sexual assault could be as high as 90% (Carrington 1997, Lees, 1997, Chambers & Miller, 1987). Figures for 1996, not an atypical year, have been chosen for the

purposes of illustration. Of those who sought criminal justice intervention in 1996, two-thirds did not result in any charges being laid. Of those that went to court, two-thirds resulted in an acquittal for the accused. Of the 2,802 recorded incidents of sexual assault in NSW for that year only 289 persons were found guilty (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, 1997a &b). The implication of such dramatically high attrition rates is that sex-offenders can expect a good measure of legal impunity while most victims can expect to remain unprotected.

Taking all of the above considerations into account, encouraging the victims of sexual assault to seek redress through the legal process is more likely to enhance their harm, than deter or punish sex-offenders. The demonstrative failure of mainstream criminal justice and legislative reform approaches has led us to consider the alternatives to tertiary intervention and to ponder what may specifically prevent or reduce the incidence of intimate adult sexual violence.

Feminist discourses of prevention

Not surprisingly it has been feminist activists, scholars and bureaucrats who have pondered most seriously the prevention of sexual violence in society. While radical feminist discourse on preventing sexual violence argues for a radical restructuring of society and reconfiguring of gender relations, liberal feminist discourse aims for gender equality. This results in a primary focus on working within the state apparatus to bring about social policy reforms; for example, victim friendly laws and court procedures, victim support services and community education. As Bell has argued 'Feminism has problematised violence against women in a particular way, but is forced to enter into a discursive space where several different understandings of what violence against women is about to be produced' (Bell, 1993, p. 179). Central to both of these discourses is an attempt to reconfigure power relations between men and women that are manifested in sexual violence. However, different understandings operate concerning the influences, which lead

to sexual violence and the strategies to address them.

A plethora of activities have been promoted and implemented by radical and liberal feminists over the last twenty-five years, aimed at reducing violence against women. Some of these include: law reform, development of support services, introduction of school curricula, videos, films, pamphlets, stickers and posters, billboard campaigns, books, journal articles, conferences, radio and television interviews, community education announcements, soap opera story lines, training of professional staff and students, direct action, public shaming, street marches such as 'Reclaim the Night', and tree planting ceremonies. While much of this activity has provided an alternative discourse on sexual violence by public actions and declarations of anti-violence attitudes, what is unclear is whether it has prevented sexual violence from occurring. Sexual assault services and generalist counselling agencies continue to report increasing referral numbers of new victims. Whether this is evidence of an increasing willingness to report or an increasing incidence of sexual assault is impossible to infer. Whatever the case, the fact that the incidence of sexual violence is not declining suggests we have not yet found ways to stop it.

The universalisation of men as violent and women as passive recipients of violence is still a pervasive contemporary feminist theory (Mackinnon, 1987; Lees, 1997). From this particular feminist perspective no or little change is possible without a radical restructuring of society and reconfiguring of gender relations. The most quoted expression of this theory is found in Brownmiller's phrase that, 'rape has played a critical function. It's nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear' (Browmiller, 1975, p. 15 emphasis in original). Men are constructed as a homogeneous group who benefit from the patriarchal structure of society. There is nothing positive in such an over-arching negative conception of masculinity, as Jefferson (1997) suggests. It is not only misleading to represent all men as

'dangerous' (see Connell, 1995; Messerschmidt, 1993), but such a totalising conception of masculinity leads to a number a serious methodological and conceptual difficulties, as discussed in Collier's important book *Men, Crime and Criminology* (Collier, 1998, p. 177). It constructs all men as criminal, or potentially so. It fails to take into account the multiple ways in which men can be men, cross-culturally, trans-historically and during different stages of their life cycle (i.e. during adolescence as opposed to adult-hood). It tends to assume that all men are either biologically, socially or culturally prescribed hetero-sexed creatures of patriarchy regardless of the multiple pathways and sexualities associated with masculinity (See Collier, 1998, pp. 6-33).

While we accept the notion of hegemonic masculinity is deeply problematic in the analyis of men, their gender and crime, this theoretical model is also problematic for the analysis of women as victims of crimes of violence. The flip-side of a totalising concept of masculinity, is an equally totalising concept of femininity which robs women of any agency or ability to exert power, express desire, take control, resist, prevent or avoid their victimisation in intimate sexual encounters with men. This approach also construes all men as potentially violent and thus fails to challenge the biologically reductionist discourse that normalises male sexual violence as inherently uncontrollable. Prevention is a virtual impossibility within this theoretical framework (see also Eggar 1997). It leaves women 'in waiting' to experience violence, and men forever paused to engage in it. All men are constructed as a potentially 'dangerous' population never to be trusted, so much so that the responsibility for avoiding sexual attack must be left with women.

Consequently prevention strategies conceived within this reductionist theoretical framework have focused primarily on women taking action to avoid their victimisation. Women are advised to: avoid men entirely by creating women only communities, avoid potentially dangerous situations or people or to resist

traditional roles of physical passivity by participating in self defence training or by encouraging women to reconconceptualise their bodies as active and resistant to male violence (see Marcus, 1992). However, this begs the question of how women negotiate non-violent relationships with men at home and elsewhere, particularly when we know that most sexual violence occurs between intimates, or people casually known to each other.

While most sex offenders are men, and most victims are women, not all men rape or even benefit from the fear of rape, and many men can and do fashion ethical sexual practices based on mutual respect and pleasure with their partners (whether same-sex or opposite-sex). While we accept that some men obviously have difficulty in fashioning ethical sexual practices, at a conceptual level the notion that men are an inherently dangerous group, prone to sexual violence, harks back to Lombrosian theories of the born criminal. Sexual violence is conceived as a biologically pre-programmed crime over which there can be no external, social or cultural influence. From this fatalistic perspective prevention is a virtual impossibility. It our contention that totalising conceptions of heterosexual masculinity as an essentially non-ethical set of practices, closes off the possibility of men acting ethically, and thus places women in the position of having to be ever responsible for avoiding their own victimisation, and coping the blame when they don't succeed in thwarting unwanted sexual advances.

Our argument is that this conceptual model (which assumes masculinity is universally heterosexual, violent and hegemonic) is back to front and up side down. If considered from a non-reductionist feminist perspective, only then can prevention become a real possibility because if men can fashion ethically constituted sexualities and negotiate consenting and mutually pleasurable sexual practices, either with same sex or opposite sex partners, then they have no excuse for being sexually violent. Only then will sexual violence be considered a truly aberrant expression of sexual conduct, and not just exaggerated expressions of

'normal' men, or young lads sowing 'their wild oats'.

Responsiblising Women: Neo-liberal social policy

The 1990s especially has seen an increasing reliance on neo-liberal social policies which focus on the 'at risk individual', and the exclusion from social/public support those considered irresponsible in managing their risk (Culpitt, 1999; O'Malley, Sutton, 1997; Hogg, Brown, 1998). This period has also been characterised by a shift to market-driven decentralised policy initiatives and a greater competition for scarcer government resources in a shrinking welfare sector. Our concern is that these strategies have shifted the responsibility for preventing sexual violence even more toward the victim (see also, Radford & Stanko, 1991; Walklate, 1991).

Prevention strategies conceived within a neo-liberal social policy framework have focused primarily on women taking action to avoid victimisation. Some of them even project an avowedly feminist approach. Project Sister USA, (http://www.projectsister.org/), for example, runs a variety of programs aimed at preventing sexual assault. Included is a list of tips to assist women in avoiding sexual assault. Using the acronym PREVENT they suggest women:

Put change in your wallet for a ride home

Recognise the early signs of potential assault

Examine your surroundings constantly and carefully

Verbalize your resistance loudly

Exhibit confidence in potentially threatening situations

Never assume sexual assault can't happen to you

Travel in groups

The discourse of prevention, which operates here, and in many other similar instances, places the responsibility for prevention firmly on the shoulders of women who must be ever vigilant. While vigilance may be of some use in stranger

rape, it provides little assistance to women who are sexually assaulted by a known person. It may also increase the sense of guilt experienced by a woman if she is raped. These responsibilising discourses expect the individual to simply manage their own risk. Those who 'fail' to avoid their victimisation are liable to be constructed as illegitimate victims, who invited their own attack and thus can expect little sympathy from the authorities if and when they choose to report it.

This emphasis on responsibilsing victims is consistent with the wider discursive shifts that have occurred in international and national social policy frameworks, whereby individuals are increasingly being called upon to take more and more responsibility for avoiding risk (Culpitt, 1999; Hogg, Brown 1998; O'Malley, Sutton, 1997). A plethora of criminological studies have uncritically embarked down the pathway seeking to 'discover' 'at risk' individuals. This is readily apparent in one of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics recent research projects that sought to quantify the kinds of women most at risk of violence. The study came up with the unremarkable conclusion that women who have been victimised are most likely to be further victimised and suggests that those women who have experienced violence as adults `may benefit from programs aimed at preventing future violence' (Coumarelos, Allen, 1998, p.14). The responsibility for avoiding violence yet again lies firmly with women who have been previously victimised.

Men's responses to preventing sexual violence

While feminists have seen rape as a problem for the whole community, most of the focus of social policy activities has been on women as victims or potential victims and much of the responsibility for campaigning around the issue has been the work of women. A victim focus was crucially important to redress the denial and shame associated with sexual violence. However, this has meant that the whole community has failed to come to terms with a responsibility to prevent sexual

violence. This has meant that those men, who exercise their power through sexual violence, or may have the potential to do so, have only recently begun to receive attention.

A focus on men learning to control their alleged 'innate' violent tendencies has received more prominence in public policy circles in recent years. However most of the criminal justice sponsored programs focus on men who have been 'physically' violent with their partners, not men who engage in sexual violence (see Dobash & Dobash, 1997). Programs aimed at re-educating violent offenders now exist in the U.K., Australia, North America and New Zealand (Dobash & Dobash, 1997). Dobash and Dobash evaluated two programs in the U.K. and reported that a year after the program, `a significant proportion of the offenders who participated in the men's programs reduced their violence and associated controlling behaviour and their women partners reported significant improvements in the quality of their lives and their relationships with these men' (Dobash, Dobash, 1997, p. 254). While of value for the prevention of repeat offences by the same offender, once again the intervention tends to be after the initial harm, and thus of little primary preventative value. While we realise it is important to acknowledge men's responsibility for the control of their conduct as a component in any prevention strategy, much of this policy has been framed within a therapeutic discourse and has been focused on groups of known offenders (for example see Jenkins, 1993).

Jenkins (1993) work has found acceptance amongst many feminist therapists because it goes beyond some of the limited individualistic discourses common in much psychology. He locates responsibility for violent behaviour not only with the individual but also explores the social restraints that inhibit violent men from developing non-violent and respectful intimate relationships.

Alternative discourses to the therapeutic model are emerging, initiated by men who actively challenge the biological argument that all men are inherently

violent. The work of Bob Pease from Melbourne and Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA formed in 1989) reject the view that 'all men are genetically programmed to be violent or that violence is simply an expression of men's inner nature. Rather he argues 'men's violence is both socially constructed and individually willed' (Pease B 1995, p. 259). MASA has a primary focus on rape education awareness for all men. They argue there is a relationship between the dominant model of masculine sexuality and the prevalence of sexual assault in society (Pease, 1995, p. 263). Using a range of community education and social action activities, the group aims to challenge both men's individual attitudes and behaviour and the cultural responses to sexual assault in the community. As Pease sees it, 'if we are going to end violence against women it will require a major transformation in consciousness raising among men. MASA endeavours to be one small step in that direction' (Pease B, 1995, p. 267). This approach is an important one in that it reflects the concerns of men who reject expressions of initimate sexual violence as normal for men. Groups like MASA have been formed in the USA and many have web sites offering a range of information and services (see Washington DC Men's Rape Prevention Project for example at http://www.mrpp.org/). Like many prevention projects however, it is not clear what the impact of these worthy initiatives has been on preventing sexual violence. Nevertheless what is encouraging about this type of work is that it transgresses the biologically reductionist masculine mold that normalises male sexual violence as natural (Connell, 1995).

Public Awareness Prevention Strategies

Public education strategies have been another key tool in challenging victim blaming attitudes and providing more knowledge to the community. Many of these have been endorsed by government and are seen as major initiatives in preventing sexual violence. Certainly there are some successful examples from the public

health field in quit smoking campaigns and safe-sex messages to combat sexually transmitted diseases that embody a primary preventative focus. However, the quit smoking campaign used the powerful medical profession as a catalyst for change in the case of smoking and it is questionable whether the message has reached young people or lower socio-economic groups. The safe sex campaign's impact upon the gay men's community was successful in making safe sex sexy but it also achieved this by targeting a loose but defined community. The success of the strategy is partly due to the way the safe sex discourse was harnessed to the collective processes of cultural transmission in the gay community. The strategy did not just aim its impact upon 'at risk' individuals. It aimed and arguably had an impact on the collective solidarities of that group. However the success in changing the unsafe sexual practices of men who did not identify with the gay community was questionable (Connell, Dowsett, 1992). Both these examples suggest the need for targeted campaigns which involve key players in the desired behavioural and communal change. Importantly these strategies break with the medical and psychological models of targeting only 'at risk individuals'.

National, state and local campaigns have been sponsored by government to raise general public awareness of domestic violence, sexual violence and child abuse (Examples of these campaigns include the wide publication of the following slogans: 'No-one ever deserves to be raped', 1984, 'Domestic Violence is a Crime', 1996,'No excuses, never ever', 1985). Large scale media campaigns involving print, electronic, radio and billboards have all been used. Most have not been evaluated and the impact of these in changing personal behaviour is in need of research. Their preventative impact is unknown. While targeting of different groups within campaigns has been tried, the cross-cultural, age and gender sensitivities required to develop successful campaigns is also in need of detailed investigation. It also raises the question as to whether a state sponsored statement of anti-violence can actually alter the deeply imbedded historical, cultural and

social attitudes and beliefs of gender and sexuality which underscore sexual violence.

Many sexual assault services in Australia and overseas include public education as a prevention strategy. An examination of some service based programs suggest they focus on awareness raising about the 'facts' of rape or what women or children can do to protect themselves or to change attitudes and knowledge.

The focus on awareness raising through public education has been a key activity of feminists concerned with preventing sexual violence. This approach, while limited as the above analysis suggests, nevertheless was historically appropriate in the 1970s, a time when there was an almost complete communal and governmental denial of the reality of sexual violence experienced by women. Feminist campaigns over the last two decades have placed violence against women as part of the policy landscape and in the minds of community members. At the same time the understanding of the complexity and diverse manifestations of the many forms of violence experienced by women has developed as well as an increasing understanding of the difference in women's needs (Carmody 1995; Carmody, Premier's Council for Women & Department for Women 1996). Whether public awareness raising may have had any preventative potential in bringing about the wider cultural changes necessary to reduce sexual violence is inconclusive. Our own results are not encouraging. A preliminary finding of our own current research suggests recall of any government-sponsored campaigns aimed at preventing sexual violence is virtually non-existent. However, one could argue that the message has been conveyed but the source is not clearly identifiable.

Education for Prevention

Education programs in schools have consistently been identified as a key strategy for reducing violence in society. It is a strategy that has been supported by key

government inquiries and task forces (NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues 1996, NSW Task Force into Child Sexual Assault 1985, for example).   The assumption is that by exposing children and young adults to alternative messages promoting non-violence, conflict resolution and the respect for diversity and difference in addition to the promotion of tolerance for others, violent behaviour in adults will be prevented. Structured anti-violence programs have been developed within NSW Education Department Schools but their consistent implementation has been hampered by the voluntary nature of school involvement.

Published evaluations of rape 'prevention' programs have increased since the early 1990s in the USA and Canada. However given the large number of programs offered by community organizations, schools and universities, published research in this area is to date is minute.   A similar trend towards evaluation does not appear to be happening in Australia. This may be partly due to different policy requirements and that many prevention programs are implemented by victim support services who usually conduct in-house evaluations but may not publish the findings. At the same time, government committees and community members regularly recommend education programs as the answer to reducing sexual violence in the community. It seems timely that we consider the experience of our American and Canadian colleagues, which may point us in the direction for further research in Australia.

In the USA, the Federal government now mandates rape prevention efforts on college campuses that receive federal funds (Heppner, Hillenbrand-Gunn & DeBord, 1995). This social policy directive does not apply in Australia, where governments have consistently recommended education programs in schools and other educational settings as a preventative strategy, but have stopped short of tying their implementation to funding. The US government directive has resulted in a plethora of rape prevention programs but researchers argue little is known about what types of programs are most effective, what attitudinal, cognitive and

behavioural outcomes can be expected; or how stable any changes are over time (Heppner et al 1995, Schewe & O'Donohue 1993).

Some school run programs have been evaluated in Canada (Lavoie, Vezina, Piche & Boivin, 1995; Hilton & Harris, Rice, Smith Krans & Lavigne, 1998) and in Holland (Winkel & De Kleuver, 1997). However most of the evaluated programs have been in either university or college settings in the United States[iii]. Of the eighteen evaluations we have analysed, most of these studies have been framed within the narrow confines of a psychological discourse, understanding violence as the manifestation of individual behaviours or attitudes. The age of participants in the programs ranged from 15 to 21 years with sample sizes from 55 to 350. These programs used a variety of strategies, the most common including: classroom input, video and discussion, rewriting a scenario of a date rape, exercises aimed to promote behavioural empathy with victims, presentations by victims, advocates and legal personnel, drama, peer education programs, large assemblies, and small group discussion. Attitude change has been a primary focus of most of the programs, but some have also aimed at changing behaviour. The duration of educational input has also varied from one hour to a four-month campus acquaintance rape peer education course (Lonsway Klaw, Berg, Waldo, Kothari, Mazurek & Hegeman, 1998). The focus of the programs also varied; from broad rape prevention and anti-violence, teen dating violence, date rape, reducing campus acquaintancerape and repeat victimisation, male sexual assault peer education and rape prevention with racially diverse men. The cultural identity of the participants has been primarily Caucasian, with a number of the programs providing no clear information about the cultural mix of the students. This seems a rather obvious limitation given the mutli-racial population of the US but may also reflect the profile of university students in the settings researched. Two notable exceptions are the studies of Schewe & O'Donohue (1996) and Heppner, Neville,

Smith, Kivlighan & Gershuny (1999) who made the focus of their prevention program racially diverse men.

Parrot (1990) conducted a survey of 26 US universities. Twenty-one of these universities had programs for women, while only two had programs aimed at changing male behaviour. Schewe & O'Donohue (1996) argue that many programs referred to as rape prevention are in fact risk avoidance programs, which focus on teaching women how to avoid potentially dangerous situations. Once again the responsibility for rape avoidance is placed on women.

Lasting Impacts?

One of the pressing issues in rape prevention education is whether negative attitudes, knowledge or behaviour are amenable to change and if so, is it lasting? Reported follow-up by researchers of the impact of the educational interventions varies from none, several weeks or months to two years. The majority have indicated follow-up of between several weeks to several months. While it is not possible to attempt any comparisons across studies, there are a number of findings which emerge from the evaluations to date which raise important issues for prevention education. Most researchers found attitude change to rape. However, there was variation in how this was achieved, given the range of educational strategies used. There was also the issue of whether this change was lasting.

The best success here seems to come from Lonsway et al (1998) whose intervention spanned four months which is substantially longer than any of the other programs. Knowledge levels increased in both a small group setting (Hilton et al (1998) and in a campus run education program (Breitenbecher & Scarce, 1999). Despite this Breitenbecher & Scarce (1999) concluded that while knowledge about sexual assault increased it did not prevent women with a prior history of sexual assault from further sexual assault. Evaluations of programs aimed at men reported mixed results (Schewe & O'Donohue, 1996; Heppner,

Neville, Smith, Kivighan & Gershuny,1999; and Winkel & De Kleuer, 1997). Some success in reducing the participation in rape among high risk men was reported by Schewe & O'Donohue (1996). However, their outcome measures were based on an analysis of statistical data of predictions not actual behaviour. These reported findings suggest an inconsistent picture of the lasting effect of rape education programs in a small number of schools and university settings.

The work of Lonsway et al (1998) is worthy of closer examination as it the only evaluation which was able to report lasting impacts on those who participated in it. Lonsway et al (1998) evaluated the impact of an intensive education program which involved 74 undergraduates (53 women and 21 men) enrolled in a semester long comprehensive university course that trained peer facilitators for campus acquaintance rape education (CARE). The format of the program incorporated many aspects of rape education that are commonly associated with desirable attitudinal change including 'debunking' rape mythology through a feminist framework, generating participant interaction, providing sexuality education, and avoiding confrontational approaches (Lonsway 1996). Running over a four month period, this program differed from most programs that typically lasted from thirty minute to two hour workshops. The program also compared attitudinal outcomes of CARE with students who participated in a general course on human sexuality. This program is particularly important because it also assessed attitudinal measures by anonymous mail survey two years after the CARE course was completed. The results are promising as they indicate CARE students experienced lasting change on a number of rape related beliefs and attitudes. Follow-up investigation revealed that students who participated in CARE were less accepting of cultural rape myths than those in the more general course on human sexuality – even after an interval of two years had elapsed (Lonsway 1998 :86).

The field of rape prevention education has focused almost exclusively on attitude change as the outcome (Lonsway & Fitzgerald 1994). Unfortunately, the

assumption that attitudinal changes will lead to decreases in the actual incidence of rape has not been empirically established (Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). One of the first published evaluations demonstrated that attitudes toward violence against women could change after a one-day session involving assembly and classroom discussions (Jaffe et al 1992). A six week follow–up showed a weakening of some earlier improvements and new changes in the undesired direction (Hilton et al 1998). Hilton argues this is not surprising given psychological research on attitude change over the last thirty years which shows that trying to persuade people to change attitudes in one direction can lead instead to people becoming defensive of past behaviours and adopting more extreme versions of these (Brehm, 1966, Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Schauss, Chase & Hawkins, 1997).

Rebounds Effects

More alarming is that the very attitudes and behaviours at odds with ethical sexual behaviour can be exacerbated by the `quick-fix' workshop approach to rape prevention education. Winkel & De Kleuer (1997) found a perpetrator focused educational strategy aimed at reducing domineering masculine behaviour backfired as stereotypes were unintentionally reinforced among the cohort. While culturally relevant material was rated highly by Black men and lead to a decrease in rape supportive attitudes, rebound occurred for some participants and not others (Heppner, Neville, Smith, Kivighan & Gershuny (1999).

One team of researchers (Jaffe, Sudermann, Reitzel, & Killip, 1992) who found an increase in boys condoning date rape following one such program, suggests that students showing an attitude backlash were already involved in violent relationships. They recommend alternative interventions to classroom education for this particular cohort. Other research has shown that despite a significant drop in rape myth acceptance after an educational intervention, male participants experienced a rebound in scores to pre-test levels after only two

months (Heppner, Good, Hillenbrand-Gunn, Hawkins, Hacquard, Nichols, DeBord, & Brock, 1995). This rebound effect suggests the program failed to convince men of the personal relevance necessary for lasting attitude change. However there was some success reported in attempts to improve knowledge about dating violence (Lavoie et al 1995), and violence against women in general, warning signs of abuse, and community resources (Jaffe et al 1992).

One of the issues is whether mixed gender programs are as useful as single sex programs. Specifically some researchers have been trying to ascertain if there is more primary preventative potential in programs that target men rather than women or mixed gender education groups. This seems particularly important in resisting the dominant discourse that continues to unduly place responsibility on women for rape prevention.

Foubert & Marriott (1997) conducted an all-male sexual assault peer education program focusing on how to help rape survivors. While reporting a 59% decrease in rape acceptance, they nevertheless remained cautious of this finding. The most important lesson to be drawn from these evaluations is that perpetrator-focused strategies may backfire and even lead to boomerang effects that escalate the original problem (see Hilton et al, 1995). As these authors suggest the threat of punishment does little to genuinely educate these men about appropriate forms of sexual behaviour.

The evaluation of the programs implemented by the above researchers provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of rape education programs in education settings in the US and Canada. The majority of these programs aimed to bring about attitude, knowledge or behaviour change through intervention with individuals. The vast majority turned out to be risk avoidance rather than violence prevention strategies. Most suffered from a short-term focus and some even led to the dysfunctional outcome of exacerbating the very attitudes and behaviours they were trying to alter. As far as we can assess, none of these programs sought to

address the collective sustenance of cultures of tolerance that tend to underscore sexually violent encounters.

Socio-cultural approaches to rape prevention

The propensity to normalise intimate sexual violence is deeply embedded in the cultural beliefs and practices of individual community members and institutions. Attempting to promote collective change in such deeply ingrained beliefs about gender and relationships between men and women is a tall order for programs that may only provide several hours of alternative messages. The wider socio-cultural context that promotes rape myths and cultural attitudes has tended to be over-looked by the rape prevention programs we have analysed. Nearly all were framed within the narrow confines a psychological discourse that saw the problem as one of an individual pathology. The influence of peer group pressure on constructions of masculinity and femininity (Connell 1995), notions of 'manliness' and conquest (Carrington 1998), and the diversity of people who both experience and commit sexual violence strategies (Holland, Ramazanoglu, 1993), clearly also need to be addressed in such programs. These factors suggest social policy initiatives that seek simple answers to 'wicked problems' are rather limited (Bridgman & Davis, 1998).

In the case of sexual violence, it is not enough to try to prevent it through two-hour or one-day workshop based education programs. Yet this remains a popular policy. Social policy initiatives in this area have rarely recognised the potential harm such minimalist educational interventions may have. The research discussed above from the US and Canada indicates how complex it is to prevent sexual violence through educational programs alone. Despite this a long held belief by government and anti-violence advocates that short-term workshops in educational settings is a key strategy in reducing violence against women persists. The power of this policy discourse is clearly reflected in a recent announcement by

the Australian Federal Government to spend over $700,000 to fund community organizations to develop and run more than 1,200 domestic violence prevention workshops for young people. Referring to this initiative, Senator Ellison recently asserted: 'Ideas discussed and lessons learned by young people in the workshops will flow on to their families, schools and the wider community', (Press release March 20 1998). One has to ask in light of the above research, how does he know this and where is the evidence to support this anticipated outcome?

The findings from the US and Canada suggest that if we are serious about education as a preventative strategy we need to plan interventions very carefully, argue for extended space in the curricula and evaluate all programs rigorously. Given the diversity of women's experiences of sexual violence it seems important to resist universalising education programs (one program fits all) and the students who may participate in them. Lonsway et al's (1998) work in particular suggests the need for evaluation which measures the longevity of any perceived attitudinal change. At the same time we need to consider developing and evaluating programs suitable for the Australian context that move beyond a focus on individual attitude, knowledge or behavioural change.

Preventing sexual violence through short-term election driven social policy solutions whether it be law reform, public awareness campaigns or two-hour workshops can hardly be expected to produce the desired results. Clearly there is a need to redefine these policy initiatives within a framework that acknowledges the power of cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity and develop multi-level prevention strategies, which promote an alternative cultural landscape of sexual practices and gender norms. This means challenging those cultural norms which normalise intimate sexual violence as a 'natural' or 'exaggerated' expression of innate male sexuality. Only then will men who do engage in sexually violent behaviour have no excuse. At the same time we need to recognise the power of competing discourses within the policy field and develop alternative

discourses not only of prevention but also about the cultural norms of masculinity. In this sense it is important to resist the neo-liberal tendency toward the increasing individualisation of responsibility by targeting the victim. Likewise the answer does not lie just in interventions aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviours of individual men or offenders.

Our proposition is that rape prevention strategies ought to be concerned with the promotion of a normative basis for the inculcation of sexual ethical conduct. This is not a simple task, but nor is it impossible. The task is to wed the psycho-social structures of sexual desire with mutually respectful and pleasurable forms of sexual practice. We know from the AIDS campaign that the success of the prevention message was its cultural transmission through redefining the norms of the gay community. The same tactic may not so easily be deployed where it comes to preventing sexual violence, as men as group do not necessarily identify as a tight-knit community. However men, and young men in particular, are strongly influenced by the cultural attitudes and practices of their peers and role models, fathers, teachers, foot-ballers, movie-stars, and other such public figures and cultural icons. Hence the importance of de-legitimising particular psychosocial and political responses that symbolically authorise sexual violence, and seek to de-authorise them.

Here is where the role of men becomes symbolically important. It is important that men reject the language that constructs women as orifices (i.e. I poked her; stuck it into her, porked her, fucked her; pulled her). Important too is the rejection of the language that stigmatises women who find pleasure through sexuality as sluts who can't be raped, only fucked or "had". The possibility of sexual intimacy without sexual assault requires that men reflect upon and unlearn the language and the myths of rape culture [i.e. that women ask for it, that if she gets raped its her fault; its all her responsibility to say no (Weinberg, Biernbaum, 1993, p. 92)]. Weinberg and Biernbaum argue that to transform rape culture

requires the explicit and verbal negotiation of consent; the eroticisation of consent, the reinvention of cultural notions of romance such that they entail the mutual pursuit of sexual pleasure and respect, (whether it be between same-sex or opposite-sex couples) as well as the complete separation of sexual desire with violence, as promoted by certain cultural practices, and specific kinds of pornography, marketing, film-making and representation which objectify women as sex objects and men as their conquerors. This is clearly not a short-term strategy but one that requires ongoing commitment by all concerned.

The problem is not that men have been socially initiated inadequately, as some advocates of the men's movement argue. A far greater problem lies with those men who have been initiated too well into a culture where sexual desire equates with violence, conquest, power and the exertion of force in intimate encounters and relationships (see Carrington, 1998, pp. 159-174). Challenging this requires the reconfiguration of discourses on prevention, a shift in orientation from responsibilising victims,and individualising offenders, to promoting a *cultural intolerance* for unethical sexual practices through ways suggested above (for details on a specific educative strategy of this kind see Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993). What then becomes important in any public policy prevention response shaped by such a guiding principle is how to translate it into an ethical culture in which negotiating consent is commensurate with sexual desire. This requires policy and community responses which avoid universalising frameworks (i.e. all men are potential rapists), and actively inculcates ethical sexual practices which no longer tolerate intimate sexual violence as the expression of normal male sexuality.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[These automatically print out after the references: see below]

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Notes

[1] See Carmody 1990a for a discussion of the way in which rape has been subsumed under other forms of violence over a number of years.

[i] Here we are grateful to the constructive comments of one of the reviewers of this article.

[ii] Once again we are grateful to the reviewer for drawing our attention to some of the disputes about the methodology of the *Heroines of Fortitude* report.

[4] Breitenbecher & Scarce (1999), Dalleger, C., Rosen, L. (1993); Hanson,K., Gidycz, C. (1993); Breitenbecher & Gidycz (1998), Lonsway, Klaw, Berg, Waldo, Kothari, Mazurek, Hegeman (1998), Foubert & Marriott (1997), Forst, Burritcher & Lightfoot (1996); Jacobs, 1998; Schewe & O'Donohue (1993a & b), (1996). (1996), Heppner, Humphrey, Hillenbrand-Gunn (1995), Pinzone-Glover, H., Gidyc & Jacobs, (1998).