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Conceptualising the prevention of sexual assault and the role of education

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The United Nations *In-depth Study on all Forms of Violence Against Women: Report of the Secretary-General* (2006) surveyed 71 countries and found that on average at least one woman in three is subjected to intimate partner violence in the course of her lifetime. Between 10% and 30% of women in other studies indicated that they had experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999). In many cases physical violence is accompanied by sexual violence. In the Australian context two large-scale prevalence studies provide insight into the local experience. The 1995 Women's Safety Survey found women in the 18–24 year age-bracket were more likely to be assaulted than women in other age groups: 19% of women aged 18–24 had experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months, compared with 6.8% of women aged 35–44 and 1.2% of women aged 55 and over. Only 15% of women who identified an incident of sexual assault in the 12 months prior to the survey reported it to police (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 1996). A later study in 2005 estimated there were 44,100 persons aged 18 years and over who were victims of at least one sexual assault in the 12 months prior to the survey; approximately 72,000 incidents of sexual assault were experienced by these victims (ABS, 2005).

There is no argument about the pervasiveness and impact of sexual violence. The challenge we face is how to prevent it. Over the last 30 years, Australian governments have developed comprehensive multi-level strategies to try and address the needs of victims, to hold perpetrators responsible and to educate the community about how to prevent sexual and other forms of intimate violence. Over this time, it has become clear that the prevention of sexual assault is a complex task that challenges policy makers, victim and perpetrator services, educators, researchers and the communities in which we live.

The first purpose of this Issues paper is to consider the historical shifts that have occurred as a result of 1970s feminist campaigns that challenged the silence about the privatised nature of sexual assault: these shifts have been central to how the goal of prevention is understood. This paper begins by tracing some of the key theoretical and conceptual shifts that have occurred in the goal to prevent sexual assault. The first section explores the evolution of ideas in how to prevent sexual assault. I trace the role of feminist campaigns in gaining public recognition of the issue, the strategies used and the theoretical ideas that informed these developments. I then consider local, national and international frameworks that promote

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multisectoral responses to sexual assault. This is a critical discussion and explores several questions:

- How effective are the strategies that we are using?
- What are some of the unintended consequences of theoretical approaches, policy and practice initiatives?
- What can we learn from these discussions to improve the likelihood of preventing sexual assault?

The second purpose is to explore how sexual assault prevention education is a key strategy for preventing sexual violence. This will be explored by considering both Australian and international experiences of sexual assault prevention education and examining the theoretical shifts that are occurring.

The discussion throughout the paper is illuminated by examples of research evidence, concerning prevention programs and other activities, to demonstrate current understandings about what works and what doesn't. Specifically, this paper considers: the focus on "healthy relationships" in prevention education; rape avoidance programs that centre on women as the site for managing risk and prevention; awareness of impacts and human rights; and the role of men in prevention. I also consider sexual assault education as a means of violence prevention and draw on my own research into sexuality education. The final section of this paper considers some of the policy and practice challenges we face to progress the development of sexual assault prevention education.

Where have we come from?

Reflections on shifts in theoretical approaches to sexual assault prevention

Sexual violence has had a diverse history in how it has been understood and defined within varying policy contexts. In many countries it is subsumed under broader terms such as family violence, domestic violence and intimate partner violence. These definitional differences have occurred in policy documents and discussions as well as in areas of public debate. The deployment of these approaches reflects both political decisions and pragmatic attempts to win acceptance for the issues of violence against women by the close linkage with conceptions of family. However, in reflecting on the emergence of violence against women as an issue of public policy, I wish to put the spotlight specifically on sexual violence and its

prevention. This is because sexual violence is one of the most difficult of crimes to detect, deter, police, or punish (Carmody & Carrington, 2000). Another concern is that terms such as "family" and "domestic" violence imply the problem of sexual assault occurs only within the family context. This obscures unwanted, pressured, coerced sex and sexual assault that particularly affects young people in relationships and contexts outside family. In addition to these challenges, it is important to remember that sexual assault also comes with a history of denial, silence and taboo. Only in the narrowest of circumstances (i.e., the stranger perpetrator scenario) were social institutions (e.g., law, psychiatry, medicine, the community) prepared to acknowledge a woman's sexual victimisation. The feminist campaigning and consciousness-raising of the 1970s was the catalyst for moving sexual assault into the public domain. While feminist theorising and action about sexual assault has evolved over several decades, feminist-informed frameworks and concepts remain central to the task of prevention.

The role of feminism in sexual assault prevention

Persistent efforts over the last 30 years (especially by feminists in western contexts) have aimed to render sexual violence a visible concern by challenging the idea that it is a private matter (Carmody, 1992; Franzway, Connell, & Court, 1989). A plethora of activities have been promoted and implemented by radical and liberal feminists during this time, aimed at reducing violence against women—including sexual violence. Some of these included: law reform; development of support services; introduction of school curricula; campaigns involving videos, films, pamphlets, stickers, posters and billboards; books, journal articles and 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 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 (Carmody & Carrington, 2000).

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By the late 1980s, feminist violence prevention advocates had successfully convinced Australian governments that sexual and other forms of violence against women required an organised and coordinated policy approach to meet the needs of victims and to challenge victim-blaming attitudes (Carmody, 1992). This resulted in significant funding for sexual assault services; coordinated training for frontline staff—including police and those in health and welfare settings; the development of programs for offenders; law reform; and a strong commitment to education as a key strategy operating primarily at secondary and tertiary levels of education. This was complemented by public awareness campaigns addressing victim's rights—with a focus on women. These prevention efforts were located in a broader feminist critique of society that challenged unequal and discriminatory legal and cultural practices, and positioned sexual assault and rape as the sharp end of patriarchy (see for example the work of MacKinnon, 1983; 1987; Morgan, 1980).

Underpinning these interventions was a concept of gender that tended to deny the diversity of women's experience of sexual violence, and left unchallenged an assumption that sexual violence was inevitable; it universalised women as "victims" and men as "perpetrators". This challenge to homogenous concepts of gender and power was an important mechanism for building links between women and to challenge societal denial of the insidious and frequent incidence of sexual violence perpetrated by strangers and known offenders. As the campaigns continued, there was an increasing recognition of the diversity of women's experience of sexual and other forms of violence, and of the need for different approaches to acknowledge differences—as well as similarities—between women. There was also an increasing emphasis on the idea that violence is most frequently committed by a man who is known to the woman (ABS, 1996, 2006). These policy shifts reflect an increasing understanding of the complexity and insidious nature of sexual violence. They also demonstrate broader theoretical shifts occurring in understandings of gender and diversity and how to conceptualise and implement prevention activities.

Feminist theory and practice involve competing arguments and assumptions about the very nature of politics, the meaning of equality, the significance of sexual difference and the possibility of social and economic change (Bryson, 1999). Over time there is ongoing evidence of how this analysis has impacted on concepts of gender and on the prevention of sexual violence. Central to gaining policy, and some community, acceptance of the impact of sexual violence on women's lives was the recognition of women as victims of male violence. Sexual assault was, and continues to be, a highly gendered crime with women most at risk from some men (ABS, 2006; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). However, the conceptualisation of gender initially universalised all women as potential victims and all men as potentially dangerous. This belief, which was most common within a radical feminist ideology, and still holds some currency, provided little hope for prevention (Lees, 1997; MacKinnon, 1987). An unforeseen consequence of a limited, deterministic conceptualisation of gender was a failure to fully comprehend how gender shaped masculinities. Rather, a one-dimensional view of male gender developed and it was a version that universalised all men as dangerous. This inhibited the recognition of male victims of sexual violence and in some quarters resulted in a backlash against the importance of a robust discussion of gender in social life. This resulted in a denial of gender as fundamental to the success of sexual violence prevention efforts by government. It has been argued that the Howard Government's time in office (1996-2007) reflected a gender-neutral stance tied to broader neo-liberal social policy.[1] Phillips (2006), discussing domestic violence policy over this period, suggested this reflected a move away from a gender-based analysis towards individualised and relational understandings of men's violence.[2] At the same time, men's rights groups emerged to claim victim status and argued there was a lack of attention paid to men's needs in diverse areas such as men's health, family court and sexual abuse (Pease, 2008).

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Both the limited deterministic and neutral conceptions of gender fail to recognise the complex ways in which women and men perform gender. This approach reflects the idea that the way we live or perform gender is not tied to biological sex. For example, women are not necessarily born to be passive in face of male dominance. Rather, how we live our lives as women or men is shaped by the cultural practices and influences from family and other key role models. We therefore learn what are seen as "acceptable ways" for us to behave and this is historically and culturally variable. This means our individual and collective "lived experience" of gender can be diverse and open to alternative ways of being. This conceptualisation of gender and its expressions is reflective of a more post-modern turn within gender studies more broadly. Increasingly, critical social theorists began to move away from universalised concepts of gender and other social attributes and to recognise that both theory and our lived experiences are much more complex and contradictory than had previously been realised. By the 1980s, feminist theorising and practice had begun to acknowledge that not all women experience sexual violence in the same way. The issues facing Aboriginal women and other women's differences due to age, socio-economic status, sexuality and ability were all emerging as important issues for sexual assault prevention. The emerging study of masculinities opened up discussion about the multiple ways in which men can and do perform gender (Connell, 1995; Messerschmidt, 1993; Collier, 1998). These insights began to influence

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1   Neo-liberalism does not refer to political parties. It is rather a political philosophy and the term is used internationally to describe the shape of politics, economics and social life following the "roll-back" of an interventionist State during the 1980s and early 1990s. The responsibility for health, wellbeing, education, and so on were devolved from what was regarded by some as a cumbersome welfare state onto the individual. The role of the state then becomes to facilitate individual choice-making. Neo-liberalism characteristically develops indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without being responsible for them. The main mechanism is through the technology of responsibilisation. This entails subjects becoming responsibilised by making them see social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc. not as the responsibility of the state, but actually lying in the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of 'self-care' [Lemke, 2001:201]. The practice of going to the gym can be seen as a result of responsibilisation, our responsibility to remain free of illness so as to be able to work and to care for our dependants (children, elderly parents etc). For a discussion of the roll back of the state in Australia, see Bacchi (1990); on the political philosophy of neo-liberalism, see Lemke (2001) and Rose (1996a; 1996b; 1999).

2   See also Costello (2005) for an analysis of the "Australia Says No" prevention campaign. See Powell and Murray (2008) for a detailed discussion of the impact of these years on children and domestic violence policy.

sexual assault prevention with the development of groups such as Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) (Pease, 1995) and, internationally, the White Ribbon Campaigns.[3] By the 1990s, a more complex analysis of gender emerged that acknowledged the differences between women and between men. This conception of gender paid much closer attention to the ways that characteristics such as race, class, ability, sexuality and age impact on the gendered power relations between men and women and within gender groups.

Current conceptualisations of prevention

Much of the collective energy by service providers, law-makers and government policies around prevention efforts over the last 30 years has focused on tertiary prevention. This form of prevention seeks to provide redress and reduce further long-term harm after a crime has been committed. This is understandable given the high incidence of the crime and the negative and long-term social, psychological and economic impacts on victims if no assistance is provided. Despite this, it has been argued by politicians committed to a law and order discourse that tougher penalties for sexual assault offences will deter potential offenders and thus prevent crime. However, continued low reporting of offences and the attrition that occurs if charges are actually laid do not inspire community confidence in either justice being done or sending strong messages of deterrence to potential offenders[4] (see Leviore, 2003 and Kelly, 2007 for international comparisons of attrition rates). Fundamentally, this does not address the cultural practices that promote and condone sexual assault. As such, this form of prevention does not seek to build alternative cultural norms that make sexual assault unacceptable. In response to the limits of these approaches, alternative frameworks are developing locally and internationally that argue for a much more sophisticated multi-sectoral, multi-level approach to prevention. In these frameworks, prevention occurs across a spectrum of intervention points, often described as primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

In 2004, the National Framework for the Prevention of Sexual Assault was released. This document suggested "strengthening the evidence base for prevention activity", across primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and developing "structures and approaches that will maximise the impact of

Box 1. Prevention

The following definitions are informed by public health theoretical frameworks (as distinct from clinical intervention frameworks). Despite some complicating factors and differences in focus, the generally accepted descriptions of levels of prevention for sexual assault are:

- *Primary prevention* – activities (such as a group program) designed to be presented to an audience before the problem ever occurs, so that it does not ever occur. Such programs are often delivered to large groups at one time, attempting to reach all of a cohort within a short time-frame.

- *Secondary prevention* – is approached in distinct ways by different groups. One approach is that secondary prevention addresses groups or individuals identified as being at higher risk of either perpetration or victimisation. Vic Health (2007) sees secondary prevention as being early intervention with people who are displaying early signs of perpetrating behaviour or of being a victim of sexual assault.

- *Tertiary prevention* – is often seen as engaging with the longer-term effects of sexual assault or with people who have engaged in sexual assault perpetration. This is prevention in that it seeks to reduce the likelihood of sexual assault occurring again and preventing its ongoing impact through therapeutic intervention.

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3   See <www.whiteribbon.org.au>

4   See Leviore (2003) and Kelly (2007) for international comparisons of attrition rates.

the prevention effort" (Urbis Keys Young, 2004, p.1). In Victoria, a comprehensive framework has been developed that provides an "evidence based framework to support future efforts to prevent violence against women" (VicHealth, 2007, p.5).

Consistent and divergent themes inform nation-level approaches to prevention of sexual assault. Such policies shape prevention by informing the nature of projects that will be funded (US National Sexual Violence Resource Centre, 2006) by outlining interdepartmental approaches to the issues (UK Home Office, 2007; New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2004), and by setting a governmental direction in responding to the issues (VicHealth, 2007). The World Health Organization utilises a public health framework, while Amnesty International Australia presents a human rights framework, and the United Kingdom and New Zealand are more oriented towards crime prevention. Common to all the frameworks are approaches that identify community attitudes and social norms as integral to the existence of sexual violence—and addressing them is a key strategy for prevention.

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At present, public health concepts of prevention are most commonly used, even if this model is not specifically named. In 2002, the World Health Organization released World Report on Violence and Health (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). This report, along with the implementation plan (Butchart, Phinney, Check, & Villaveces, 2004), have proved to be landmark documents in the way that they have been used (by countries and regions) to articulate an understanding of violence and sexual assault, and to develop frameworks for their prevention.

They have also been pivotal in assisting public health concepts and practices to gain discursive territory for theorising, responding to, and preventing violence and sexual assault. It appears that discourses organised under the banner of public health are currently dominant in informing approaches to prevention in Australia and elsewhere.

The World Health Organization reports have three significant elements that have been taken up by subsequent national frameworks. These were:
- the use of an "ecological" model for understanding violence and/or sexual assault;
- arguing for the possibility of, and need for, primary prevention; and
- articulation of a public health approach.

The ecological understanding used proposes that violence and sexual assault are the result of interactions between factors at a range of different levels. These levels are the personal, the interpersonal (relationship), the community, and the social. The personal level includes personal history and psychology. The relationship level includes household dynamics and circumstances. The community level includes the physical and demographic features of an area in which people live. The social level includes violence-supportive cultural norms and the structures and processes that enshrine discrimination in law and policy. Violence and sexual assault are also seen as having effects at each of these levels, and requiring action at each level to effect meaningful change. The use of an ecological model is seen to provide sufficient scope to include the complex and multi-dimensional nature of violence against women and sexual assault, as well as flexibility to incorporate explanations from a wide range of disciplines such as individual psychology, sociology, criminology, and public health (Butchart et al., 2004).

The VicHealth framework has adopted an ecological model for understanding violence and sexual assault, while the US National Sexual Violence Resource Centre approach uses the key concepts without naming it. An area of consistency and consensus across these frameworks is that any approach to addressing violence against women, including sexual assault, must be implemented across jurisdictions, by multiple departments, at various levels of society, and with a consistent message.

While the approaches differ in the degree to which they focus on aetiology, they are consistent in identifying gender-based, discriminatory attitudes and unequal power structures as pivotal in the

continuation of violence against women and sexual assault. They were also universal in identifying these as significant points for primary prevention activities.

Following the public health model, many of the frameworks reviewed use the idea of "risk-" and "protective" factors to conceptualise who is likely to experience violence and who is likely to perpetrate it. Prevention can be tailored more specifically towards those people or sites identified as having a greater risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence or sexual assault. Specific risk factors can be targeted and protective factor enhanced. These approaches link back to the ecological model where risk and protective factors are identified at each level of the ecology. As concepts, risk and protection inform interventions, assist with targeting prevention activities and guide their evaluation strategies (Butchart et al., 2004; VicHealth, 2007; US National Sexual Violence Resource Centre, 2006). Such approaches, though, are more closely aligned with secondary prevention than primary prevention.

Within frameworks such as that of VicHealth or the WHO, a range of activities are proposed as being primary prevention. The most common of these are: social marketing (public-awareness raising) campaigns, aimed at increasing awareness within the community and changing attitudes or social norms; and education programs, primarily provided to students in high schools. There is a difference in the literature regarding whether such education programs are primary prevention (e.g., VicHealth, 2007) or secondary prevention—as they address people at the highest risk of experiencing and/or perpetrating sexual assault—at key developmental moments (e.g., Urbis Keys Young, 2004). The above discussion focuses on a range of framework documents to understand the prevention of sexual violence at multiple levels. However, education is privileged as a key strategy for primary prevention because it has the capacity to be delivered to a cohort before instances of sexual violence occur—so that it does not occur. As such, education as a primary prevention strategy will now be considered in some detail.

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Education as a primary prevention strategy?

A key focus within a number of international framework documents is for prevention education to be targeted at young people. It is argued this is necessary because of the increased risk of young women aged 14–24 as victims of sexual assault and because young men are the most likely perpetrators (Buchart et al., 2004; Urbis Keys Young, 2004). An additional argument is made that young people are at a critical point in their personal and social development (VicHealth, 2007; Grealey et al., 2004) and that their attitudes and behaviours are more easily influenced than adults (WHO, 2004). Building from these arguments is the belief that schools are the most suitable setting in which to deliver sexual assault and other forms of violence prevention education (Quadara, 2008). The VicHealth framework, for example, argues that specific anti-violence/respectful relationships programs targeting young people in secondary school is a "priority approach" (VicHealth, 2007, p. 18). The Amnesty International Australia report (Fergus & Lappin, 2008, p. 7) argued that "an education program for implementation in every high school across Australia must be a cornerstone of the National Plan of Action" developed by the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

It is important to consider what we know about the theoretical development of ideas surrounding the most effective prevention education activities. My analysis of the development of ideas and practice around sexual assault prevention education indicates that significant shifts have occurred over time. There is evidence of some unintended consequences of approaches to prevention education and there are emerging areas of work that are exciting and promising.

Theoretical approaches to prevention education

Gender remains a core issue of theoretical approach in many prevention programs internationally. How gender is conceptualised and how it impacts on program design varies significantly. In

2004, a UK review of educational programs addressing violence against women and girls was conducted in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (Ellis, 2004). Jane Ellis found that there had been a significant growth of programs between 2000 and 2003, which seems to have been driven by a Home Office focus on crime reduction and young people, a commitment to reduce domestic violence, and the creation of a children's fund with a strong prevention agenda. Most of the programs were aimed at young people aged 3 to 25 years of age, had short-term funding, and were primarily delivered in school contexts. However, 38% were delivered in community contexts aimed at reaching marginalised and "at risk" young people. Partnerships between teachers and community organisations, like Women's Aid, delivered the programs. A gender analysis and feminist understandings of domestic violence and sexual assault was acknowledged by 66% of programs. However, many education programs seemed to think gender analysis and feminist understanding was too controversial or not relevant and reduced the discussion of the precursors to violence to interpersonal conflict. Evaluation of the programs was only evident in 36% of programs reviewed and these focused on children and young people's knowledge, understanding and attitudes. None of the programs reported in this study looked at outcomes in relation to behavioural change. The influence of a public health discourse was evident as 42% of programs had a focus on "healthy" relationships from friendship to intimacy. I will now explore this concept of "healthy" relationships as well as other dominant approaches to prevention education: "risk" and responsibility (particularly as it relates to awareness raising campaigns); impacts education; men's roles in prevention; and finally, sexuality education.

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Healthy relationships?

This concept of healthy relationships has global currency beyond the UK. I have a number of concerns about this approach. What exactly is a healthy relationship? It seems to me to reflect a medical discourse in which we are constantly being asked to monitor or surveil our practices—from eating to sex—against some predetermined barometer of what is acceptable. One might ask to whom, and what, is acceptable? Who determines this? Is it the teachers, educators, parents, the state, the young people? Even more concerning is that often programs using a healthy relationship model focus on telling young people what isn't healthy. Ellis found that though people in the UK programs said the aim was to identify positive and negative actions and feelings, the focus in reality was telling young people about "unhealthy" relationships. Obscured here is the complexity and diversity of gender, sexualities and cultural and socio-economic difference which impacts differentially on the lives of young people. It also implies a static quality to relationships and sexual intimacy that is disturbing. The moral imperative here implies that if young people understand the predetermined characteristics of a healthy relationship this will result in them governing themselves and being better heteronormative citizens. How gender and sexuality are implicated in this model, and the possibilities of this model being open to transformation and shifting subjectivities, is made invisible (Carmody, 2009).

Knowledge about relationships is therefore constructed within a truth discourse of a binary of healthy/unhealthy. This reflects a particular form of power relations between the object of the knowledge (young people) and those who define how they should behave. I would suggest that the UK experience highlights the collision of competing discourses of prevention. This involves feminist concern to reduce violence against women and girls, the power of Home Office crime reduction policies targeting "the problem of youth", and the unacknowledged impact of prevention strategies utilising public health discourse as the technology by which to impart a conservative moral and political agenda (Carmody, 2009).

A Canadian review of violence prevention programs by Resolve Alberta (Tutty et al., 2002) found that the majority of programs do not identify the fact that girls and young women are the most likely victims of many forms of intimate violence. Gender neutrality therefore obscures international data indicating the gendered nature of these crimes (Carmody, 2009).

These examples, from the UK and Canada, show how prevention work is deeply implicated in how we understand the communities in which we live and how we deny women's experiences of sexual violence in framing educational strategies. Both these examples indicate quite different outcomes in program design that reflect particular theoretical approaches to violence prevention and gender. Both are problematic in terms of conceptual ideas and how these will impact on achieving primary prevention of intimate violence.

One way to counter the moral or normative standards imposed by constructing relationships as healthy/unhealthy is to argue for prevention programs that build or increase ethical subjectivity. This requires more than replacing the healthy/unhealthy binary with a discussion of ethical/unethical behaviours or relationships. Rather, encouraging young people to reflect on their own behaviour, and providing them with a framework and skills to reflect on their own ethical stance in relation to themselves and others within a gendered social context, opens them up to alternative possibilities and ways of being women and men. My own work in this area seeks to encourage this kind of reflective and reflexive stance as a strategy to reduce pressured, coerced sex within "dating" contexts. This is not about replacing one set of moral codes with another but rather seeks to engage a dynamic and constantly shifting process of ethical reflection specific to each sexual or relationship encounter, one that varies between individuals and places mutual negotiation by both partners of their individual and joint desires and needs as central to an ethical relationship (Carmody, 2009).

The complexity is further exposed when we consider that unwittingly, some feminist sexual assault prevention education has placed the focus on women managing the responsibility for sexual assault and its prevention. I will now consider the impact of this approach more fully.

Risk, risk avoidance and making women responsible for prevention

The 1990s saw a shift in how social and public policy conceived of and responded to social issues. Governmental solutions imagined from the new space of risk shifted the site for social intervention to personal responsibility (Hall, 2004). One's illness, safety, living conditions, econominc status (among others) were seen less and less as the responsibility of the state and its support mechanisms, and more the responsibility of the individual who was expected to make rational, accurate choices in minimising risk and maximising potential. This saw an increasing reliance on neo-liberal social policies, the "responsibilisation" of individuals, and a focus on the "at risk individual", (Culpitt, 1999; Hogg & Brown, 1998; O'Malley & Sutton, 1997). Prevention strategies conceived within a neo-liberal social policy framework have focused primarily on women taking action to avoid victimisation. Key features of the risk avoidance discourse include individualised approaches to sexual assault prevention, fostering fear in women, a denial of gender and ignoring the broader aspects of violent societies, a focus on stranger assaults and managing safety (for example, self-defence and verbal and physical resistance). This results in a paradox in that women's agency is only possible through risk avoidance (Hall, 2004). A focus on risk results in placing the emphasis on women to manage prevention—minimising the responsibility of men and the whole community in taking responsibility for the prevention of sexual violence.

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The US leads the international field in published accounts of sexual assault prevention education. Interestingly, the origin of this response can be traced to Mary Koss's (1988) groundbreaking research on the high levels of "date rape" in university and college campuses. Since 1992, legislative amendments resulted in a requirement that every post-secondary educational institution receiving US federal funds was required to implement a sexual assault prevention program (Heppner, Humphrey, Hillenbrand-Gunn, & DeBord, 1995). However, the legislative move did not spell out what kinds of programs were needed, how long they should be or who should be involved.

In many sexual assault education programs run in the US, there is evidence of this discourse of rape avoidance informing educational programs run on college campuses, with a primary focus on women. The depth of this approach is indicated in Parrot's (1990) review of 26 US university programs, which revealed 21 programs for women and only 5 programs that were aimed at changing men's behaviour. Despite this, some US violence prevention educators began to develop some programs focused on men who were seen as "at risk" of sexual assault offending. Initial results from a number of programs were not promising and a rebound to negative attitudes toward women and sexual assault were reported by several authors (e.g., Heppner et al., 1995; Heppner, Neville, Smith, Kivligan, & Gershuny, 1999; Jaffe, Sudermann, Reitzel, & Killip, 1992; Winkel & De Kleuver, 1997). One of the difficulties here was the inability of the programs to convince men of the personal relevance of the program and a commitment to non-violence. This may have been due to the conceptualisation of the programs within a risk avoidance model and constructing men as inherently "dangerous" (Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004, 2007; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Carmody, 2003, 2006). The result of this approach excluded men as part of the solution to preventing sexual violence, and left women with the primary responsibility for managing the risk and prevention of sexual assault.

Current examples of the risk avoidance discourse in operation can be seen in drink spiking awareness programs. We are expected to guard our drinks at all times and be responsible for managing the risk of being spiked. There are very few examples of campaigns focusing on perpetrators of drink spiking. Lawson and Crookes (2003) found that as few as 2–3 of the campaigns they analysed made specific reference/targeting towards perpetrators. There was one drink spiking campaign in Western Australia that included posters directed at perpetrators with the slogans "Take away her freedom … and you could lose yours" and "Drink spiking can lead to a five year relationship with a cell mate".[5]

The risk avoidance discourse is also evident in what Kitzinger and Firth (1999) called "refusal skills" being taught to young women as a strategy to manage consent, for example: No means no! I have argued elsewhere that sexual assault prevention education programs are often underpinned by unarticulated discourses of gender and sexuality (Carmody, 2003). These reinforce essentialist ideas about male and female behaviour, focus almost exclusively on the unethical behaviour of men, and deny the dynamic and fluid negotiation that occurs in intimate sexual encounters or relationships. A recent UK example of a social marketing tactic (masquerading as a prevention effort) illustrates the problematic ways that some programs focus on unethical behaviour in connection to the concept of "risk avoidance". A 2006 campaign by the UK Home Office to try and get men to seek informed consent used the following slogan under a picture of a women's crotch: "Have sex with someone who hasn't said yes to it and the next place you enter could be prison". This example not only reproduces a phallocentric view of sexual intimacy but it also misrepresents what data tell us about the poor conviction rate of sexual offences.

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One of the problems with the risk avoidance approach to prevention of sexual violence is its inability to address violence within relationships or between people known to each other, which is the primary context for violence. It also fails to grapple with the social and cultural messages that impact on gender and relationships and the broader normalisation of violence in everyday life (Carmody, 2009). This "flattening out" of risk, where it is made a general social fact (simultaneously everywhere and nowhere) fails to account for significant cultural and economic differences among women. Statistically speaking, not all women are equally at risk of sexual assault (Hall, 2004). It shifts prevention and education back to an individual woman's responsibility for managing risk, and leaves the broader structural issues of society unchallenged. Noticeably absent in this discourse of prevention is a conception of masculinity that moves beyond men as the problem and seeks to involve them as part of the solution.

5   See <www.aic.gov.au/conferences/policewomen3/fyfe.pdf>.

Education to prevention education

Previously, much prevention work has assumed that awareness of women and men about the risk and impacts of sexual violence, whether as a potential victim or as a potential offender, will prevent it. Programs have been run since the 1990s in Canada and the US that focused on attitude change as the primary outcome (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). There is now ample evidence from US and Canadian researchers of sexual assault prevention education that this assumption is flawed and the primary prevention of sexual violence is much more complicated. Most programs suffered from a short-term focus, with only several hours of input, and others found a rebound effect after the program was completed, resulting in exacerbating the very attitudes they were trying to alter especially among men. The change focus aimed to alter the attitudes and possibly the behaviour of individual women or men. I have found no evidence that programs attempted to address the cultural conditions that underscore sexual violence (for detailed discussion of violence prevention program evaluation, see Brietenbecher, 2000; Carmody & Carrington, 2000; Schewe, 2004).

Human rights discourse also underpins some approaches to prevention education. This approach has been particularly important in focusing United Nations attention to violence against women. The strength of this approach lies in a recognition of the conditions that enable violence against women as socially produced and therefore, that the processes by which they are produced can be altered (Carmody, 2009). The UN in-depth study into Violence Against Women (2006) acknowledged the need for an integrated and inclusive human rights approach that considers not only gender, but race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability, religion and culture. Many developing countries are only just beginning to pass laws and establish procedures to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Education is primarily about increasing awareness of new laws and attempting to build alternative cultural norms of non-violence. However, as we are increasingly becoming aware in democratic industrialised countries, awareness programs are limited in achieving behavioural change and therefore their primary prevention potential is limited. Below, I set out two arenas in which education has moved beyond education about the risks of sexual assault to prevention as an exercise in capacity building for individuals and communities.

Men and prevention

There is an increasing acknowledgment of the importance of including men in prevention efforts. Much of this work has been driven by the US experience based on work by Katz (1995) and Berkowitz (1994). Rather than constructing men as inherently dangerous, this approach to prevention attempts to build the skills of men—particularly young college men—as active bystanders who can use their status as role models to intervene or prevent violence against women. This work was extended by Banyard et al. (2004, 2007), who evaluated a series of interventions with young women and men within their own university. They found significant uptake of pro-social bystander behaviour by women and men, which were maintained over a 12-month period. In the Australian context, Michael Flood (2001, 2003, 2006) is a key researcher in this area who argues for the increased role for men in prevention programs and the need to link this to rigorous critiques of masculinity. Bob Pease (2008) argues for a critical approach to men working in partnership with women in violence prevention work, posing the question of whether this work will help transform gender relations. He suggests in part, that we need to understand more fully the basis of men's privilege, the nature of men's interests and the forms of men's resistance in challenging men's violence before we can begin to assess their contribution to gender equality.

> Rather than constructing men as inherently dangerous, this approach … attempts to build the skills of men—particularly young college men—as active bystanders who can use their status as role models to intervene or prevent violence against women.

Sexuality education and violence prevention

Another area of increasing interest in the field is the integration of sexuality education and sexual assault prevention education. Traditionally these areas of work have developed separately and often been delivered by different groups of professionals. Some are teachers who implement

personal development curricula; others are trained sexual health educators. Professionals delivering violence prevention education have often come from a direct service background of working with victims of sexual violence. Prevention education is seen as an adjunct to clinical work or as a key focus of activity through the employment of specific project workers to develop programs (for example CASA House schools program (Imbesi, 2008), or in the case of New Zealand, Auckland Rape Prevention Education—a specific agency set up to focus on education). If we are to take seriously the challenge of intersectoral collaboration raised by international framework documents discussed above, closer links between sexuality and sexual assault prevention education make sense. There are a number of additional arguments that can be put forward to support this shift. My own research with young people (Carmody & Willis, 2006; Carmody, 2009) indicates that many young people are not being well prepared by existing personal development programs to deal with relationships issues that emerge around their developing sexuality, issues of consent, conflict and negotiation of their own and their partner's sexual needs and desires. Their sexuality education was limited to biological facts and safe sex in the government schools context and in faith-based schools it was abstinence based. A noticeable exception to this is the Share program (which has been adapted into the Focus Schools Program) developed by Shine South Australia that involves a comprehensive evaluated sexuality program including material on sexual consent and relationships (Johnson, 2006; SHineSA website).

My interviews with young people showed that their exposure to sexual assault prevention education was limited to non-existent except for occasional messages that "rape is bad" and "just say no" to manage the complexity of consent. I found highly gendered expectations about sexual intimacy among young people. This is consistent with other research with young people by Hirst (2004), Hillier and Mitchell (2008), Powell (2007a, 2007b) and Allen (2007, 2003). If we leave aside sexual assault by strangers and focus on the vast majority of sexual assault that is committed by known people, there are some different challenges for education. Pressured, coerced and forced sex is common among many couples, including young people (Gavey, 1991, 2005; Powell, 2007a; 2007b; Carmody, 2009). This form of sexual assault is often not perceived by the men or women involved as a crime. For some it is seen as part of the bargain for maintaining the encounter or relationship, and to pressure someone to have sex is part of the gendered dance of heterosex in which men pursue and women resist and gradually cede bodily territory. Recent legislative moves in Victoria and NSW towards a more communicative form of sexual consent, based on mutual and free agreement, seek to challenge these traditional gender expectations. If a sexual assault matter is taken to court, the accused person will now have to demonstrate how they actively and consistently obtained consent throughout the sexual encounter.

However, there are other fundamental questions to be asked of sexuality and sexual assault prevention education. Is a risk focus the most useful way to achieve positive health and violence prevention outcomes? What kind of messages are we giving by a focus on a negative discourse on sex and relationships? Of equal importance is how useful current approaches to sexual assault prevention are in actually building ethical non-violent sexual intimacy. If we are to take seriously the challenge of primary prevention, then we need approaches that acknowledge the capacity of young people to be ethical; we need ways to challenge highly gendered expectations about intimacy; and we need to provide young people with the skills to do this. The task is not about purely improving communication skills but locating the exploration of alternative subjectivities within a critique of gendered cultural practices and providing alternatives. My own work (Carmody, 2009) is one small contribution to this task but there are other ways and these need to be taken seriously by the field and developed further. There is emerging international research that supports a shift in approach to sexual assault prevention education having closer links with positive sexuality education.[6]

> We need approaches that acknowledge the capacity of young people to be ethical; we need ways to challenge highly gendered expectations about intimacy; and we need to provide young people with the skills to do this.

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6   For example, see: Allen, (2005), Cargill (2008), Perry (2008a,b,c,d; 2005), Powell (2007a,b).

Where to from here

Policy challenges in building sexual assault prevention education

This paper began with an overview of the theoretical shifts that have occurred in the broad field of sexual assault prevention and moved to a consideration of prevention education as one strategy for prevention. Education alone will not prevent sexual assault. Rather it is a key strategy within a comprehensive multi-sectoral and multi-level response eliminating sexual and other forms of violence. In this final section of the paper I will discuss some of the challenges of policy and program development currently facing the field of sexual assault prevention education.[7] While it is usual in papers of this kind to provide examples of promising practice examples and discuss specific methodology around program development, I will not do this here. There are several reasons. Firstly they are two large-scale projects underway nationally that are currently doing this work and their findings will be publicly available in 2009. These are the work being done by VicHealth, examining school-based prevention education, and the National Sexual Assault Prevention Education Research Project, with funding to the National Association of Services against Sexual Violence (NASASV) from the Federal Government.[8] The ACSSA website includes a comprehensive list of education programs including information about the theoretical orientation of the programs and the outcomes of any evaluations conducted and readers are encouraged to review this.[9]

We are at an exciting point in the development of preventing violence against women in Australia, including sexual assault prevention education. The above initiatives are indicative of a renewed vigour and commitment to focus on eliminating violence against women. In a speech given by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on 17 September 2008 to the White Ribbon Annual Dinner, the commitment of the Australian Government was clear and direct:

> As a nation, the time has well and truly come to have a national conversation—a public national conversation, not a private one—about how it could still be the case that in 2008 half a million Australian women could have experienced violence from their partner … And it is my gender—it is our gender—Australian men—that are responsible … From birth, it must be drilled into the conscious and the subconscious of all men that there are no circumstances—no circumstances—in which violence against women is acceptable. There are no circumstances in which the threat of violence against women is acceptable. There are no circumstances in which the thought of violence against women is acceptable. That on violence against women, we have simple, clear policy in two words: zero tolerance. (Rudd, 2008)

This speech marks a historical shift in dealing with violence against women. It is not only crucial in terms of national leadership but it places gender, and challenging men's behaviour towards women, as fundamental to preventing violence against women. However, I think it would be short sighted to see this critique of masculinity as the sum total of a gender analysis. This should not be interpreted as a free ride for women. If we are serious about creating a major cultural shift then women too will need to consider how gender impacts on our expectations and behaviour about relationships, sexuality and sexual intimacy in casual and ongoing relationships. Sexual assault and other forms of intimate relationships in lesbian and gay relationships highlight the ways in which gender and sexuality can also be imbued with violence and how different sexualities invoke hostility and violence from others (Easteal, 2001; Mason, 2002). A cultural shift to making violence in all

> From birth, it must be drilled into the conscious and the subconscious of all men that there are no circumstances—no circumstances—in which violence against women is acceptable. (Rudd, 2008)

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7   These challenges, particularly around program development, are explored in greater detail in ACSSA Issues 11 (Evans, Krogh, & Carmody, in press).

8   I should state here that I was the Research Coordinator for this project based at the Social Justice Social Change Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney and I was a member of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children in 2008 and convenor of the sub group working on developing a national plan which included the national rollout of Respectful Relationships Education. My comments in this paper are mine alone and do not reflect the Council's or the Federal Government's views.

9   See <www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/ppdb/promisingpractice.html>.

its forms unacceptable therefore challenges both women and men whether same-sex or opposite-sex attracted to hold up our attitudes and behaviours to ethical reflection and critique. It also challenges the whole community to take a stand against sexual violence.

It is timely to consider how the development of prevention education can be progressed. While there is renewed vigour across the nation in addressing the relationship between gender and violence, there are significant challenges we face in incorporating this into sexual assault prevention education.

As indicated in earlier sections of this paper, constructions of gender have undergone some significant theoretical shifts over the last 30 years. These shifts need to be acknowledged as the field moves to implement education programs more widely. I have outlined some positive directions that have emerged in relation to masculinity and the need to engage men in prevention education. However, we are still a long way from being able to clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the limited number of programs that currently include men.

Challenges of school-based delivery

Working in schools to deliver violence prevention education is a common strategy. Schools have scheduled sessions, ready-made groups, and in relation to evaluation, they allow the repeated collection of data over event-bounded timeframes (Hilton, Harris, Rice, Krans, & Lavigne, 1998). There are other advantages. Among young people, peers have a powerful influence on their involvements in sexual violence, whether as perpetrators, victims, or bystanders. For example, among males, there is consistent evidence that peer support for intimate partner violence is an important predictor of men's perpetration of sexual and physical abuse. Young men with "rape-supporting social relationships"—with male friends who give advice (e.g., that girls owe them sex) and who approve of or use violence against girls and women—are more likely to use sexual and physical abuse themselves (Flood, 2007). However there are also a number of limitations to only focusing on school delivery.

First, it misses those children and young people who are not engaged in schooling, and in fact who may be most at risk of violence, and it does not directly address specific at-risk populations and environments. Prevention programs should also address those young people who are not currently attending school, and should address young people through other means and contexts associated with increased risks of victimisation (Rosewater, 2003; Vezina & Herbert, 2007). We are yet to discover how we might best engage young men and women who do not find school a welcoming or positive experience and need to consider what other kinds of settings might work better. The UK scouting movement has recently announced it will incorporate sexual health education as part of its activities and this may provide another setting to work with young men and boys around sexual assault prevention.[10] Working with apprentices as they do in the ACT Rape Crisis Centre may also be instructive. My own program includes women and men from TAFE, university and from youth centres (Carmody, 2009). Working with potential leaders in communities may also provide positive role models around non-violence and ethical relating. This has been part of the goal of work done by Katz (1995) and Berkowitz (1994; 2004) with US college athletes and in the Australian context with AFL and NRL footballers, and part of the aim of White Ribbon ambassadors.

> We are yet to discover how we might best engage young men and women who do not find school a welcoming or positive experience and need to consider what other kinds of settings might work better.

Challenges of adult-based education

We have not really come to grips with how to effectively do prevention education with adults. In some ways this has been seen as less useful, preferring instead to focus our energies on school age and university populations. When it has occurred prevention education with older age groups has

10 See <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/entertainment/5092217/scouts-advice-safe-sex/>.

been based on social marketing campaigns, and the preventative impact of these is still unclear. These examples suggest there is much work still to be done to understand how to engage both young men and women beyond the school gates and broader population groups such as parents and family groupings and assess the effectiveness of the prevention education that is delivered. We need therefore to think creatively and explore possible sites for stronger engagement and partnerships around sexual assault prevention with a range of population groups of varying ages— including sporting organisations, workplaces and with faith-based communities.

Education programs that address diversity in society

We also need to address the different kinds of men and women in the community. Programs may need to be differentiated based on culture, socio-economic status, ability, sexuality, and location. It is quite clear that one education program won't necessarily work with all groups. How do we engage young people and others with a strong faith base to their lives? While their faith or culture may prohibit sexual intimacy outside of marriage, how do we engage them in violence prevention in a meaningful and respectful way? Not all cultural groups are the same and there is significant difference within communities. In Aboriginal communities with long histories of intergenerational trauma from abuse and the impacts of past government policies, an educational strategy may need to be closely aligned with broader strategies of community healing, for example, the Aboriginal Healing Project in Western Australia (Cox, 2008). Engaging with lesbians and gay men will also raise different kinds of challenges to our understanding of gender and sexual assault. What does it mean to do prevention education with people with disabilities who we know have very high levels of intimate violence (Women With Disabilities Australia, 2008). The nature and extent of a person's disability is extremely variable and there are important distinctions to be understood within and between people with disabilities (Murray & Powell, 2008). There is a need therefore to work closely with different groups and think creatively about how to engage them. Central to effective program implementation and evaluation will be the need to talk directly to the people who will consume the education and tailor it to their needs.

Utilising new technologies

One area that has great potential is the use of mobile technologies and interactive gaming that builds violence prevention messages into the games in a way that is fun, challenging and exposes the players to alternative ideas and strategies for ethical relating. While drama and artwork-based approaches are gaining some interest, we know little so far about their primary prevention potential.

Understanding the impacts

Whatever our prevention program is, we need to understand its primary prevention impact. We now have access to a significant body of international research that demonstrates awareness raising and attitude change about the nature and impact of sexual assault has limited hope of bringing about a change in behaviour (see Schewe (2004) for a detailed discussion). Another important issue is the length of exposure that participants have to prevention messages. Awareness raising and attitude change programs do not themselves lead to behaviour change (Schewe, 2004). Flood (2008, in press) argues greater duration of an educational program means greater exposure to the intended prevention messages and materials. It facilitates the acquisition of new skills and knowledge through both "exercise"—meaningful repetition and application of information—and "intensity"—lucid, exciting learning experiences and opportunities to practice putting new knowledge and skills into action (Perry, 2008). Greater duration allows educators to move beyond lecture-style instruction to the use of various teaching strategies which have been shown to increase impact, including role plays, skills training and so on. Further endorsement for the claim of an association between program duration or

> Prevention education should facilitate the acquisition of new skills and knowledge through both "exercise" and "intensity".

intensity and program impact comes, for example, from Hassall and Hannah (2007), Nation et al. (2003), and Tutty et al. (2002).

Educators, funding bodies, policy-makers and researchers are all interested to understand how effective any sexual assault prevention activity is, including prevention education. As discussed in an earlier section of this paper, framework documents from the UK, US, New Zealand and Australia all point to the importance of evaluation in gaining an understanding of the effectiveness of the education and its impact on the prevention of sexual violence. This is further elaborated on by Schewe (2004).

The prevention education field has to date been poorly funded in a systematic manner in Australia. This has meant that prevention education has been driven by local violence support service initiatives or the commitment of individuals in the government, non-government and private sectors. The result is one of ad-hoc activity unevenly spread throughout Australia. The tyranny of short-term pilot programs has also meant that opportunities to build a knowledge base founded on depth and what works for different population groups have been lost. The lack of a comprehensive prevention education strategy has also resulted in a variable uptake of meaningful evaluation. Many programs do not receive funding beyond the life of the pilot or project funding and this makes longer-term impact of prevention education hard to assess. The person skilled in knowledge about sexual assault victims may not be the best person to deliver prevention education. Professionals working in the violence prevention field are often poorly trained to deliver sexual assault prevention education and often are handed a "kit" and told to just go out and deliver the program or a one-off session. They may also not have the skills around evaluation methodology and this suggests there is a need to build closer working relationships with universities and other providers who can work in partnership towards developing flexible and creative methods of evaluation.

These factors reflect a further policy gap around the crucial issues of workforce development and the sustainability of programs. If we are to take seriously the challenge of the primary prevention of sexual violence then we need a skilled and adequately remunerated workforce that not only understand the content of the programs they are delivering, but have a clearly articulated theoretical stance to the work they do and understand why they do it. They need to have opportunities for ethical reflection and to consider the moral-ethicality of prevention work they are doing (Evans, 2008). Without this, there is a strong likelihood that they may unwittingly create resistance to the prevention messages and alienate potential allies. They also need job security, promotional opportunities and ongoing access to training to increase their skills, as well as supervision and mentoring. This is a challenge for the human services generally but the current lack of a workforce strategy in prevention education results in rapid staff turnover, education programs disappearing, a lack of continuity of prevention education and loss of valuable data that can inform future practice.

> If we are to take seriously the challenge of the primary prevention of sexual violence then we need a skilled and adequately remunerated workforce that understand the content of the programs they are delivering … and why they do it.

Conclusion

Sexual assault prevention has undergone significant conceptual shifts since the 1970s. This has been reflected in all forms of prevention activity but is also evident in sexual assault prevention education. At this point in time there is still much to be done to ensure our tertiary responses to victims of sexual assault are supportive, effective, timely and flexible to the diverse needs of different population groups who experience sexual assault. We also need to continue to work more effectively to hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable. Our current understandings recognise the need for multi-sectoral and diverse responses if we are to move more closely to preventing sexual violence. Prevention education is one crucial strategy in government and community responses to sexual violence. If we are to achieve the cultural shift in communities that promote non-violence and deplore the use of violence between intimate partners, we face many challenges. To respond to these challenges we need to interrogate prevention education rigorously and to develop effective policy to guide its future implementation.

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