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Young Men, Sexual Ethics and Sexual Negotiation

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Abstract

This paper explores a research and education project seeking positive ways to engage young men in respectful and ethical negotiation within sexual relationships. The experiences of young men aged 16–25 years of age are explored who took part in the *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program* which was developed in 2006 and continues to be run in several Australian states and in New Zealand. The Program was designed to assist both young women and men to develop enhanced ethical sexual subjectivity and in the process help them to explore diverse gender possibilities in their intimate relationships. This study is located within the international field of violence prevention education. It considers how the young men who took part in this Program between 2009–2011 responded to the opportunity to reflect on their practices within the context of casual and ongoing sexual relationships. The implications of the study for our understandings of masculinities and gender are explored and how sexual ethics may provide a useful approach to assist young people as they navigate their sexual lives.

Keywords: *Young Men, Sexual Negotiation, Masculinities, Sexual Ethics, Violence Prevention*

Introduction

1.1 Ground breaking contributions to understanding gendered violence have been made by sociologists over a number of years (Dobash & Dobash 1992; Kelly et al 1996; Hearn 1998; Hearn & Parkin 2001; Stanko et al. 2002). Despite this, sociology has been less present within the field of gendered violence prevention. This is an extension of the argument put by Linda McKie in 2006 that issues around gendered violence are often located within gender and women's studies rather than within mainstream sociology (McKie 2006). The violence prevention field internationally has also been strongly influenced by psychologists, legal scholars and public health advocates. While an interdisciplinary approach is most likely to address the complex structural and personal factors that will lead to effective prevention, sociologists have much to offer this emerging field. In this paper I take up these concerns and as a sociologist reflect on a research and education project seeking positive ways to engage young men in non-violence within sexual relationships. I consider the experience of working with young men aged 16–25 years of age who took part in the *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program* which I developed in 2006 and has since been rolled out across several Australian states and in New Zealand. The Program was designed to assist both young women and men to develop enhanced ethical sexual subjectivity and in the process help them to explore diverse gender possibilities in their intimate relationships. This paper focuses on young men, while other work has considered the whole group of participants (Carmody 2009a; Carmody & Ovenden 2013).

1.2 Young people are often associated with ideas of risk (Furlong & Cartmel 2007). However, the sexual cultures in which they operate are less well understood. Research in the UK by Attwood and Smith (2011) with a range of specialists from sexual health, childhood, youth and media and communication studies identified a number of gaps in understanding young people. These included a considerable lack of actual knowledge about young people's sexual cultures, a need for more qualitative research and a concern to move beyond young people and danger to a consideration of the ways in which young people can and do have good experiences of sex. Like Attwood and Smith (2011) I use culture in its broadest sense of the word 'a particular way of life that expresses certain meanings and values' (Williams 1961: 57 as cited by Attwood and Smith 2011). In relation to young people I consider the many ways sexual knowledge is

constructed, how sexual values and norms are struggled over, how sex is depicted, talked about and 'done' (Attwood & Smith 2011: 237). This paper therefore also seeks to add to our knowledge about the sexual cultures of young men.

1.3 A number of questions have arisen from working with young men about sexuality and violence prevention that will be explored in the paper. For example; what can a Program that combines sexuality and violence prevention knowledges with a theoretical underpinning of sexual ethics tell us about the sexual cultures and intimate practices of some young men? How do young men speak about sexual negotiation when they are given an opportunity to learn skills in ethical negotiation? Does this experience change what they actually do with their sexual partners? What are the implications of their responses for our understandings about gender?

Multiple masculinities

2.1 My focus on men in this article follows the calls by Messerschmidt (2012), Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), Hearn and Morrell (2012) for recognition of the complexity and diversity of masculinities beyond hegemonic masculinity. I am particularly interested in how masculinities are embodied and resisted by a diverse group of young Australian and New Zealand men. The context of this work is at the local level defined as face to face interactions of families, organisations and immediate communities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). It is through this level of analysis where we can gain important insights into how men's relationship to each other and to women are realised and the consequences of particular performances of gender for them and others.

2.2 While the concept of hegemonic masculinity has proved extremely useful in considering how dominant forms of masculinity and related power are structurally fostered and maintained, it tells us little about the lived realities of men's own masculinities (Coles 2009). Connell argues that this form of social relations is supported by the majority of men as they benefit from the subordination of women. Despite the structural focus of the original conception of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and other masculinity scholars have warned against universalising or generalising men into simplified categories (Coles 2009; Messerschmidt 2012). Therefore, we need to move beyond assumptions for example that gay men are particularly sensitive or that footballers are innately sexually aggressive and promiscuous. Young men may be just as embarrassed as young women in negotiating sex especially when they are inexperienced (Holland et al. 1992). Van Teijlingen et al. (2007) also have considered the role of embarrassment in young people's experiences of talking about sexual health and found a number of gender differences. Recognition of these emotions is another important factor in considering the most effective way to engage young men in violence prevention education. A universalising conception of masculinity also fails to address any particular differences that may occur as a result of socio-economic background, age, sexuality etc. The challenging question here is to work out how these factors also intersect with multiple and dynamic performances of gender. Given the impact of the post-modern theorising around gender and sexualities, it is now more possible to conceptualise alternative ways of understanding masculinity. Counter discourses that mark a movement away from biological determinist discourses create the opportunities to explore a multiplicity of ways for men to 'do' gender and negotiate sex in intimate relationships. Louisa Allen (2007: 150) also suggests that young heterosexual men face 'pressures from girlfriends who, influenced by feminist criticisms of hegemonic forms of masculinity, expect more emotional and sensitive engagement from them in relationships'.

Background to the Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program

3.1 The *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program* (in short the Program) resulted from a three year Australian Research Council Grant from 2005–2008, which explored how to build ethical relationships between young women and men aged 16–26 years of age (Carmody 2009a, Carmody 2009b). The Program was piloted in 2006 and refined slightly following feedback from educators and participants. Since that time it has been run in a variety of states in Australia and New Zealand.

3.2 The Program was developed after interviewing young people about their needs in relation to both sexuality and violence prevention education (Carmody 2006, 2009a). I found there was a paucity of Australian sexual assault prevention programs that actively explored both pleasure and danger in the context of young women and men's early sexual lives. Rather, the focus was on danger and 'plumbing'. Rarely were young people provided with a range of navigation tools by families or schools to assist them in negotiating the complex and often confusing emotional beginnings to their sexual lives. This was consistent with other international research. For example, a recent study (Hilton 2007) found that young men aged 16–17 in the UK wanted to know more about emotions and sexual techniques. A further study in Northern Ireland with 14–25 year old young people found that they rejected what they saw as negative approaches to sexual feelings and emotions (Rolston et al. 2005). Alongside this gap in sexuality education is a failure of many programs to address pressured and coerced sex which is not uncommon in this age group and often goes unreported to police or other agencies (Smith et al. 2009). In my own initial interview study, I found 32 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men indicated a range of abusive experiences (Carmody 2009a). In Australia a large scale study of year 10–12 (age 16–18) school students has been conducted every five years since 1992 (Mitchell et al. 2011). The survey was last administered in 2008 and 38% of young women indicated they had experienced unwanted sex. They cited being too drunk or pressure from their partner as the most common reasons for having sex when they did not want to (Smith et al. 2009). It also highlighted gender differences with 38% of young women indicating they had experienced unwanted sex. They cited being too drunk or pressure from their partner as the most common reasons for having sex when they did not want to (Smith et al. 2009). These experiences run parallel to young people's positive experiences of sex and it is this balancing between pleasure and danger and how to negotiate this tightrope that is a key focus of the *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program*. Before considering a more detailed discussion of the Program structure and approaches, the

following section will locate the development of this Program within a backdrop of growing international efforts to engage men in intimate violence prevention education.

Working with men to prevent intimate violence

4.1 Until the mid-1990s it was rare for governments and non-violence advocates to engage men in the primary prevention of violence. Men were often universalised as one homogenous group and primarily constructed as possible perpetrators. The historical denial of sexual and other forms of intimate violence required concentrated efforts to break down the separation between public and private forms of violence (Weedon 1999). Central to this were campaigns by feminists to achieve legal reforms and policies to support female victims of male violence and to hold men who were perpetrators to account. Many of these reforms were achieved in democratic countries by the late 1980s. Even in the US where rape prevention programs became mandatory in the early 1990s for universities and colleges receiving federal funding, men's inclusion was minimal (Carmody & Carrington 2000). Rather, sexual and other forms of intimate violence were seen as primarily women's business.

4.2 Increasing recognition locally and internationally of the high incidence of sexual and other forms of intimate violence against women and girls by the early 2000s saw a renewed focus on the prevention of violence against women (World Health Organization 2002, 2004). In particular the ecological model of public health became the increasingly dominant discourse of ways to work in the violence prevention sector. This model recognises multiple levels of action and the need to address a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, institutional and societal factors that both cause and can prevent violence against women (United Nations 2006, VicHealth 2007). The approach has been criticised for its application of a medical model that views rape as treatable as something akin to influenza (Foubert 2011). Despite this, the public health model has been accepted by WHO and various nation states because it moves the debate away from the contested terrain of feminist understandings of violence against women and reframes the issues as 'health' ones that can be prevented. It also suggests that solutions are possible if we can work from a multi-systemic approach.

4.3 Alongside prevention work based on the public health discourse, there is also evidence of other competing forms of knowledge informing prevention education such as an assortment of feminist discourses, human rights discourses, masculinities discourses, crime prevention risk discourse, psychological models and public health discourses to name a few (Carmody et al. 2009: 65). It is important to understand the existence of these competing truths as they significantly impact on violence prevention program design (Foubert 2011) or can unwittingly replicate victim blaming and traditional gender norms (Carmody 2009a; Ellis 2008).

4.4 Building from the public health model, a key level of activity is promoting community education to specific target groups. In this case men have become participants in a diverse range of educational programs. However, as Piccigallo et al. (2012: 508) argues:

'While the number of universities incorporating programs aimed at men has increased in recent years, they continue to represent a small minority of the total number of programs aimed at sexual assault prevention (Choate 2003; Fabiano et al. 2003; Gold & Villari 2000) and many are coeducational (Anderson & Whitson 2005).'

4.5 The pressing issue facing governments internationally, educators, researchers and the communities in which we live is how effective the violence prevention programs are in reducing violence supportive attitudes and behaviours of diverse men. Overviews of the effectiveness of violence prevention education specifically targeting boys and men can be found in the works of Berkowitz (2004a, 2004b), Flood (2006), and Morrison et al. (2004).

4.6 In response to this concern about effectiveness of programs for both women and men, a number of researchers have explored best practice principles to guide the field. Nation and colleagues (2003) conducted a meta-evaluation of prevention literature across four areas of social concern (substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour, school failure, and juvenile delinquency and violence) to ascertain factors associated with effective prevention programs. They found the following factors were consistently associated with effective prevention programs: Programs were comprehensive, included varied teaching methods, provided sufficient dosage (amount of time), were theory driven, provided opportunities for positive relationships, were appropriately timed, were socio-culturally relevant, included outcome evaluation, and involved well-trained staff. In Australia, the National Association of Services against Sexual Violence and the federal government commissioned a one-year project in 2008 to develop and trial a national Sexual Assault Prevention Education Framework, to assist Australian services in evaluating and benchmarking their violence prevention education programmes against best practice research. The outcome of the project resulted in six recommended national standards (Carmody et al. 2009). The standards had a number of similarities with Nation et al.'s (2003) work but were specifically focused on sexual assault prevention education. Neither group of researchers separated out programs by gender though the national standards did explore promising practice findings targeted at men. This work has been particularly important to educators in progressing more effective program design and evaluation.

4.7 Related to program effectiveness is a need to understand what motivates people to change. There are multiple models of personal change that have been developed since the early 1980s. Three most common approaches include the transtheoretical or (TTM) developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1982, 1983, 1992); a health belief model drawn from public health and the social learning model derived from Bandura (1973).

4.8 The social learning model focuses on the interplay of personal factors, social environment and

behaviour. As Perry (2009) argues, the social learning model places a particular emphasis on the mental processes a person uses to make sense of their social environment, and how this leads to behaviour. These mental processes are influenced by how we process images and words around us into attitudes and behaviour. Behaviour is then reinforced (or not) by the perceived adverse effects and incentives that result from a behavioural choice (or from observing another person's choice and the associated outcomes). Therefore, a person would be more likely to engage in positive behaviour change when he/she sees positive behaviours modeled and practiced, is able to increase his/her own capability and to implement new skills, is able to gain positive attitudes about implementing new skills, and experiences support from his/her social environment in order to use their new skills. These findings about violence program effectiveness and research on personal change provided the backdrop to the *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program* which I will now consider in more detail.

Focus of the *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program*

5.1 The Program aims to reduce unwanted and pressured sex between people known to each other, but not at the expense of the positive experiences sex can provide. This alternative approach sees young people as having agency and the ability to negotiate ethical sexual lives. The Program offers them the opportunity to practice and develop or enhance knowledge and skills to realise this potential more fully. The 2–3 hour per week program runs for six sessions and locates the individual knowledge and skills young people learn within a broader socio-cultural context of gendered relations. It challenges them to reflect on the gendered expectations of sex in casual and ongoing relationships and ways to actively resist dominant beliefs that promote and condone sexual and other forms of intimate violence.

5.2 The Program involves interactive activities conducted over 6 weeks to maximise impact on attitudinal and behavioural change. Topics include:

- Different cultural perspectives on sexual intimacy
- The sexual ethics framework and how to decide what is right for you and the impact on others
- How to handle pressures to be sexual
- Non-verbal communication skills
- Alcohol and drugs and the impact on sexual decision making
- Skills in ethical consent and the law, ethical use of social media and technology
- Negotiating conflicting desires and needs in casual and ongoing relationships
- Recognising the signs of abusive relationships
- Breaking up and
- Being an ethical bystander and standing up to sexual violence and other gender-based abuse in your community

5.3 The Program was delivered by educators recruited from community organisations, youth groups and universities. They came from diverse backgrounds such as counselling, sexual health educators, violence prevention services and youth and welfare work. They participated in a five day training program developed as a result of the initial research and jointly delivered with a co-facilitator from the NSW Rape Crisis Centre.

5.4 The theoretical approach to sexual ethics underpinning the Program is concerned with determining the conditions for ethical exploration for different types of people and contexts, rather than establishing the borders of acceptable or unacceptable desires, thoughts and actions (Carmody 2003, 2006, 2009a). This approach includes a post structuralist feminist conception of ethics; including multiple ways to embody gender for women and men.

5.5 The French philosopher Michel Foucault's work on ethical sexual subjectivities has particular relevance to thinking through alternate spaces and possibilities in working with young people. Foucault suggests that if we wish to be sexually ethical we need to consider not only our own needs (care of the self) but that we need to be mindful of the impact of our desires on the other person (care of the other). This process of mutual concern is possible he argues through a process of constant reflection and renegotiation with ourselves and others (Foucault, as translated by Rabinow 1997: 287). These concepts were adapted and form the theoretical framework that underpins the Program (Carmody 2009a).

5.6 As indicated above, Nation et al. (2003) argue effective programs need to be theory driven. The *Sex & Ethics Program* follows this best practice prevention education principle by including a clearly articulated theoretical approach based on sexual ethics (Morrison et al. 2004). It is therefore more than a series of activities. Rather, it is a carefully planned program that builds from general issues of sexuality, explores the negotiation of ethical practices for those engaging in sexual intimacy as well as considering the social and friendship context and concludes by focusing on how young people can be active citizens in their communities and stand up against sexual and other forms of intimate violence by using ethical bystanders skills.

How the program assists young people to develop skills in ethical relating

6.1 Participants in the *Sex & Ethics Program* are introduced in Week 2 to an ethical framework based on the theoretical ideas discussed above. The Program offers structured activities using real life scenarios which prompt participants to think beyond popular discourses surrounding sex, gender and sexuality. For example, the role plays encourage participant's to engage in a process of ethical reflection – asking them 'what is "really" going on', and what might be the consequences for the characters involved? This provides a space to name and examine dominant gendered expectations about how men and women relate. It also encourages hearing a diversity of views and experiences from which group members can expand their own world views. Through a series of carefully constructed critical questions and individual

and group reflection, young people are also invited to consider alternative possibilities for how people may relate in intimate situations.

6.2 Reflection is used in a specific way in the Program. Reflection allows us to experiment with alternative approaches and to try them out. It provides an opportunity to consider our real-life experiences and try to make sense of them. Payne (2002: 126) discusses a reflective cycle to describe the process involved. He argues that we begin with moving from description (what happened?) to feelings (what were you thinking and feeling?) and evaluation (what was 'good' or 'bad' about the experience?) to analysis (how can you make sense of what happened?). We then move to conclusions (what were the alternatives?) and an action plan (what would you do if it happened again?). In this Program these steps are extended beyond a purely individual and internal process. Rather this concept is expanded to explore how we are situated in our lives and how age, ability, gender, sexuality, culture and faith, may intersect and impact on our reflective stance and the possibilities we are able to imagine. A consideration of these additional factors moves beyond individual musing to locate these very musings within an historical, cultural and gendered context. Therefore participants are encouraged to move from a position of personal reflection to reflexivity.

Working with diverse groups of men

7.1 The *Sex & Ethics Program* structure is a flexible one and activities can be adapted to different sub population groups. While case studies and scenarios used in the activities include both women and men from diverse cultural and sexual backgrounds, specific tailoring of the Program has occurred. For example a number of case studies were refined to reflect the particular needs of same sex attracted and queer young women and men to ensure there was a better fit with a wider range of contexts in which they may find themselves such as large dance parties or sex parties held in public or private premises. Similarly, with football groups, the characters and locations of events were adapted to include locker room conversations, club tours at end of the season or managing issues in public spaces when they may be well known. For participants living in university residences, there were further refinements to reflect particular issues in that setting such as increased personal freedom and invitations to engage in high levels of casual sex and drinking alcohol to excess. In New Zealand, specific adaptations were made to address the needs of Maori and Pacific Islander young people from a youth centre and with a university based queer group.

7.2 It has been suggested by some researchers that single gender programs affect greater behavioural change compared to mixed gender groups (Vladutiu et al. 2011). Sexuality researchers have also indicated that mixed gender groups are less willing to discuss issues freely (Halstead & Waite 2002). However, the research on this variable is still very unclear (Piccigallo et al. 2012). Men's involvement in the *Sex & Ethics Program* has included both single gender (footballers and also young gay men) and mixed gender groups. There appear to be no significant differences in responses to the Program as a result of this configuration. Rather, what has been more important in the single male gender groups is the credibility of the men who recruited them into the program. In the case of footballers, recruitment was done by trained current and former players. For gay men, recruitment was done by a well-respected peer educator from a leading LGBT community organisation. Men recruited into mixed groups were recruited by community workers in youth services or counsellors within universities who were known to them. We found that the credibility of the person who approached the men was most important. However, given that men talking about sexual violence is still relatively uncommon, it is important to note that if men do invite men into these conversations they are often more likely to pay attention as Piccigallo et al. (2012) found in their interviews with young men about their reasons for joining rape prevention programs.

The research study

8.1 The following section will discuss the data collected by educators and analysed by university research staff involved in the Program. The data was collected from 2009–2011 from multiple locations across Australia and in Wellington New Zealand. Human Ethics Committee Approval was obtained from the University of Western Sydney in NSW and also from the Health Service in New Zealand to collect evaluation impact data. Written consent was obtained from all participants and parental consent was also obtained for 16–18 year old participants unless they were legally recognised as independent young adults living away from their family of origin.

8.2 In keeping with the concerns about developing alternative models of violence prevention, finding ways that engaged men and to assess effectiveness of the Program, an ongoing research process was developed alongside delivery of the Program. One of the ongoing concerns expressed by researchers in the field of violence prevention education has been a failure of many programs to conduct meaningful evaluation of the programs and their possible impact on the attitudes and behaviour of participants. These concerns centre on four areas: Program evaluations being limited in their conception and implementation (Morrison et al. 2004; Whitaker et al. 2006; Harvey et al. 2007); evaluations being implemented too soon after a program's completion resulting in the inability to understand maintenance of any change in the longer term (Flood 2006; Whitaker et al. 2006) and a lack of use of validated measurement tools (Morrison et al. 2004; Perry 2006b; Tutty et al. 2005). These findings influenced the methods used in both Program design and the evaluation approach.

8.3 The method for data collection involved administering a short standardised survey at three time periods. The short survey method was chosen as it was easy for educators to administer the first two surveys in their education groups, it did not take up valuable training time and it provided us with data that compared young people's attitudes at the beginning of the Program and on completion of the Program six weeks later. Therefore, baseline data was collected at the first group meeting (pre-group survey) and it was repeated again at 6 weeks in the final session of the Program (post group survey). Survey forms were distributed within the groups but the educators removed themselves from the room

while the process was completed and each participant placed their forms in an envelope which was sealed by one of the young people. The educator returned the sealed envelope to the university where their responses were de-identified and entered into a data base. A further email survey was administered 4–6 months following completion of the education groups (follow-up survey). The differences in times when the survey was administered related to the occurrence of national holidays. If a group of young people were due for follow up right around Christmas time for example we moved the evaluation either forward or back to maximize survey return rates.

8.4 The introduction of this follow up survey some months after the Program was completed aimed to understand more fully if the Program had a lasting impact beyond the life of their attendance at the education groups. It aimed to address the concerns expressed by the field about evaluation being completed too soon to assess impact on the lives of participants. The mode of delivery of email was chosen as the young people who attended the groups had often dispersed by the time the follow up was due. A decision to conduct the follow up 4–6 months after the groups ended was based on trying to maximise the return rate before young people moved on from their university or community setting.

8.5 Data is only presented for the total number of men who completed all three stages of the evaluation. The survey, which was developed for the original pilot study in 2006 (see Carmody 2009a for the published results of this), included two specific survey items to determine what impact, if any, the Program had on young people's behaviour and sexual relationships, and whether this was maintained six weeks and four or six months later. In the subsequent research over 2009–2011, there was a range of data collected from the three-stage evaluation survey (pre-group, post-group and follow-up) including information on knowledge about sexual assault and the most important factors in negotiating sex. The five point Likert scale in the survey asked them to identify their level of agreement with the statement: 'I know how to work out what I want from a sexual experience'. The second item aimed to determine participant understanding of their partner's needs in sexual experiences. In particular, we wanted to assess their ability to care for themselves in sexual situations and secondly to understand their desires or behaviour has an impact on another person. This focus on self-care and care of the other reflects the theoretical approach to sexual ethics underpinning the Program and described above.

The participants

9.1 There were a total of 153 men and women who took part in all three survey evaluations conducted in 2009–2011. Of this total number 81 or 52.94% were men. Participants were aged between 16–26 years (Mean age = 18.8 years, SD = 2.51). Participants were recruited through a range of community groups and youth-service networks, university counselling and residential services, as well as youth-focused media (student newspapers, youth radio programmes) and social media. Young trainee footballers were recruited through ongoing work with the National Rugby League one of Australia's main elite football codes (see Albury et al. 2011 for detailed discussion). The diversity of the sample is an important distinction between this work and much of the violence prevention research conducted in the USA where almost all samples are drawn solely from university or college samples. The primary method of recruitment was through youth workers or others working directly with young men and who had participated in 5 days of educator training delivered by the author. Both participants and educators were drawn from several states in Australia and from Wellington New Zealand.

9.2 The men were also culturally diverse with the largest groups represented as Australian (25.9%); Pakeha (16%) (non-Maori New Zealander); Samoan (7.4%); Aboriginal (4.9%); Tongan (3.7%) and Maori (2.5%). There were also a diverse but small number of other cultural groups identified such as Asian, Chinese-Malaysian-Australian reflecting the multi-cultural nature of Australia and to a smaller degree New Zealand.

9.3 The participants in the program identified with a range of sexualities. This information was collected using a Sexual Experiences Survey, which was administered in Week 3 of the Program. Overall, 56 young men (69.1%) indicated that they were heterosexual, 19 (23.5%) indicated that they were same-sex attracted (gay, queer, bisexual), and the remaining 6 young men (7.9%) were 'not sure', indicated an 'other' sexual orientation, or did not respond to this question on the survey.

Differences in sexual experiences

10.1 If the total sample of men is separated to compare same sex attracted men and heterosexual men some clear differences emerge. For a start the mean age for same-sex attracted young men is slightly higher (21.05 years) than heterosexual young men (18.07 years). The football players were the youngest group with a mean age of 16.71 years. When we consider their age of first sexual experiences, same-sex attracted participants were slightly older at 15.53 years compared to the heterosexual men in this sample whose mean age was 14.89 years. The mean age of first consensual sexual experience is also slightly lower for the football club sample (13.92 years) compared to the community sample (15.28 years) and the same-sex community sample (18 years). The biggest differences emerged in regards to the mean number of sexual partners. For gay men this was 13.82, while for heterosexual men it was 5.61. This may have been a function of a few same sex attracted outliers (for example one had 40 previous sexual partners). At this level of analysis we also found that the football club men report a higher mean in terms of the number of sexual partners at 6.45 compared to 5.61 from other heterosexual men.

Responses by young men to the Program

11.1 A statistical analysis (a paired samples t-test) was carried out to assess any changes over the three periods when the survey was administered. In particular, we wanted to know how the men dealt with issues of self-care and care of the other. These findings indicated that, compared to pre-test, young men

at post-test (immediately following program completion) and follow-up (4–6 months following program completion) indicated a higher level of understanding regarding their own needs in sexual relationships. However, the largest increase in mean score across the pre-test and post-test survey was observed in their 'understanding of their *partners needs* in sexual relationships.' That is, young men showed a greater jump in their mean score for understanding their partners' needs, rather than their own needs, from pre-test and post-test. This is a particularly important finding as it suggests a challenge to a traditional view of male sexuality as being primarily act driven and self-focused. It also is hopeful in challenging sexual aggression by some men which may result in pressured and coerced sex. The following qualitative data provides a more detailed picture of sexual decision making and the men's increased understandings about sexual assault. This data is drawn from the email based follow-up survey 4–6 months after the Program had ended. The survey provided an option for extended responses.

11.2 The men were asked to indicate the three most important things for them in negotiating sex. There was a strong recognition of the need for clear honest, verbal and non-verbal communication. However, participants also recognised the need to ensure their own physical safety. They were particularly being mindful of how being drunk could negatively impact on their decision making and ability to negotiate consent. Connected to this was some new insight into the need for self-care and care for their partner. Recognition of the importance of mutual consent was evident in many of the comments made for example: 'ensuring that both of us really want to do it'; 'respecting the other person's decision'; 'both parties know what the other's intentions and feelings are'; 'it's important to check in with the other person to clarify each other's expectations'.

11.3 They were also asked to provide any examples of how they might have used the ideas or skills they learnt in the group in negotiating sex in casual or ongoing relationships. John, a gay man from Sydney indicated the importance of negotiation of expectations and how it can go wrong:

'I learned the importance of clarifying each other's expectations when negotiating sex, and how easily a partner's intentions can be misinterpreted when communication breaks down.'

The Program emphasised the importance of being aware and attending to non-verbal as well as verbal communication and this was evident from Tom's comment from rural NSW:

'I gained a better understanding of body language and how to read it. By that I mean that I gained a better appreciation of how signals can be misinterpreted.'

And for Bill from Sydney, there was an increased recognition of the importance of consent and considering his partner's needs:

'I would always ask for consent and not assume that they want to do it. I would also ask questions on what they prefer and like in sex rather than just thinking about what I want and my satisfaction'

Some men articulated very clearly their views on sexual assault following the end of the Program. Rick from New Zealand highlighted the dynamic and ongoing nature of consent:

'It doesn't matter if you are together or not, you may be a couple that regularly has sex, but there has to be consent made. If you are too drunk, you are not in a position to give consent. As a male I should not be ashamed if I am sexually assaulted and I like a female can be assaulted'

Two other men, Barry and Chuck who were footballers were more succinct about sexual assault and how to prevent it:

'Ask questions. Don't assume or go to jail'; and 'Don't do it'

A number of men talked through how the ideas and skills they learnt in the Program helped them in negotiating sexual situations and working out what each person wanted. Tony, a Pacific Islander living in New Zealand:

'I've used the framework from the Program with my girlfriend all the time when negotiating sex. (The) framework was a huge help in regards to sex'

This view was echoed by several men who used the sexual ethics framework to negotiate with existing or new sexual partners. It was also useful for others such as Rob, a footballer, in considering the possible negative impact of a sexual decision past the immediate event:

'An ex-girlfriend asking me for sex; I thought of the daylight (sunlight) test. (I felt) good about it. It stopped me making a big mistake'

For Matt, another young footballer, it involved using his increased listening skills to understand how his girlfriend was feeling before they became sexual:

'My girlfriend has had a bad experience with sex before and just said that she needed me to understand her situation and fears before initiating sex. I felt that talking to her about her issues and how she feels about the situation has brought us closer together as I can understand her feelings and concerns'

This response not only avoided any harm or trauma for the young woman but Matt could see the benefit of his approach in caring for her needs and how it brought them closer together. Vic from New Zealand, who identified as queer, commented on an increased level of confidence in articulating what he needed to care for himself and also paying attention to his partner's needs:

'Being intimate with somebody and being able to confidently ask what they liked, and being confident to say no to things without feeling insecure and also being able to ask for things or say yes to things without feeling insecure!'

Working with men to challenge sexual violence

12.1 The above data indicates the way that the men involved in the *Sex & Ethics Program* used the ideas and skills to assist them in making sexual decisions and negotiating around consent and expectations in sexual contexts. In the final session of the Program the emphasis shifts from intimate relationship negotiation to assisting the young men to see the benefits of becoming active ethical bystanders in challenging sexually risky situations. The concept of bystander skills seeks to intervene in reshaping social or cultural norms that promote or condone gendered violence. Social norm theories highlight the ways that the majority culture or normative environment can support beliefs and attitudes held by an individual (Dyson & Flood 2008). Building from these theories, violence prevention researchers and educators have increasingly been focusing on bystander behaviour. This approach seeks to mobilise community members from purely witnessing an event to intervene safely in situations of violence, discrimination or other unacceptable or offensive behaviour (Powell 2011). The implications of the research on pro-social bystander interventions suggests positive engagement by members of communities that previously felt issues such as violence against women were private matters (see Banyard et al. 2004, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Banyard 2008). It has proved a particularly engaging strategy to involve men in promoting non-violent forms of masculinity (Berkowitz 2003, Banyard et al. 2004, 2007; Banyard 2008). Central to men's engagement in programs is the notion that men may be particularly effective in challenging violence-supportive behaviour or speech among their male peers (Flood 2006).

12.2 Of the total number of men who took part in the follow up survey, 51% indicated they had used bystander skills in the last 4–6 months. The skills involved protecting female friends and unknown women in clubs and parties from unwanted advances by other men, counselling men to think through the impact of their behaviour on others and challenging sexual assault or victim blaming within friendship groups. In the club or party context, men stepped in to prevent men pursuing women when the women were drunk; for example: Rob a footballer challenged a male friend who *'was trying to get with a really drunk, barely standing up chick. I told him off and paid for her taxi home'*. Mark from Sydney observed a similar situation with a guy he didn't know at a club:

'I saw a guy getting very moody and wanted to have some form of sexual activity with a girl and she did not want it at all and I just spoke to him on the side and said 'I hope you know what you're doing, from my side it doesn't look like she wants to do anything sexual, maybe she likes you or whatever but she doesn't want to have sexual activity with you'; In the end he apologised to her because he was taking the wrong cue from her.'

Alec from New Zealand used his skills to talk to *'friends to ensure that the decisions they were making whilst intoxicated were the right ones for both themselves and for the other party'*. The importance of men standing up to other men for inappropriate behaviour towards women within a joint friendship group was highlighted by Malcolm also from New Zealand:

'I had a friend that took advantage of another friend while we were drinking. I along with my group of friends as a whole made it very obvious to our friend it was not ok and he had gone over the line. We also supported the friend that had been taken advantage (of), letting her know that she was in the right and had nothing to be ashamed of and letting her know that she had the choice to take further action if she wished. They later made up and are friends again.'

Discussion

13.1 One of the key challenges in preventing gendered violence has been how to engage men as allies rather than constructing them solely as potential perpetrators (Casey & Ohler 2012; Albury et al. 2011; Katz 1995). This has required sociologists, educators and victim's services to rethink past approaches to preventing violence and move away from women being asked to manage the risk of violence and the prevention of it (Carmody 2009a). At the same time many sexuality programs have failed to address what young women and men want and need to know about negotiating sex, dealing with conflicting expectations in relationships and exploring alternative ways to express gender as a man or as a woman. This is occurring in a period of high uptake of social media amongst young people where a failure to understand the ethical implications of how they construct themselves and behave on-line can have lasting impacts.

13.2 The *Sex & Ethics Violence Prevention Program* provides one model to try and address the complex needs of young people as they begin to explore their sexual lives. The men who have taken part in the Program so far have been diverse in cultural and sexual background, socio-economic context and education, of varying ages from 16–25 and drawn from diverse settings including community youth services, universities, football clubs and specialist services for gay and queer young men and located in cities and rural areas. Despite these apparent differences, their increased self-care and the significant increase in caring for their partners needs in sexual contexts have been remarkably similar. The evaluation results discussed above demonstrate significant shifts in men's attitudes to understanding

their own sexual relationship needs better. One of the most important findings for sexual assault prevention is men's increased reported understanding of their partner's needs within a sexual relationship. When men are taught to be dominant and aggressive, this often leads to hyper-masculinity, male peer support for sexual aggression, and the development of rape myths (Rozee & Koss 2001; Flood 2005). The men's responses in this study suggest a counter to the dominant socialisation of men. Their responses indicate a move away from an aggressive male sexuality and hyper-masculinity.

13.3 It is possible that the young men may be providing us with what they believe are socially desirable responses. However, the willingness of the men who took part in the follow-up survey to provide details of how they were using the ideas and skills 4–6 months later suggests this is unlikely. The data was complex and there is evidence of a clear understanding of self-care and care of the other, the key theoretical concepts underpinning the Program. Examples of reported behaviours included negotiating to be sexual, ensuring mutual negotiation of what practices occurred, being able to ask their partner what they wanted but also to have more confidence in expressing their own desires and negotiating with a partner around this. These skills were used in casual and ongoing relationships. This was complimented by examples of men actively using bystander skills to challenge sexual approaches by other men to inebriated women who may have been unable to consent. Interestingly, women who participated in the Program also reported significant changes from pre-test to follow up. While men showed increased care of the other, women's greatest area of change was in their reported increase in taking care of themselves within sexual situations or relationships (see Carmody & Ovenden 2013a for a detailed discussion of these findings). This finding is also important for sexual violence prevention as it challenges ideas about sexual desire of women as dependent on the domination of men (Hollway 1996).

13.4 The data discussed in this paper is drawn from survey responses and as such it provides only some glimpses of the sexual cultures of these men. A limitation of the study is this methodology and the mobile nature of the population inhibited the possibility of follow up interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding. More research is needed with larger and more diverse groups of men to understand how culture, sexuality, socio-economic status and other factors may impact on their willingness to address sexual negotiation and gendered violence. We also need to understand more fully whether concepts such as hegemonic masculinity exist in the same way in all settings and how it may be embodied differently cross-culturally (Hearn & Morrell 2012).

13.5 Despite the current limits, the data does suggest there are benefits in providing a supportive environment and a structured program targeting men. Their responses indicate a willingness to explore issues around gender, sexual negotiation and sexual assault and think through the ethical implications of how they perform masculinity and the possibilities of other ways of expressing it. There may be several factors that have resulted in the Program being effective with these diverse men. Rather than leaving men powerless or frustrated (Scheel et al. 2001), the Program provided them with a model to explore alternatives and provided an opportunity to practice new skills in gendered intimacy. Pedagogically, the Program addresses the best practice approaches recommended by Nation et al. (2003) in terms of being comprehensive, includes varied teaching methods, provides sufficient dosage (amount of time), is theory driven, provides opportunities for positive relationships, is appropriately timed, socio-culturally relevant, includes outcome evaluation, and involves well-trained staff. The theoretical approach based on Foucault's concepts around ethical sexual subjectivity, self-care and care of the other, provides a 'decision making' model that appealed to the young men. They were not told what to think or do but rather they were situated as active agents who could learn an ethical framework to assist them in dealing with the complex issues and feelings around sexual intimacy. They also used this framework successfully in challenging attitudes and behaviour amongst friends and in the community that were hostile to women or placed other men at risk when they intervened as bystanders.

Conclusion

14.1 The findings suggest that the young men in this study from diverse backgrounds were willing to take the time to reflect on their own masculinity and how this impacts on themselves and their sexual partners. The sexual ethics approach was well received by these men (and the women in the rest of the study) during the Program, on its completion and 4–6 months after the Program ended. Their embodied use of the ideas and skills learnt in the Program highlighted in the qualitative data suggest that their practices of gender were reworked and refined in light of the education Program. This demonstrates the importance of understanding masculinities as flexible and open to change and supports R.W. Connell's (1995) original work on masculinities as socially constructed. From this recognition the possibility of increasing new cultural norms that promote non-violence and respect become more possible. Much more research is needed to understand the multiplicity of ways in which men can and do reshape their masculinity and the impact of this on themselves and others. Insights from this additional research could potentially greatly enhance future sexual violence prevention programs and the possibility of new cultural norms around gender. This is a field in which sociologists have much to offer.

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