

Aware

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

In this issue

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of *ACSSA Aware*, the quarterly newsletter of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, containing news, articles, reviews and notices for those working in the sexual assault field in Australia.

This edition contains two feature articles. "Sexual pressure and young people's negotiation of consent", by Anastasia Powell, which discusses young women and men's perceptions and experiences of negotiating sexual encounters in contemporary Australia. It is based on research with young people, part of an ongoing study. "Judging rape: Public attitudes and sentencing", by ACSSA's Haley Clark, discusses average sentences for sexual assaults, and connects public attitudes towards sexual assault, and the influence of myths and stereotypes, to sentencing decision-making.

Our usual "News in Brief" section contains overviews of recently released reports and events both here and overseas. We also provide a review of a seminar on specialist courts in Australia.

For our "Service Profile", we look at the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project in Adelaide, South Australia, one of the services in Adelaide that address the sexual assault of prisoners in SA. The profile consists of an interview with David Denborough, one of the Project's instigators.

We also review some recently released books, *Real rape, real pain*, on intimate partner rape by Patricia Easteal and Louise McOrmond-Plummer (which some of you may have already read news about in *ACSSA Aware*) and *The macho paradox*, by Jackson Katz, a book about how men should make a commitment to ending all violence against women. As well as these, we also provide a review of a recently released film *Book of revelation*.

Finally, there are our regular columns on conferences and training as well as literature highlights from recent additions to the ACSSA library collection at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

As always, ACSSA remains keen to receive feedback on how we can better meet the needs of those committed to working against sexual assault, so please continue to provide us with your comments on current or future publications. If this is the first issue of *Aware* you've read, earlier editions can be requested via email or by returning the form on the back page of this issue. Also, all our publications are freely available online at www.aifs.gov.au/acssa.

We hope you find this newsletter informative, helpful, and inspiring.

Dr Zoë Morrison
ACSSA Coordinator



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies
Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault aims to improve access to current information on sexual assault in order to assist policy makers, service providers, and others interested in this area to develop evidence-based strategies to prevent, respond to, and ultimately reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is funded by the Office for Women, Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, through the Women's Safety Agenda. The Centre is hosted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

NEWS IN BRIEF

New report on community attitudes to violence against women

Two steps forward, one step back: Community attitudes to violence against women: Progress and challenges in creating safe, respectful and healthy environments for Victorian women, VicHealth, 2006.

VicHealth recently released "Two steps forward, one step back: Community attitudes to violence against women: Progress and challenges in creating safe and healthy environments for Victorian women". The new report by VicHealth is based on surveys conducted with 2,800 Victorian adults, and qualitative research involving the general community and Indigenous communities.

The release of the report is particularly timely, given the media attention recently focussed on attitudes towards violence against women in certain sections of the Australian community. This report highlights that such attitudes are prevalent in the general community and are not limited to any particular religious or "ethnic" group. The most striking finding is the 38% of respondents (44% of men and 32% of women) agree that "Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex". Also 8% of respondents agreed or were unsure about whether "most women who are raped often ask for it", and 15% agreed that "women often say no to sex when they mean yes". The report found that "the strongest and most consistent predictors of holding violence-supportive attitudes were being male and having weak support for gender equality".

The 2,800 respondents to the survey included 800 participants from Selected Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (SCALD) communities, in particular from the Italian, Greek, Chinese and Vietnamese communities. The survey results suggested that the men in the SCALD sample, as a group, expressed the most violence-supportive attitudes, compared to the 2,000 people in the "main sample". However it should also be noted that most men in this group said they thought violence against women was serious, common and harmful. Some consideration could also be given to the notion of socially-desirable responses, and whether men in the SCALD sample would be less aware of the social desirability of giving responses indicating anti-violence attitudes.

Through comparison with the 1995 Women's Safety Survey, the VicHealth report shows that progress has been made in

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some areas, while considerable work is still required in others. For example, in 1995 15% of respondents agreed that “women who are raped often ask for it”, compared to 6% in the 2006 survey. Similarly, a higher percentage of people in 2006 could recognise a range of controlling or abusive behaviours as constituting violence. Conversely, in 2006 there appears to be greater belief that women and men commit domestic violence equally (from 9% in 1995 to 20% in 2006), despite evidence to the contrary.

The recommendations of the report endorse an understanding of violence against women that links violence to gender inequality, and highlight the need to address the “underlying social norms that contribute to violence given the link between attitudes to gender roles and gender relations and attitudes towards violence against women”. The report points out that attitudes are only one part of the problem, as the link between expressed attitudes and actual behaviour is not clear, nor do changed attitudes directly address problems of material inequality between men and women.

Further information including the summary findings report is available online at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cas

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Anti-discrimination report on women in prison

Women in prison: A report by the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, 2006.

This review investigated the treatment of women in Queensland prisons on the basis of gender, race and disability, primarily in response to submissions received by the Commission from Sisters Inside (an advocacy group for women prisoners). Of particular interest to those in the sexual assault field is Section 7 of the report, relating to the strip-searching of women prisoners. The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADQC) expressed concern at the intrusive and humiliating nature of strip-searching, especially for highly traumatised women who have experienced sexual assault or child sexual abuse. The report makes several recommendations and suggests that some women prisoners could make a case that they have suffered discrimination on the basis of their gender and on the basis of mental health issues.

The full report is available online at: www.adcq.qld.gov.au/pubs/WIP_report.pdf

US violence in prison study

Violence and victimization: Exploring women's histories of survival, by Judy Postmus and Margaret Svenson for the US Department of Justice, 2006.

This US study (consisting of both quantitative and qualitative components) compares the experiences of 157 incarcerated women, 157 women accessing domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, and 109 women from the general community. Experiences of childhood sexual and physical abuse, adult rape and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among the women were investigated for correlation to a range of indicators of mental health and physical wellbeing.

Key findings included:

- women prisoners were more likely to have been raped or otherwise sexually abused (both as a child and an adult) than women living in the community;
- women in prison had experienced more severe injuries as a result of IPV (although significant numbers of women from each group experienced severe injuries); and
- women in prisons had experienced co-occurrence of all “types” of victimisation (adult IPV, adult sexual violence, child physical abuse and child sexual abuse) more often than the other groups.

One of the surprising findings was that women in prison have better rates of mental and physical health than women not in prison. The authors attribute this partly to the fact that women in prison

have easier access to health care, as the state is obliged to provide these services to prisoners, whilst women in the community often cannot access health services.

The full report is available online at: www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/214440.pdf

Preventing violence against women report

Health promotion and preventing violence against women: What does it really mean? by Women's Health West. Paper presented at the conference on Health promotion and prevention of violence against women: What does it really mean?, June 2006.

Women's Health West has published a report of conference proceedings held in June of this year. Launched by the Honourable Joan Kirner, the conference aimed to build the capacity of agencies to plan and implement health promotion actions committed to preventing violence against women, with emphasis on the particular character and needs of communities in Melbourne's West.

The report includes information from the Primary Care Partnerships in Melbourne's West about what is being undertaken to promote the prevention of violence against women and actions that could be undertaken. Overviews about what has been done at a number of levels in the region are provided, including:

- *Research, evaluation and monitoring.* Projects here include the Intimate Partner Violence and its Health Impacts, and the Family Harmony Research Project exploring the experiences of women from Somali and Muslim Eritrean backgrounds;
- *Direct participation programs.* Included here are Health Education Programs for young women, information services, and a Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program;
- *Advocacy.* This involves the prevention of violence against women through health promotion plans, taskforces and working groups which represent issues surrounding violence against women at forums and to local government.
- *Community strengthening.* A range of activities and awareness raising campaigns have been undertaken where different issues and perspectives around violence against women are discussed.

The report also offers recommendations for PCPs, agencies, organisations and PCP Coordinating committees. The recommendations involve the integration of the prevention of violence against women at all levels of the VicHealth Mental Health Promotion Framework. Also provided are summaries of the workshops held at the conference.

The report is available online at: www.whwest.org.au/docs/ConfReport2006.pdf

Publish in ACSSA Aware

As there are so few forums in which those working in the sexual assault field can share information with one another, we are keen to publish articles in this newsletter written by you on the topic of sexual assault. The items would be of particular interest to those working in the sector, and to all those interested in preventing sexual assault. We accept article contributions of up to 5,000 words, and shorter items, such as book and film reviews, news of conferences, and training and research projects, of up to 1,500 words. If you would like to contribute an article or review to *ACSSA Aware*, details of how to do so are on page 38 of this newsletter. You can also access our "contributor's guidelines" from the website (www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/pubsmenu.html) or contact ACSSA directly.

The legal system's response to sexual assault

Do specialist courts offer the best way forward?

HALEY CLARK

On 5 September 2006, the Institute of Criminology, at the University of Sydney presented a seminar, "The legal system's response to sexual assault: Do specialist courts offer the best way forward?" The seminar's objective was to consider reform proposals—particularly specialist courts—that have arisen from sustained criticisms of the legal system's response to sexual assault, and that have been gaining support from some legal practitioners and researchers nationally as well as internationally. The seminar was chaired by the Institute's Deputy Director, Julie Stubbs, and comprised three speakers from the New South Wales Criminal Justice Sexual Offences Task Force: Annie Cossins, Laura Wells and Karen Willis. Robyn Holder, ACT Victims of Crime Co-ordinator, provided commentary. The speakers' different backgrounds, perspectives and approaches to the subject provided a broad and interesting address of the issue of responding to sexual assault.

Currently Australian jurisdictions operate under what is known as the adversarial system, which involves a contest between two parties. In cases of sexual assault, the parties usually comprise the defendant, i.e. accused of the offence, and a Crown Prosecutor, who is representing the State (the victim is usually involved as a key witness only) and most of the evidence is produced through questioning witnesses. The judge plays a relatively passive role, participating infrequently and generally to rule on objections. By contrast, the inquisitorial system aims to provide an inquiry into the case. Evidence is produced upfront and witnesses are questioned almost exclusively by the judge. Inquisitorial systems are commonly used throughout Europe.

Anne Cossins: Considering a less adversarial, more inquisitorial approach to specialist courts

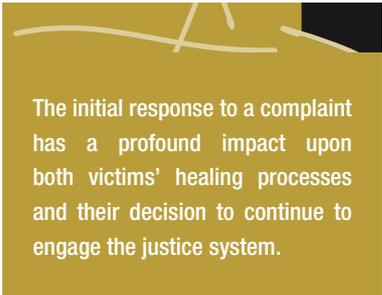
Anne Cossins, University of New South Wales Faculty of Law, addressed the potential to adopt a less adversarial approach (i.e. an inquisitorial model) for sexual assault trials in NSW. Cossins drew on her investigative work into the prosecution of cases of child sexual assault, which she conducted for the National Child Sexual Assault Reform Committee, and added that many of her findings could be applied to sexual assault cases more broadly. Cossins proposed that in order to counteract low rates of reporting, high levels of attrition, low conviction rates, long delays, trauma suffered by victims at the hands of the system and reportedly high rates of recidivism among offenders, a package of reforms is necessary, in which specialist sexual offence courts would be central. Cossins questioned what the aims of prosecuting sexual offences actually are, and referred to the notion of public interest both in increasing conviction rates and reducing incidents.

In order to counteract low rates of reporting, high levels of attrition, low conviction rates, long delays, trauma suffered by victims at the hands of the system and reportedly high rates of recidivism among offenders, a package of reforms is necessary, of which specialist sexual offence courts would be central.

Cossins highlighted research that indicates that although witness protection schemes have gone some way in reducing the level of trauma experienced by complainant-witnesses, they have not impacted upon the trial process and outcomes. If an increase in prosecution and conviction rates is a desired aim of reform, then, Cossins argues, serious thought needs to be given to ways of overcoming evidentiary burdens that feature in cases of sexual assault (such as a lack of witnesses and injuries). One possibility of meeting this would be through the use of specialist courts based on the inquisitorial system. In such a system all evidence—including hearsay, coincidence and tendency—is initially considered. Another feature of such a system is that the court proceedings are controlled by the judge rather than the parties, which means that the focus of the trial shifts from a contest between the accused and the State, to an inquiry into the guilt or innocence of the offender. The process removes the centrality of the credibility of the victim’s evidence and the proof of a criminal charge. The less adversarial approach also offers the capacity for jury-free or judge-only trials. Cossins argues that the less adversarial approach would be particularly appropriate for cases involving vulnerable complainants, such as Indigenous children or people who have cognitive impairments.

Cossins also dealt with the presumption that a specialist, inquisitorial system would necessarily undermine the right to a fair trial, proposing that current legislation poses no barriers for state courts to use a less adversarial system. Rather, greater acknowledgement could be given to community interests in determining what is actually meant of the notion of “fairness” as it applies to the principle of a fair trial.

Karen Willis: Considering victim/survivors in specialisation



The initial response to a complaint has a profound impact upon both victims' healing processes and their decision to continue to engage the justice system.

Karen Willis, Manager of the NSW Rape Crisis Centre, drew on her research into the management of sexual assault complaints in South Africa, Canada and the US to present the potential benefits of specialisation for victims in NSW. Willis advocated the need for specialised, coordinated response units—or “one stop shops”—that prioritise victims’ needs for recovery and healing. Willis reinforced the need to establish well-resourced, proactive measures throughout the entire system that are governed by established principles of best practice. Crucial elements of best practice were nominated to include: a commitment to justice

and respectful treatment of victims/complainants, provision of regular information to victims, victim involvement in decision-making, specialist training and coordinated responses for all sectors involved, service provider consistency and case-management, minimised time delays and quality assurance at all levels.

Willis identified two areas as requiring significant improvement. These were the initial response to a complaint and the role of expert prosecution. In NSW, victim/survivors enter the criminal justice system through three avenues: directly through the police sexual assault units, at a hospital or community health centre, or via the NSW Rape Crisis Centre. According to Willis, the initial response to a complaint has a profound impact upon both victims’ healing processes and their decision to continue to engage the justice system. Thus, it is critical to “get it right” from the start. Willis argued that getting it right could be better achieved by offering “one stop” units at local major hospitals or community health centres, as such units will create a safe, familiar and informative environment where victim/survivors feel comfortable and are known.

Willis also spoke of the gross miscarriage of justice for victim/survivors that continues to occur in NSW courts. In South Africa, Willis observed first-hand the benefits of specialisation, including a greater involvement of prosecution. Willis said the South African model permits the prosecutor to spend weeks to months getting familiar with the complainant, resulting in both a stronger case and greater satisfaction for victims. Willis advocated for a similar model to be adopted in Australian jurisdictions. She concluded by reinforcing that for specialisation to be effective, courts need to reflect contemporary understandings of sexual assault, to dispel myths and to shift from starting from the presumption that all allegations are untrue.

Laura Wells: Considering legal professionals in specialist courts

Laura Wells, Director of the Criminal Law Review Division, Attorney General's Department of NSW, spoke of her own experience as a Crown Prosecutor and possible implications that specialisation may have on legal professionals and the court process. Wells held a different opinion of specialisation to the other speakers, favouring the maintenance of mainstream criminal justice over specialisation. Specialisation, Wells emphasised, is a relatively new concept within Australian jurisdictions. Given this, Wells stressed that precaution needs to be taken when diverting from traditional criminal justice practices, questioning how unintentional outcomes would be dealt with. Specifically, Wells highlighted that processing sexual assault cases has a unique impact upon legal professionals, and expressed concerns about the level of consideration that would be afforded to ensuring the wellbeing of the legal professionals involved. Wells emphasised that legal professionals' health is critical to the smooth running of courts, and feared that changes may not properly account for the position of legal professionals and therefore face the potential of staff burnout, high turnover rates and loss of objectivity. Wells also reiterated that specialist courts located outside of current courts need to be protected from the potential to marginalise the crime of sexual assault or detract from the seriousness of the offence.

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Robyn Holder: Commentary and the consideration of victim inclusion

The seminar was closed by commentary given by Robyn Holder who spoke briefly about the concept of participatory justice, particularly as it relates to victim inclusion and participation in justice processes, greater consideration being forwarded to victims' rights and needs, and the potential for a range of forums to be used to meet these. Holder also advocated the need to further develop the role of the prosecution and the need to stop defaulting the rights to a fair trial to the rights of the accused; that public interest, including victims", ought to be better accounted for in the criminal justice system.

Concluding remark

Overall, the seminar provided insight into issues surrounding specialisation and the processing of sexual assault cases and the treatment of victim/survivors within the criminal justice system. Speakers emphasised, that such a direction would need to come with certain precautions. In particular, consideration needs to be given to the provision of adequate resources, research, clear policy aims and strategies, and a commitment to best practice at every level.

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Sexual pressure and young people's negotiation of consent

ANASTASIA POWELL, MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY

We are living in what has been described as the “age of raunch” or “generation sex” (Souter, 2006)—the times of an unprecedented sexualised culture following the so-called sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s. The rules for negotiating a sexual relationship have changed and are still changing (Gold & Villari, 2000). Young people are negotiating their intimate relationships in an increasingly uncertain environment, where the expectations of such relationships are shifting from other generations. This is accompanied by ongoing legal debate around consent as the crucial mechanism distinguishing between sex that is freely agreed to and sexual assault. The legal definition of consent, and therefore its formal rules, continues to be the subject of reform in Victoria and elsewhere (Attorney-General's Department of New South Wales, 2005; Victorian Law Reform Commission [VLRC], 2004).

This paper explores young women and men's perceptions and experiences of negotiating sexual encounters in contemporary Victoria, Australia. The paper focuses particularly on the pressures and coercion which may not necessarily constitute non-consent under the criminal law, but which nonetheless call into question the level of “free agreement” in some young people's intimate relationships. Drawing on the preliminary research findings of an ongoing doctoral study, this article discusses the experiences of young people in negotiating consent in light of the current research literature calling for the promotion of ethical negotiation of sexual consent in sexual assault prevention.

Young people and sexual relationships

Australian research suggests that young people are first engaging in sexual intercourse at an earlier age, with the average age of intercourse at sixteen years of age compared to nineteen years of age twenty years ago.

Australian research suggests that young people are first engaging in sexual intercourse at an earlier age, with the average age of intercourse at sixteen years of age compared to nineteen years of age twenty years ago (Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society [ARCSHS], 2003). The nature of their intimate relationships is also changing, with most people marrying later. Young people are also more likely today to have several sexual partners prior to marrying, than in previous decades (ARCSHS, 2003). Researchers have argued that our popular culture is replete with images of women actively desiring, initiating, and negotiating sex on their own terms (Jackson & Cram, 2003). It is a time of supposed “girl

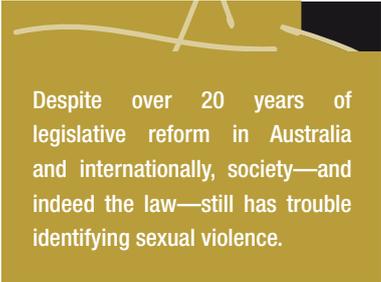
power”, when it is perceived that young women are saying “we have a right to sexual pleasure”, and they're going out and getting it (Flood, 2005–2006).

At the same time as this apparent “sexual freedom”, however, rates of sexual assault continue to be of concern. Young women aged 16 to 25 are the most likely to experience sexual assault (Victoria Police, 2005). According to one victimisation survey, Australian data suggest that 34 per cent of women have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime, with one in ten young women aged 18 to 24 experiencing sexual violence in the last twelve months (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). Unlike several decades ago, we now know that women are most likely to experience sexual assault at the hands of a known man, such as a boyfriend, friend or acquaintance, rather than at the hands of a stranger (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996). Sexual assault data for younger teenage women are difficult to come by, yet some clues to youth experiences of sexual coercion can be gained from retrospective victimisation surveys. One of these surveys, the Australian Study of Health and Relationships, indicated

that 21 per cent of women and five per cent of men reported ever having been forced or frightened into doing something sexual (ARCSHS, 2003). Of this group of young women, 21 per cent were between the ages of 13 and 16 and 32 per cent were between 17 and 21. In other national survey research, 14 per cent of young women (aged 12 to 20) reported a boyfriend having attempted to force them to have sex, while a further six per cent reporting experiencing physically forced sex (National Crime Prevention, 2001). These statistics of the prevalence of physically coerced sex however are one aspect of a larger issue relating to what “free agreement” means, how it is negotiated and how gendered expectations about sexuality inform that negotiation. As the following discussion makes clear, this uncertainty about what free agreement is has implications for sexual assault prevention.

Sexual “pressure” and consent

Despite over 20 years of legislative reform in Australia and internationally, society—and indeed the law—still has trouble identifying sexual violence (Gold & Villari, 2000). This is reflected in the low reporting, prosecution and conviction rates for sexual assault across all Australian states and territories (Heath, 2005; Lievore, 2003, 2004). Data compiled by the Victorian Law Reform Commission indicates that in Victoria in the years 1997–1998 and 1998–1999, of those rapes that were reported to police less than one in six proceeded to prosecution (VLRC, 2004, p. 80). Furthermore, of those rape cases that did proceed to prosecution, 76 per cent did not result in a conviction for rape (VLRC, 2004, p. 80). This process of attrition for cases of rape and sexual assault is well documented in the national and international literature and has been described as a virtual decriminalisation of sexual violence (Lees, 1996, p. 99), a suggestion that is “all the more disturbing when we remember that at least 85 per cent of sexual offences are never reported to police” (Heath, 2005, p. 5).



Despite over 20 years of legislative reform in Australia and internationally, society—and indeed the law—still has trouble identifying sexual violence.

The law in Victoria (where the study is situated) clearly states that “consent” to a sexual act means “free agreement”. The *Crimes Act 1958* goes on to outline a number of conditions under which a person does *not* freely agree, including where there is force, fear of force, or while the person is asleep or unconscious (*Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.), S. 36). Especially relevant here is section 37 which outlines judicial directions for the jury when considering consent. The section was last amended in 1997 to reflect a more “communicative” model of consent (Cowling, 1998; Pineau, 1996). This means that consent is not to be assumed by the *absence* of refusal or struggle, but through the *presence* of “active” verbal or physical indication. The relevant section is quoted here:

- S.37.1 (a) the fact that a person did not say or do anything to indicate free agreement to a sexual act is normally enough to show that the act took place without that person’s free agreement;**
- (b) a person is not to be regarded as having freely agreed to a sexual act just because—**
- (i) she or he did not protest or physically resist; or**
 - (ii) she or he did not sustain physical injury; or**
 - (iii) on that or an earlier occasion, she or he freely agreed to engage in another sexual act (whether or not of the same type) with that person, or a sexual act with another person. (*Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.))**

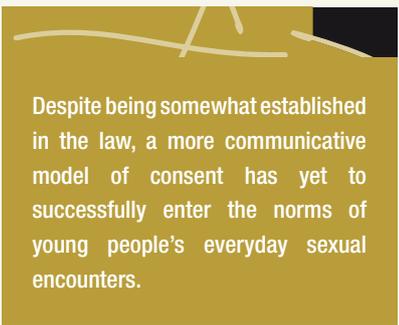
This communicative or “active” model of consent differs quite significantly from a more passive model, where consent is seen to be implied by compliance or non-resistance. The ideal model of “communicative sexuality” is one where not only is there initial active consent, but *continuing* verbal expression of consent during the sexual encounter (Pineau, 1996). This means that under a truly communicative model of consent, if a defence to rape of “I thought she/he was consenting” is to be upheld, the accused would be expected to have communicated continually with their partner to ascertain consent, and to have received continual confirmation.

However, this communicative model of consent has not gone uncriticised, particularly in regard to how it would work in practice. For example, how relevant is such a model in established or long term

sexual relationships where two partners' indication of consent might be highly nuanced, built upon a shared history of negotiating previous encounters (Cowling, 1998)? More pertinently, the idea of a continually communicative model has also been criticised for being unrealistic even in first-time sexual encounters. Cowling (1998, p. 103), for example, argues that most new couples still negotiate sex based on a more traditional model of male active initiation and female passive acceptance, often quite ambiguously. In other words, both first-time sexual encounters and those in an established relationship tend to rely on the interpretation of subtle signs and cues. These signs are read according to particular gendered expectations of "normal" male and female sexual behaviours, such that "normal boys but not girls have 'raging hormones'—and that normal girls but not boys long for emotional connection and relationships" (Tolman, 2002, p. 5). These expectations can be highly problematic. Ideas of what is to be "expected" in intimate relationships create a backdrop or context where sexual coercion is normalised, and can itself become an expected, naturalised part of intimate relationships.

The complex relationship between these gendered expectations and sexual coercion in intimate relationships is perhaps best represented in feminist researcher Liz Kelly's (1987) influential work. Kelly argued that rather than discrete categories of violence and non-violence, women's experience exists along a continuum from "choice to pressure to coercion to force" (p. 54). While "force" and "coercion" in the context of this continuum might refer to sexual violence as it is defined in the law, sexual "pressure" is less easily defined. Few studies have investigated "pressure" and its role in the sexual violence continuum. As it becomes clear below, the pressure of gendered expectations and the language of "sexual pressure" employed by participants to talk about them, highlights the limitations of communicative models of consent.

Young people's experiences of sexual pressure and coercion



Despite being somewhat established in the law, a more communicative model of consent has yet to successfully enter the norms of young people's everyday sexual encounters.

Unfortunately, despite being somewhat established in the law, a more communicative model of consent has yet to successfully enter the norms of young people's everyday sexual encounters. There remain a number of pressures on both young women and men that negatively impact their negotiation of sexual consent, and that may be carried through to adulthood. Pressure to have unwanted sex is still an important concern, particularly for young women. A recent international study has found that as many as 41 per cent of teenage women have experienced unwanted sex, most of these young women reported compliance due to a fear that their partner would become angry if sex was denied (Blythe, Fortenberry, Temkit, Tu, & Orr, 2006, p. 593).

In this study, in focus groups and individual interviews, young people (aged 14 to 24 years) volunteered their perceptions and experiences of intimate relationships. The study is still in progress. So far participants have been recruited from Victorian metropolitan secondary schools and university campuses, though further interviews are underway with rural youth and those not engaged in higher education.

Sexual coercion

The first thing raised consistently by young women when asked about "pressures" in relationships, was sex.

Sara: Pressuring you to have sex. (18 years)

Jill: Just basically the whole expectation of sex. (19 years)

Joanne: It depends on the girl though because there are so many girls who succumb to the whole sexual pressure. Yeah, but it is a really big problem for a lot of girls, it's awful. And that's how the whole regret thing happens anyway. (17 years)

Interviewer: So what kind of situations would girls be in where you think they'd regret that afterwards?

Cassandra: Drunk or with someone that they usually wouldn't. Like a random person that you might have kissed and later they take you away. It gets like that, with a lot of girls they go away and feel so uncomfortable and they just want to run. But then it's like "oh she led me on". So I mean, what can you do? (16 years)

While the excerpt above describes a situation that is defined, certainly according to the Victorian statute, as sexual assault, the young women framed it in terms only of "regret"; a situation they wish they could change. In the discussion, Cassandra appears to focus primarily on young women's role in the situation rather than questioning the role of the other person. Indeed in Sally's account of her experience below, she too seems to hold herself somewhat accountable.

Sally: I lost my virginity to him which I kind of wish I could forget but anyway, that wasn't good, that situation. But for me it, I started dating this guy and he knew I hadn't had sex before and I wanted to wait and I wanted to, you know I wanted it to be special and everything. And in the end he got me very, very drunk. I can hardly remember it and I didn't feel like—like it obviously was kind of partially consensual but I felt—I don't know whether you'd classify it as rape or anything but I was, I can only just remember before and then remember seeing him on top of me and then it was over. (20 years)

Similarly below, while Rachel describes sexual pressure as something that a young man puts onto a young woman, she also appears to somewhat justify the pressure, referring to men's sexual "needs".

Rachel: Sex is always going to be something that's pressure, it's just they expect you to have sex after a while and depending on the guy and what pressure he's putting on the girl, because everyone has their sexual needs. (18 years)

However, young women did not only describe these overt forms of sexual pressure or coercion, but also a pressure to do with how they perceived their role in a relationship. As will be seen, it is these subtle and pervasive pressures about what can be expected of young men and women in intimate relationships that is a key challenge in developing sexual education and sexual assault prevention programs.

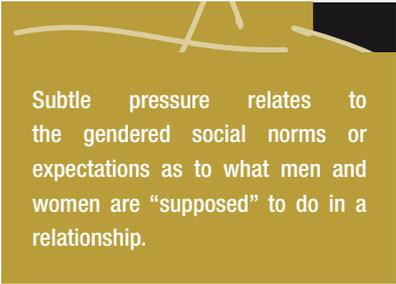
Sexual "pressure" and coercion

Subtle pressure relates to the gendered social norms or expectations as to what men and women are "supposed" to do in a relationship (Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999). In this way, young women may "choose" to participate in unwanted sex.

Jill: You're constantly pleasing the other person, or, aiming to please the other person. (19 years)

Rebekah: Yeah, cos' like when you're in love and everything, you're supposed to see the other person's happiness before your own, I mean, whatever it is. (20 years)

Melanie: It might not be that they're pressuring you, it might just be like you love them so much that you just want to do anything for them and make them happy. (18 years)



Subtle pressure relates to the gendered social norms or expectations as to what men and women are "supposed" to do in a relationship.

Indeed, this is further borne out in research which suggests that ideals surrounding love, romance and sex as well as gender-role expectations of sexual encounters, can influence the occurrence of unwanted or "compliant" sexual experiences (Blythe et al., 2006; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1998; Tolman, 2002). Yet, these are not pressures young women feel boyfriends are necessarily responsible for, or even aware of.

Angela: You've got to be the "good" girlfriend. (19 years)

Jill: Yeah, exactly...maybe they don't put the pressure on you to be the good girlfriend, maybe that's just something that you do, because you think that's what you should do. (19 years)

Ani: You feel like they won't love you if you don't do the things that they want. (20 years)

Cassie: And maybe they don't even consciously pick up on that, but because you're so worried about pleasing them, like, it is a form of pressure. (19 years)

In the excerpts above, young women describe pressures that appear consistent with a traditional understanding of femininity; a role of nurturing and putting their boyfriends' needs before their own. Indeed, this is supported by international research suggesting that "the cultural values and social practices of heterosexuality today still divert much of young women's agency, energy and identity towards meeting men's 'needs'" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 146). This is further illustrated in Rebekah's comment below:

Rebekah: yeah, like if you don't succeed in this relationship, then it's like you're not a worthwhile person. (20 years)

These pressures limit young women's ability to actively negotiate their intimate relationships (Hillier, Harrison, & Bowditch, 1999) on the basis of their own needs and desires (Tolman, 2002).

However, these gendered expectations are not necessarily always beneficial for men either, similarly limiting men's opportunity to express alternative masculinities (Allen, 2005; Hillier et al., 1999). The following excerpts describe some of the pressures young men experience when it comes to sex and relationships.

Dan: I know that just the pressures, the external pressures I guess, you know expectations to be cool. You've got to be doing that, you've got to be treating girls badly and you know kissing them or whatever and just forgetting them, scoring I guess. If you're a young guy, that's what you think other people are going to expect from you. (20 years)

Nath: There's pressure to conform to the way the other person in the relationship expects you to behave. (19 years)

Justin: yeah, I think there's also the pressure that you put on yourself, because you feel you should be behaving a certain way. (20 years)

Joel: It's just taking the initiative, we've just got to be the one to find the spark, and they're the person that just sits back and enjoys it, I mean, it's like there's an unwritten rule that the guy's meant to show her a good time, if you know what I mean. (18 years)

Adrian: There's always that automatic sexual assumption. (18 years)

Ricky: Yeah, but I'd say that society forces that upon us, it's the automatic assumption if we go to a bar and want to approach a female, even if we're just doing it out of just wanting to get to know her, there's the automatic assumption that people put on us these days that we're doing it out of sexual needs. (20 years)

International research suggest[s] that "the cultural values and social practices of heterosexuality today still divert much of young women's agency, energy and identity towards meeting men's "needs".

Here, young men describe a set of social norms that emphasise expectations that men's sexuality is active, desiring, even aggressive; while women's sexuality is situated as passive, as just "sitting back" and allowing things to happen. This serves to position young men in such a way that they are able to exert pressure, whether they actually intend to or not. Contrary to the stereotypes of men's "sexual needs" or biological "urges", these young men are able to reflect upon this gendered positioning, as Ricky's comments above illustrate. Inherent in these subtle everyday pressures, there is a real danger of the gendered expectations on young women and young men, leading to coerced and unwanted sexual experiences.

While these excerpts are based on interviews and focus groups conducted thus far with Melbourne youth, similar gendered expectations have also been linked to young women's experiences of sexual violence in rural New South Wales (Rawsthorne, 2000, 2002), as well as internationally (Allen, 2005; Holland et al., 1998; Tolman, 2002). Together these studies indicate that there is something about the everyday negotiations of sexual encounters that lends itself to pressured/unwanted sex experienced particularly by young women, and that indeed sexual violence is still fairly hidden and normalised

in everyday relationships (Carmody & Carrington, 2000). Furthermore, these gendered negotiations have very real implications for how young women and men negotiate consent in a sexual encounter; sexual coercion is not always an overt deliberate force from a “bad guy” that young women are able to avoid or “run” from. Instead, sexual coercion can be a general backdrop or potential within “normal” relationships.

Implications for sexuality education and sexual assault prevention

Adolescence can present a window of opportunity for sexuality education and interventions to challenge these traditional gendered expectations that can lead to coerced and unwanted sex, as it constitutes a crucial phase of development during which gender-role socialisation is acted out and reinforced (Lacasse, Purdy, & Mendelson, 2003). However, Allen (2005) observes that many young people report formal sexuality education programs as irrelevant to their life experience, an observation that is borne out in much other research into sexuality education (Measor, Tiffin, & Miller, 2000; Family Planning Victoria [FPV], Royal Women’s Hospital, & Centre for Adolescent Health, 2005). Indeed, sexuality education is often much more versed in providing young people with information about their reproductive health, than it is in helping young people to manage the often complex social aspect to consensual sexual relationships.



Many young people report formal sexuality education programmes as irrelevant to their life experience, an observation that is borne out in much other research into sexuality education.

Sex education and negotiating consent

In describing their experiences and perceptions of the sexuality education they have received during secondary school, young people spoke of various limitations.

Tom: Sex ed is more about STDs and stuff not so much about relationships. In schools they’re more deterring you from having sex, rather than telling you “if you’re going to do it, do it safely”. It’s still kind of, “don’t do it”. (14 years)

Joanne: It’s like “have a respectful relationship”, that’s the kind that you want them to base it on. But ours is more like, “use a condom”. (17 years)

Cassandra: We didn’t actually do anything about what constitutes sexual assault, really what you can do about it, like what you can do to prevent this attention, like looking out for friends or that kind of thing. I think it’s really important. (16 years)

As the comments of Cassandra above suggest, young people are able to articulate the kinds of information that they value and suggest ways to make sexuality education more relevant and engaging.

Dan: Probably just a bit more education for the guys, that if the girls say no just leave it at that... I just remember being 16 and all the guys just thought every girl was up for it. Stupid decisions are made and stuff starts happening, sexual stuff, just cause you’re after something, whereas if we were taught that girls didn’t necessarily want it—that you needed to check, you needed to actually find out- it would stop that from happening. (20 years)

Kelly: I’d like more of the real life personal experience type things. I think things like people like us, telling you of their experiences that could actually happen to you. (15 years)

Susie: I think just generally more talking about the social stuff rather than the biological stuff because I knew all that, I knew how everything worked but it was just the emotional and the social bit I didn’t know how to deal with. (19 years)

These young people’s experiences of sexuality education in Victorian schools is further borne out in a recent report finding that the quality of sexuality education is inconsistent, with most schools covering the biology of sexual health and reproduction without focusing also on broader social aspects

including the negotiation of consent (FPV et al., 2005). As Williams and Davidson (2004, p. 97) put it, “the ‘nuts and bolts’ of sex are not enough to equip the young person with the skills necessary to steer their way safely through an increasingly sexualized society”.

The gendered social norms influencing sexual encounters must also be addressed if serious gains in preventing unwanted and pressured sexual experiences are to be made. Community and school education campaigns have been largely successful in discouraging behaviours amongst youth such as smoking, and promoting behaviours such as condom use (Smith, Aguis, Dyson, Mitchell, & Pitts, 2002). Nevertheless, despite the innovation of a few individual schools, the same emphasis has yet to be systematically placed on promoting responsible and communicative negotiation of consent.

Information and discussion around the negotiation of sexual consent is not only highly valued by both young men and women, but is an important element in the prevention of sexual violence and indeed the promotion of other safe sex behaviours. Yet, as the comments from young people about sex education indicate, youth sexuality still makes our society uncomfortable. Hillier, Harrison, and Warr (1998) and Hillier, Harrison, and Bowditch (1999) discuss the way that adolescent sexuality has long been considered problematic, and even feared, by the adult community. This fear has been complicated by recent media debates about the “danger” of sexualising young girls and teenage women in popular culture and advertising (Delaney, 2006; Rush, 2006; Souter, 2006), debates which seem to both protect and blame young women for permissive sexual behaviour. Similar to sexual violence prevention

Information and discussion around the negotiation of sexual consent is not only highly valued by both young men and women, but is an important element in the prevention of sexual violence and indeed the promotion of other safe sex behaviours.

which instructs teenage women to “just say no”, this debate focuses its attention on the appearance and behaviour of girls and young women as responsible for attracting the “wrong” attention—albeit at the behest of advertising companies and a sexualised culture. While the increasing sexual objectification of anyone is justifiably cause for community concern, it is problematic to make it a sole cause of the sexual violence that girls and women experience. Values about sexual relationships may be changing, and the media has amplified sexualised imagery of women but there is nothing terribly new in the underlying causes and strategies of pressured and coerced sex, nor in the attitudes of a society that holds girls and women partly responsible for their victimisation.

Preventing sexual violence through education

In contrast to these responses, recent Australian research has called for sexual violence prevention which does not place “risk management” into the hands of young women (Carmody, 2003, 2005). This is especially important; as young people’s perceptions and experiences indicate, young women are not always in a position to simply manage the risk. Sexual coercion is not always an identifiable “risky” situation with an identifiable “aggressive” or “coercive” partner—it can occur in more subtle and complex ways and in everyday sexual encounters. The subtle and widespread nature of sexual pressure and coercion is further supported by international research (Holland et al., 1998; Tolman, 2002). Furthermore, placing the responsibility on young women to manage their sexual safety by teaching them risk avoidance and “refusal skills”, sends both young women and the community at large the wrong message. Rather than promoting a more communicative model of sexual consent for both young women and young men, it reinforces those traditional gendered norms which situate men’s sexuality as irrepressible and “out of control” while positioning women as “gatekeepers” and responsible for managing men’s sexual behaviour.

Indeed New Zealand researcher Louisa Allen (2005) has suggested the need for sexuality education which disrupts these traditional expectations of sexual relationships, and that introduces new norms based on equality, mutuality and consent. In Australia, Moira Carmody is undertaking research that explores the experiences of women and men engaging in consensual and ethical sexual relations as a basis for rape prevention policy and practice (Carmody, 2003). Carmody (2005, p. 478) argues that through a “focus on promoting and developing ethical non-violent relating there may be a greater possibility of preventing sexual violence within intimate relationships”.

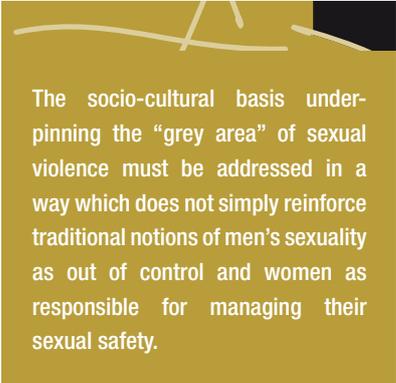
There is great scope for sexuality education and rape prevention that challenges dominant understandings of both masculinity and femininity. In particular, as the reflections of the young men observed, sexuality education needs to engage young men in ways that tackle those gendered norms that place them at particular risk of being responsible for sexual coercion, and to “create new meanings and ways of being men” (Denborough, 1996, p. 92). By providing alternative understandings of masculinity, we can promote norms that prioritise consensual sex (Flood, 2005–2006) and that allow young men to reflect about what that means in everyday sexual encounters.

Some promising programs and curriculum materials continue to be developed in the community, and have been the topic of a previous Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) paper (ACSSA, 2005). Peer education programs are being increasingly employed to engage young people in discussions around the sensitive issues of love and sexual relationships, perhaps in part due to the powerful influence of peer norms. Indeed, during focus group discussions with young people, many reported not taking the sexual relationship advice or information from an adult teacher seriously, and suggested that discussions with peers, or other young people with similar experiences, are often more relevant and useful (Powell, 2005). These findings replicate those of previous research (Allen, 2005; Measor et al., 2000; Smith & Welchans, 2000), and would tend to further support the use of peer programs in sexuality education that provide discussion of real-life scenarios and the questioning of social norms by peer educators to whom young people can relate.

The sociocultural basis underpinning the “grey area” of sexual violence must be addressed in a way which does not simply reinforce traditional notions of men’s sexuality as out of control and women as responsible for managing their sexual safety. Alarming, while nearly all the young people participating in this study describe receiving sexual health information in schools, very few received any education about the law regarding sexual consent and almost none had received information about or discussed what that meant in practice. Sexuality education that explores the meaning of sexual consent in a way that is relevant to young people’s lived experiences of sexual encounters is crucial in the prevention of pressured and coerced sex. We must encourage and support the capacity of both young women and particularly young men, to be reflective about their role and actions in sexual encounters, and to negotiate them on principles of mutuality and consent.

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The socio-cultural basis underpinning the “grey area” of sexual violence must be addressed in a way which does not simply reinforce traditional notions of men’s sexuality as out of control and women as responsible for managing their sexual safety.

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Judging rape: Public attitudes and sentencing

HALEY CLARK

This article discusses public attitudes towards sexual assault, sentencing, perceptions of seriousness and the influence of myths and stereotypes. Community attitudes towards offence seriousness and sentencing impact on sentencing practices in various ways: directly, because judges themselves are members of the community, and indirectly, because community attitudes influence and shape policy, and because they may play a role in jurors' decisions to convict (La Free, 1989), the decision to take a case to trial (Buddie & Miller, 2001), police decisions to charge and investigate a case (Frazier & Haney, 1996), attrition (Harris & Grace 1999; Kingsnorth, MacIntosh, & Wentworth 1999; Lievore, 2005; Stanko 1982), interpersonal reactions towards victims and offenders, decisions to report, and victims' own interpretations of an offence (Burt, 1980, 1991). Public concerns surrounding perceived leniency of sentences for sexual offenders are presented in this article together with an overview of recent developments in sentencing policy around Australia and statistics on current sentencing practice. Attitudes towards sexual assault and the role that rape myths play in judgments of offence seriousness and sentencing are then considered. Finally, a small study that I conducted in 2002 (Clark, 2002) which examined the extent to which rape myths may influence evaluations of rape seriousness and sentencing is presented.

Sentencing reform

In recent years, public concern over the sentencing outcomes for several high-profile sexual assault cases (such the 2000–2001 gang rapes in Bankstown and other south-western suburbs of Sydney) has been expressed in the media. Within popular media discourse, this has been represented as a need to “get tough” on rape (see, for example, Carr, 2001; “Our community”, 2001; “PM backs rape sentence”, 2001). The extent to which tougher sentencing legislation alone adequately addresses the problem is, however, questionable. In conjunction with debate around enforcing tougher sentencing strategies, it is necessary to consider the attitudes that shape conventional understandings of what constitutes “seriousness” in sexual offences.

Within the media there has been widespread criticism directed at judges for handing down sentences regarded as too lenient and for their apparent failure to take sexual assault seriously. For example, in early 2006, Victoria's *Herald Sun* reported findings that 91% of survey respondents thought that criminals are let off lightly and 92% believed that judges did not represent the community in their decisions (cited in Freiberg, 2006). Importantly, it should be highlighted that although some public criticisms of sentencing are well founded, others reflect a misunderstanding of what the criminal justice system can or ought to do (Freiberg, 2006, p.8). To bridge the discrepancy between low levels of faith in the judiciary and confusion around sentencing practice, some states have taken positive steps by setting up independent advisory councils and supervisory bodies, for example the Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria and the NSW Sentencing Council and the Judicial Commission of NSW.

Nonetheless, the apparent community discontent with sentencing practices has been the impetus for the introduction of a range of sentencing reform proposals and legislative changes for throughout Australia. Among these are: provisions for indefinite or continued detainment of “serious” sexual offenders considered an ongoing risk to the community at the completion of their sentence in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia (and discussion of introducing a similar policy in Victoria); the ability to hand down disproportionately long sentences for offenders classified as “serious sexual offenders” in Victoria; the provision in NSW for “sexual assault in company” following

a series of high profile gang rapes; the introduction of and continued debate around statutory minimum sentences and standard non-parole periods; automatic registration of offenders convicted of some classes of sexual offences; the introduction of guideline judgements; an inquiry into whether to endorse judicial-jury consultations for sentencing in NSW; and consideration that is being given to the abolition of suspended sentences altogether (see Freiberg, 2005, for a discussion of Australian sentencing practices).

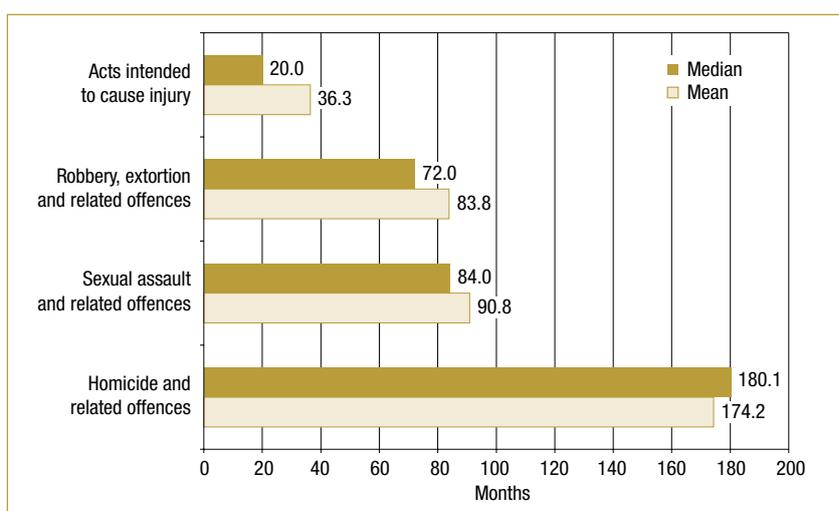
Sentencing practices for sexual assault: What are they?

Before entering into a discussion on the problems with sentencing practices, it is helpful to consider the current situation. Generally, when considering other “serious” offences (such as robbery, homicide and intentionally causing injury), sentences for sexual offences appear comparable both in terms of the statutory maximum and average length handed down to convicted offenders.

Although sentencing legislation and practices vary across states, in comparison to other “serious” offences, the statutory maximum sentence for rape is among the longest. In Victoria, for example, the statutory maximum sentence for rape is 25 years. This is less than that of murder and drug trafficking (for which an offender may receive life imprisonment), is equivalent to aggravated robbery, and is higher than the maximum sentence for all other violent offences, such as intentionally causing serious injury and manslaughter (both hold statutory maximums of 20 years) (*Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic.)).

However, there is considerable discrepancy between statutory maximums and actual sentences handed down. Thus, statutory maximums do not reveal much about actual sentencing practices. Average sentencing lengths offer a more accurate picture of sentencing practices. Average aggregate sentencing lengths for the year 2005 are displayed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Aggregate sentence length (months) for prisoners sentenced in Australia 2006 by most serious offence



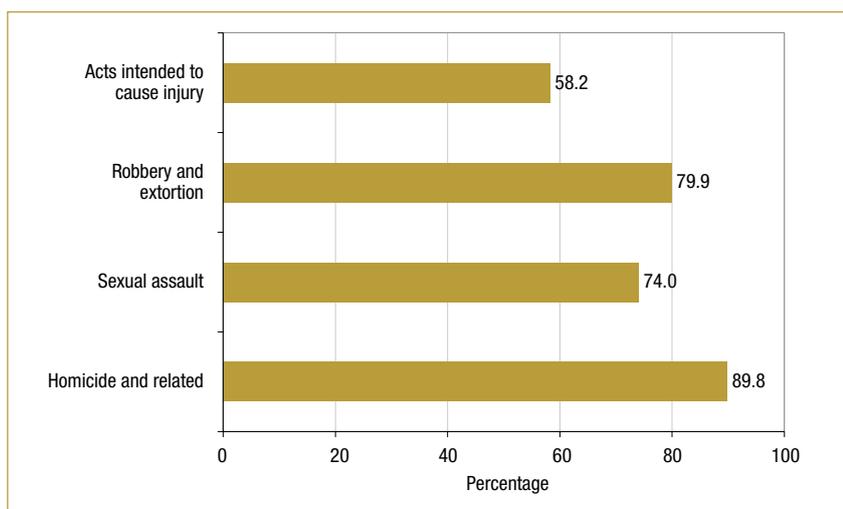
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] (2006)

With an average of 7.6 years (90.8 months), sentences for sexual offences (as the primary offence) are among the longest, positioned below homicide and related at 14.5 years (174.2 months), and just above robbery and extortion at 7.0 years (83.8 months) and acts intended to cause injury at 3.0 years (36.3 months).

Statistics also indicate that the majority of sexual assault defendants proven guilty receive custodial sentences. See Figure 2 on page 19.

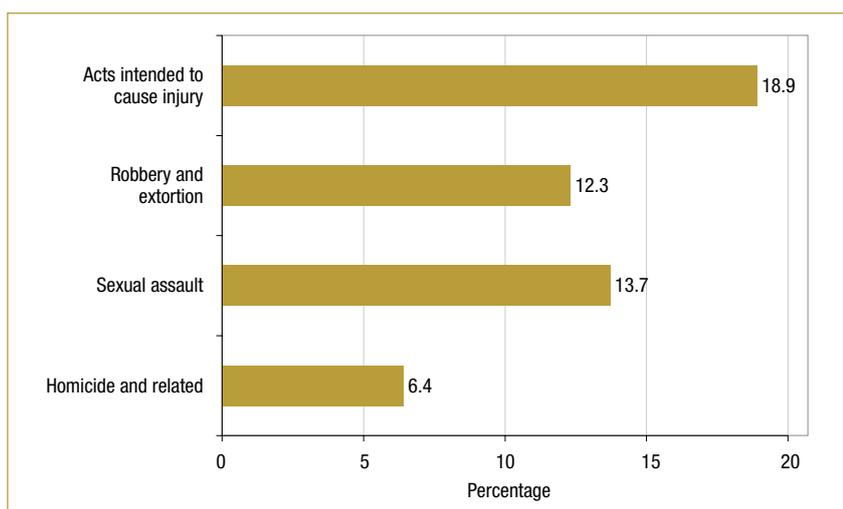
“A suspended sentence is a prison term which is suspended subject to the condition of good behaviour (such as not to commit another offence) for a set period” (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2007). Suspended sentences are not included in Figure 2, although notably do fall under the category of “custodial sentence” in most Australian jurisdictions. Figure 3 shows the proportion of sexual assault defendants found guilty in Australian higher courts that received suspended sentences.

Figure 2: Proportion of higher court defendants proven guilty in Australia 2004–2005 who received a custodial sentence (excludes suspended sentences)



Source: ABS (2006)

Figure 3: Proportion of higher court defendants proven guilty in Australia 2004–2005 who received a suspended sentence



Source: ABS (2006)

The proportion of suspended sentences handed down to defendants proven guilty of sexual offences—and offences in general—varies considerably across jurisdictions. South Australia, for example, has reportedly higher rates of suspended sentences; 30% of sexual assault offenders proven guilty received suspended sentences in the period 2004–2005, but this higher rate of suspended sentences also extended to other categories of crimes. The differences across states and territories may be attributable to a combination of factors such as differing definitions of the crimes, sentencing options available, different sentencing practices, legislative differences and political climates.

Recently, some jurisdictions have been considering the abolition of suspended sentences altogether. One problem with suspended sentences lies in the disjuncture between judicial and community perceptions of whether it is a harsh sanction. Judges may see it as harsh as a conviction because it is permanently recorded against the offender’s name and because the consequences for re-offending are grave (a term of imprisonment is usually reinstated). In the context of sexual offences, the use of suspended sentences as a sanction raises a number of concerns. Sexual offences have low reporting rates (ABS, 1996), low rates of charging and high attrition (Stubbs, 2003; Cook, David, & Grant, 2001),

and this coupled with evidence that re-offending rates are relatively high (Chung, O'Leary, & Hand, 2006; Vandiver, 2006; and NSW Department of Community Services, 2005) means that the likelihood of undetected re-offending may be higher than in other categories of offences. This point is relevant to the debate on the abolition of suspended sentences for sexual offences, as is the kinds of cases to which suspended sentences are applied.

Overall, this statistical overview of sentencing outcomes is limited in what it can tell us about the how the seriousness of sexual assault is reflected in sentencing practice. As stated above, sexual assault is grossly under-reported, and rates of attrition far exceed that of other crimes (Law Reform Commission of Victoria, 1991); cases that result in conviction reflect only a portion of offences committed. The kinds of cases that are reported and those that are filtered out of the system are not homogeneous, rather the fraction of cases that are brought to the attention of the authorities are select and research suggests that they do not necessarily reflect the spectrum of cases that occur (Stubbs, 2003; Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2003; Victorian Community Council Against Violence, 1991). Research indicates that victim, offender, situational, interpersonal and cultural factors all influence the likelihood of criminal justice engagement, the processing of cases and attrition (see, for example, Heath, 2005). An implication of this is that sexual assaults involving strangers are reported more often, while cases of intra-familial abuse are grossly under-reported.

It is for these reasons that Warner (2005) argues that, "prevailing notions of sexuality and conventional sexual behaviour shape sentencing outcomes for rape and sexual offences as much as they shape other components of the criminal justice system... At the sentencing stage, as at all stages of the criminal process, it is clear that stranger rape is the paradigm of serious or real rape" (p. 243). Sexual assault cases that are processed and that receive stronger penalties generally reflect a stereotypical typology of what constitutes "real rape", while assaults involving acquaintances and family members maintain higher rates of attrition and continue to constitute a disproportionately large proportion of suspended sentences (Lievore, 2004; Frazier & Haney, 1996).

What is not apparent in offence comparison statistics, and what is missing in community and media concerns that sexual assault is not being taken seriously, is the way in which the seriousness of sexual assault is understood. While drawing attention to the problem, current media accounts of high profile cases may deflect the issue of taking sexual assault seriously onto a general "law and order" debate and, at the same time, reinforce stereotypes of what constitutes "sexual assault". As such, the support given to harsher sentences may not actually reflect a shift in perceptions of sexual assault seriousness.

Attitudes towards rape, myths and sentencing

Public concern appears to express support for sexual violence to be taken seriously; however, the general community's perception of sexual assault as a heinous offence deserving harsh punishment may be conditional. Specifically, while there seems to be a great deal of agreement about the fact that rape is a serious crime that must be punished, at the same time there is a great deal of disagreement about how serious particular rape offences are (La Free, 1989, p. 236). Classic understandings based on stereotypes exclude most rapes from the category of "real" or "serious" rape (Estrich, 1987), thus minimising and trivialising the seriousness of nearly all sexual assaults.

Applied to sentencing, the combination of broad discretionary powers over the assignment of sentences and the use of subjective evaluations to determine relevant factors to scale seriousness and sentencing severity can become problematic in cases of sexual assault. This is because judges may draw on myths and stereotypes when weighting the gravity of the offence(s). Indeed, myths still permeate sentencing manuals; consider, for example, the following three clauses extracted from the current *Victorian Sentencing Manual* (Judicial College of Victoria, 2005):

24.6.2.3: Relationship between offender and victim—where a husband/wife, de-facto relationship exists, the court may consider the consequences of the rape may be less grave than in the case of a victim raped by a stranger.

24.6.2.11: Conduct of victim prior to the offence—The sentencer is entitled to take into account the conduct of the victim prior to the crime. That conduct may render the

offender's actions more or less serious. The sentencer must proceed on the basis that where absence of consent is an element, the plea of guilty or jury verdict has established that element. Foolish behaviour or unintentional provocation, or risk taking does not necessarily justify a reduced sentence.

24.6.2.12: Victim a prostitute—Where the victim of rape is a prostitute, the victim's sexual experience may be relevant to sentence ... the prostitute's experience may tend to reduce the weight commonly given to rape cases to the "reaction of revulsion" of the "chaste woman" to the "forcible act of sexual intercourse" ... where the victim is a prostitute, the elements of "shame" and "defilement" may (on the facts) be missing or diminished, and the offence will thus lack a circumstance of aggravation.

Such explicit comments in a guide for judges' sentencing decisions demonstrate that judicial bodies may still have difficulty coming to terms with contemporary understandings of rape and redressing rape myths that have been continually contradicted by empirical research. While the level of trauma caused by rape varies greatly among individuals, there is no evidence to suggest that victims who are acquainted with the offender are generally less affected than those who are not (Koss, Dinero, Siebel, & Cox, 1988), nor that sex workers are less harmed than victims who are not sex workers (Falk, Wang, Carlson, & Siegal, 2001). The Manual's unsubstantiated statement proposes that cases involving "unchaste" victims could be considered less serious. Clause 24.6.2.11 demonstrates that the judiciary are still being guided to consider the possibility that women may be "asking to be raped" by their behaviour, and to use their own discretion to determine whether to factor "foolish behaviour or unintentional provocation, or risk taking" into judgments of sentencing severity.

Despite media reports that the community does not feel that the judiciary consider their views when handing down sentences, when judges provide sentencing explanations they frequently refer to the consideration of the community (although this does not necessarily mean that they are reflecting upon *actual* community attitudes) (Walker, Hough, & Lewis, 1988). Research also suggests that the public's expectations of sentences can influence judges' decisions (see, for example, D'Arcy, 1996).

There have been few empirical studies into the role of myths in functioning to reduce people's perceptions of seriousness and how this relates to perceptions of appropriate sentencing. However, the small study I conducted examined the extent to which rape myths may influence evaluations of rape seriousness and sentencing (Clark, 2002). The study compared differences in judgements of rape seriousness and self-determined sentences in classic rape scenarios to cases that challenge the stereotype. As many factors as possible were controlled for; the inclusion of rape myths was the only variable, thus enabling an examination of the interaction of myths about rape, perceived seriousness and sentencing practice.

Overview of the judging rape study

The study investigated the role that rape myths play in perceptions of rape seriousness and sentencing. The sample comprised 61 adults—males and females—who were presented with four hypothetical rape scenarios that differed in content only in relation to rape-myths. Each scenario presented included a classic version (reflecting common or accepted understandings of rape) and a non-classic version of the same incident, so there were eight scenarios altogether. The nature and duration of the act (for example, the level of planning involved, the means used to subdue the victim, the victim's and offender's ages, reported harm done to the victim and the number of prior convictions of the offender) remained the same for each of the four classic and non-classic pairs of scenarios. The scenarios were half a page in length and described a single incident of rape perpetrated by an adult male on an adult female, of which the accused had been found guilty. Scenario 1 included a combination of stereotypes associated with blaming women, excusing men and justifying acquaintance rape (so the "classic" version involved the stranger, described the victim as a small woman who physically resisted and contacted the police immediately following the assault, while the "non-classic" version involved an ex-partner, described the victim as a large woman who did not physically resist to the same extent and delayed contacting the police for some time after the assault). Scenario 2 focused particularly on "acquaintance-justifying" myths (for example, the classic version included a stranger, and the

non-classic involved a boyfriend). Scenario 3 focused on “male-excusing myths” (for example, the classic version described the offender as a “nice guy” from a good Australian family who was sexually frustrated, and the non-classic version described the offender as weird, hot-tempered and of Middle-Eastern ethnicity). Scenario 4 focused particularly on differences in “women-blaming” myths (for example, the classic version included that the victim had not consumed alcohol, was on her way home from work and wearing a suit and jacket, while the non-classic scenario included that the victim was as out clubbing and drinking and wearing a short skirt).

Participants were required to evaluate the scenarios by indicating the level of blame and responsibility they believe should be allocated to the offender and to the victim for each offence; distinguishing whether they considered a range of factors to be aggravating, mitigating or irrelevant to the judgment of offence seriousness; and, finally, to sentence the offender. Responses given in cases reflecting stereotypical understandings of rape were compared to cases that challenged stereotypical rape scenarios. The small non-randomised sample restricts the generalisability of the study. Nonetheless, the matched-subjects design employed by the study enables accurate comparisons between responses that can be directly attributable to the use of stereotypes and myths.

Main findings

Evaluations of seriousness

Nearly all participants (98%) considered myth factors—such as those relating to the victim’s dress, behaviour, chastity and alcohol consumption, as well as prior acquaintance and the offender’s social status—as relevant in determining the seriousness of any particular offence. However, most did not consider all myths relevant in any given scenario. Participants tended to nominate factors that reflected classical understandings of rape (for example, if the offender was a stranger) as aggravating the level of offence seriousness. Participants tended to nominate factors that challenged stereotypical notions of what constitutes rape, (for example, if the victim was so-called “provocatively” dressed or if the offender was an acquaintance) as mitigating the level of offence seriousness. Specifically, women-blaming, offender-excusing and acquaintance-justifying myths were found to act to reduce the perceived seriousness of rape. Differences achieved a considerably high level of statistical significance.

Blame and responsibility

Participants were asked to assign a level of blame and responsibility to offenders and to victims in each scenario on a seven-point scale (a score of one indicating “not at all to blame” and a score of seven indicating “totally to blame”). Participants consistently assigned higher levels of blame and responsibility to the offender than to the victim, irrespective of whether or not the scenario reflected a classic rape scenario. The average (mean) level of blame and responsibility are displayed in Figure 4 (on p. 23).

As illustrated in the graph, the range of blame and responsibility ascribed to offenders was generally high for *all* scenarios; however, offenders were consistently ascribed less blame and responsibility in non-classic scenarios than classic scenarios. Comparably, although the level of blame and responsibility allocated to victims was relatively low in all scenarios, more blame and responsibility was given to victims in non-classic scenarios than classic scenarios. Differences between classic and non-classic versions achieved a considerably high level of statistical significance.

Sentencing

Participants consistently referred to myths in determining sentence severity. Imprisonment was clearly the most frequently chosen sanction for offenders in every given scenario, regardless of whether it diverged from the classic rape scenario. However, the proportion of participants who nominated imprisonment was consistently higher in cases that reflected classical rape scenarios than those that challenged the stereotype. The proportions are displayed in Figure 5.

Alternatives to imprisonment—including suspended sentences, community treatment orders, intensive correction orders, fines, discharge, dismissals and adjournments—were more frequently

Figure 4: Allocation of blame and responsibility (on seven-point scale) to victim and offender for each scenario

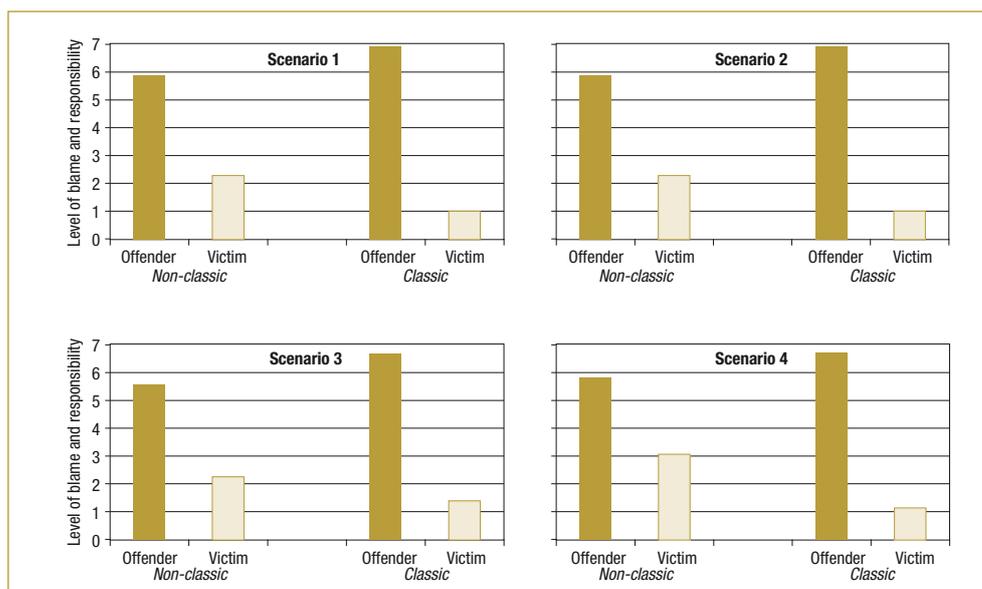
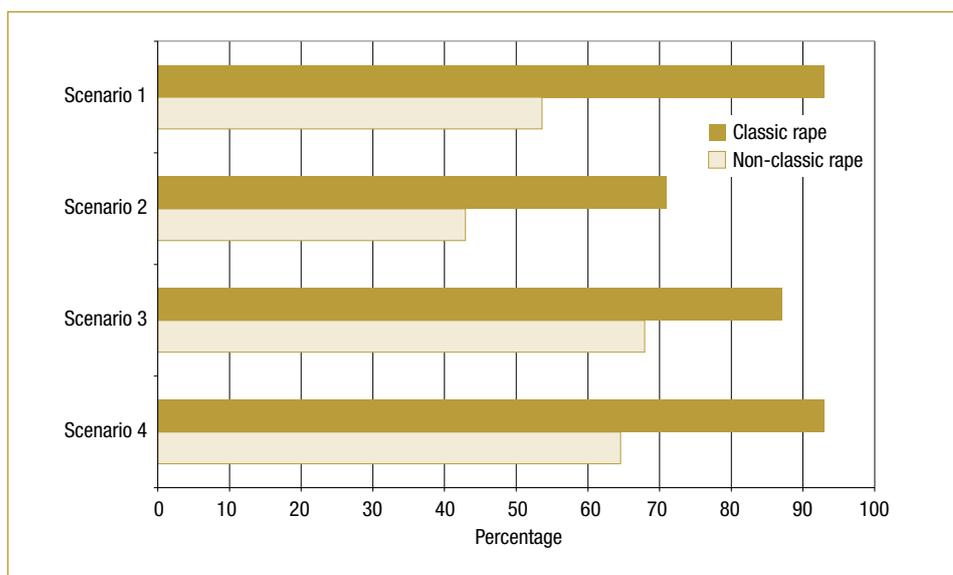


Figure 5: Proportion of participants who nominated imprisonment to be the most appropriate sanction for the offender in the four scenarios



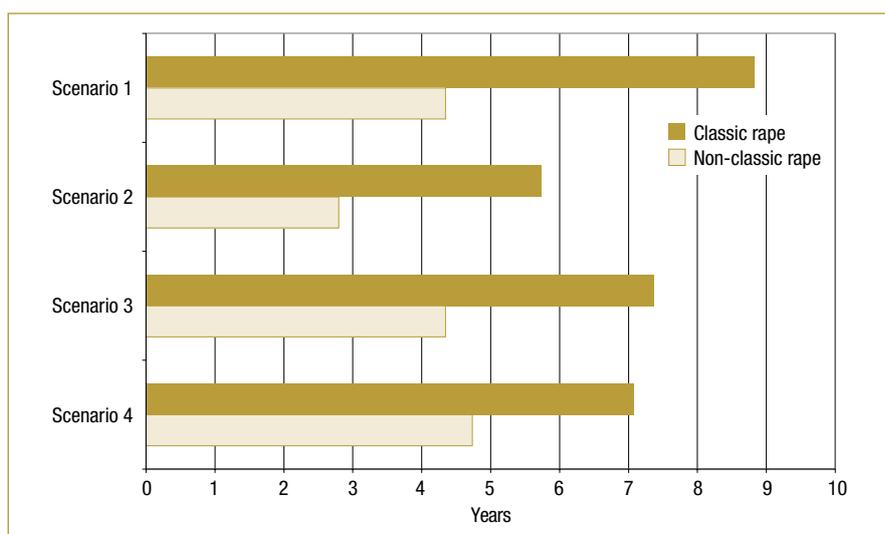
allocated to offenders in scenarios that deviated from the classic rape scenarios. Discharges, dismissals, adjournments and fines were not nominated as appropriate sentences for offenders in any scenarios that reflected classic rape stereotypes.

Mean sentence lengths allocated to offenders were consistently higher in scenarios that reflected stereotypes. The differences in sentencing lengths nominated as appropriate to offenders in each scenario is displayed in Figure 6 on page 24.

Offenders in classic rape scenarios were allocated significantly longer sentences than in corresponding scenarios that challenged the stereotype. Differences received a high level of statistical significance.

Together, the data on sentencing sanctions and lengths indicate that myths did influence participants' perceptions of appropriate sentencing severity.

Figure 6: Average (mean) sentence length in years imposed upon offenders by participants in the four rape scenarios



Summary

More needs to be done to ensure that sexual assault is considered serious, that myths and stereotypes are not used to justify reductions in grading the gravity of an offence or influencing sentencing severity, and that “seriousness” is understood to include various experiences of sexual violence. The findings of the small study show how rape myths can function directly to influence perceptions of offence seriousness, blame and responsibility and sentencing appropriateness. The study found that when scenarios included non-classic elements (for example, when the offender was known to the victim), attributions of blame to victims were higher, and sentences nominated as appropriate were less severe. Warner (2005) advocates that courts should use the opportunity to dispel myths and stereotypes rather than endorse them. Work still needs to be done to promote this approach. A shift in attitudes, both within the community, and the judiciary (who should be playing a pro-active role, rather than reinforcing myths) should be included in debates on treating sexual assault seriously. A critical element of achieving appropriate sentences for cases of sexual assault is not the introduction of more punitive measures per se, but the reshaping of understandings of seriousness and incorporating these into sentencing practices.

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Preventing Prisoner Rape (SA)

INTERVIEW BY CAMERON BOYD

ACSSA staff talk with David Denborough from the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project. The project is an unfunded voluntary group based at the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide, which aims to provide support for people who have experienced sexual violence within prisons and other institutions, and to raise awareness of this problem in the community. At this point, its focus is mostly on men who have experienced sexual assault in prison. The Project is one of the services in South Australia that assist those in prison.

ACSSA: Can you tell us about the history of the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project?

David Denborough: The history of this project can be traced back to the early 1990s when I worked within the welfare and education units at Long Bay Prison in Sydney and began to hear stories from young men who had experienced sexual assault in prison. I was also facilitating groups with transgender inmates who spoke openly about the abuse they had experienced over the years. A number of older guys, so-called “heavies” who had done a lot of prison time, also let me know in subtle ways that their lives had been significantly affected by experiences of sexual violence—mostly within boys’ homes or juvenile justice institutions. Some of them had gone on to commit acts of sexual violence to women and other men.

While walking through the yards of the prison I found myself trying to understand the extent of the harm that had been caused by this sexual violence, and how its effects had undoubtedly rippled outwards into the lives of other men, women and children.

This was not formal research. I hadn’t deliberately sought out to hear these stories, but it became clear to me that rape in prisons, in boys’ homes and in juvenile justice settings is a very significant issue in this country. While walking through the yards of the prison I found myself trying to understand the extent of the harm that had been caused by this sexual violence, and how its effects had undoubtedly rippled outwards into the lives of other men, women and children.

Then, in the mid-1990s, I was asked by Dulwich Centre, an independent counselling, community work and publishing house here in Adelaide (which had been involved in responding to one of the recommendations of the Deaths in Custody Royal Commission in partnership with Aboriginal Health) to put together a book about prisons—or more accurately alternatives to prisons. This became the book *Beyond the prison: Gathering dreams of freedom* (Denborough, 1996). Within this book we were trying to question assumptions about the prison system and provide ideas about alternative ways of responding to crime and violence.

The research I undertook for this book took me to various places including New York City where I met Stephen Donaldson, one of the key early members of Stop Prisoner Rape in the US (see www.spr.org). I have stayed in touch with the work of this grassroots organisation ever since and recently visited their headquarters in Los Angeles. Stop Prisoner Rape in the US has had amazing success in the last few years in making the issue of prisoner rape a national concern in that country. So much so, that a federal law has now been passed and every state government is required to take a “zero tolerance policy” to rape in prison.

I suspect that Stephen Donaldson (who has since died of AIDS—he acquired HIV through rape in prison) would be very surprised at what has been achieved. When I met Stephen the organisation was just operating from his apartment! There is now money and research and more importantly significant action being taken to address the issue of prisoner rape in the US. I find it inspiring what they have achieved.

I stopped working in prisons about ten years ago. From the day I left, I felt a sense of guilt that I had not taken any action in relation to the issue of rape in prison. Those inside had let me know of the significant effects of this sexual violence in their lives and yet I had found no way to adequately respond. One day I mentioned this sense of regret to my colleague, Cheryl White, and she quite simply suggested that we do something about it! So, a small group of us here in Adelaide formed the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project in order to raise awareness about the issue and to take some similar action to that which has occurred in the US. We are hoping to respond to the experience of women, men and transgender folk in prisons, in detention centres, in psychiatric institutions, and also young people in juvenile justice settings.

To learn the extent of sexual violence in prisons and other institutions is complex because there are very good reasons why those incarcerated do not disclose their experiences of abuse.

ACCSA: What is known about the extent of sexual assault in prisons in Australia? What obstacles have been identified in trying to learn about this problem (or if you like, what are the “gaps” in our knowledge)?

David Denborough: That’s a very good question. We know that sexual assault occurs in prisons, psychiatric hospitals, detention centres and juvenile justice centres. We know that within any institution of this kind, the possibility of assault and abuse is heightened. In terms of actual statistics or formal research, we know very little. I think this is for two main reasons. First, no one has cared enough about the issues to find out. Secondly, finding out the extent of sexual abuse and assault experienced in institutions like prisons is complicated.

It was only due to dedicated, courageous and committed work by feminist women from the 1970s onwards that the cultural silence surrounding sexual violence was broken. It took time for the extent of sexual abuse and rape in the wider community to be named, known and responded to. As you know, there is still so much to be done in relation to these issues.

To learn the extent of sexual violence in prisons and other institutions is complex because there are very good reasons why those incarcerated do not disclose their experiences of abuse. If a person is assaulted by another prisoner, to report the assault or abuse will in all likelihood place the person at risk of greater violence. They will be labelled an informer and the consequences of this can last their entire sentence or even longer. If the assault has occurred at the hands of a prison officer, again there are significant risks associated with disclosure. When you have so little power over your own daily life, and you are forced to live with your abuser and completely unable to get away from them, retribution is a realistic fear.

These circumstances have led to two different sorts of figures about sexual violence in prisons. Formal reports from Departments of Correctional Services state that sexual violence is not a significant issue within prisons. Their studies are based only on cases in which inmates make a formal report, meaning that the majority of sexual assaults in prison do not appear in the official statistics. Then there is independent research based on anonymous surveys. David Heilpern, who was then a defence lawyer and is now a judge, conducted such a study in 1997. He surveyed 300 male prisoners aged 18 to 25 in New South Wales prisons. Of those surveyed, 26% said they had been sexually assaulted in prison at some time and 50% said they had been assaulted other than sexually. He extrapolated these figures to suggest that 25,000 incidents of sexual assault occur in New South Wales prisons each year (see Heilpern, 1998). No equivalent research has been done in relation to young prisoners in women’s prisons.

I don’t believe we will know the extent of sexual violence in prisons and other institutions until the cultural silence about the issue is broken, until survivors of this violence are supported and linked together, and until the conditions are created in which survivors can speak publicly about their experiences. Formal research has a role to play in this process, but following from the learnings from feminist action in the 1980s, I think that grassroots local action is just as important. If people in local communities start to care about this issue, and provide spaces for survivors to speak about their experiences and to meet one another, this could have a ripple effect.

ACSSA: I know that you are also interested in documenting individual accounts of prisoner rape survival. How is this linked to breaking the cultural silence around this issue?

David Denborough: When I was working within Long Bay prison there were a handful of young men, adult men and transgender folk, who were willing to speak about the assaults they had experienced, and how they had endured them, in the hope that their testimonies would assist others. From the beginning, we wished to generate “double-storied accounts” (see White, 2004). These are accounts that not only describe the assaults and their effects, but also describe the skills and knowledges that people have used to survive and endure the violence. In this way, we were not only seeking stories of trauma, but also detailed stories of survival.

The people I was speaking with in the prison did not want to meet in person to share their experiences (although this did happen to a degree within the group for transgender folk), but they were very interested in being linked with others through their stories. They were particularly eager to make any contribution they could to the lives of others who may have been through similar experiences.

This sort of documentation has a number of effects. By generating double-storied accounts, people are able to receive an acknowledgement of not only what they went through, but also the skills, knowledges, relationships, dreams, hopes etc. that they drew upon to assist them through their hardest times. This sort of acknowledgement can be healing. It can be particularly healing if their stories can then assist others, and if we can facilitate some way that they can learn of how their stories are assisting others. And at the same time, accumulating these sorts of accounts is contributing to breaking the cultural silence around sexual violence in prisons and other institutions.

Part of the work of the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project is to continue this documentation process. If readers know of women or men who might be interested in sharing their story with us please let them know that we would be delighted to hear from them. Anyone who has experienced sexual violence within an institution, or helped to prevent or stop it, has something to contribute to this project.

ACSSA: In reading the Prisoner Support Package developed for male prisoners who have been sexually assaulted, I found a clear sense of care and respect for the wellbeing of prisoners. Have you received any feedback from prisoners so far about the support package and what is useful about it? What has the response from people working with prisoners been like?

David Denborough: Work on the support package began with a prisoner rape survivor who I worked with in Long Bay back in the 1990s, but it was only completed last year with assistance of a wide range of practitioners. At this stage, it is only in written form but we hope to make it available on tapes or CDs.

We have two aims for the package. Firstly, we hope that it will offer support to those who experience sexual violence in prisons. Rape in such circumstances can be profoundly isolating and we hope that enabling people to read the words and experiences of others can offer some connection at these desolate times. There is also a section within the support package designed for those who experienced childhood sexual abuse. The questions that are asked throughout the package are designed to assist people to consider the skills, knowledges, dreams and hopes that they have utilised in surviving what they have been subjected to.

Secondly, we hope the package offers some ideas and support to workers in prisons. To work in prisons can be a strange and alienating experience. And there are so few resources available to prison counsellors, group workers, psychologists etc. When I was working in prisons at times I felt very lost. I really could have done with some resources to use in the groups I was running or in the individual conversations that were taking place.

We have received very good feedback about the support package so far—both from those incarcerated and those working in prisons, but we will also always be open to making revisions.

Significantly, we would now very much like to develop a support package for women’s prisons. If anyone would like to collaborate with us on this please get in touch! (See contact details on p. 32.)

ACSSA: There are many myths about sexual assault in prison, for example that all men will be sexually assaulted in prison. What are some of the most unhelpful stories about rape in prison, and the effects of these stories on the lives of prisoners?

David Denborough: There is a strange irony about the issue of rape in prison. While there is little to no room in Australian culture for people who have experienced rape in prison to speak about their experiences, there is also a general folk understanding that rape in prison is widespread, at least in relation to men's prisons. There is a history of rape in prisons in this country that dates back to the arrival of the First Fleet (Foster, 2005). I don't think we have fully engaged with this history or understood its implications.

Due to this history, there are many cultural stories about rape in prison, and many of these are extremely unhelpful. Perhaps the most unhelpful story is that rape in prison is somehow "deserved", that it is part of the punishment of prison. This cultural story makes the shame and culpability often experienced by those subjected to sexual assault all the more difficult to deal with. Survivors of sexual assault inside or outside prisons often have to deal with the idea that they were somehow to blame for the assault. Those assaulted within prisons also have to contend with the idea that they "deserve" this abuse because they are a "prisoner", a "criminal".

Another particularly unhelpful idea is that rape in prison is inevitable and therefore not worth taking any action about. I think this is tied to the long cultural histories of degradation and abuse within prisons in this country. This idea of the inevitability of rape in prison can make people turn away from the issue, thinking it is too hard to deal with.

Of course, societal attitudes to sexual violence and sexuality more generally also affect those within prisons. For instance, the idea that there is some linear link between experiencing assault and later perpetrating it is an extremely unhelpful idea for those inside or outside prisons.

But perhaps the most pervasive cultural factor that makes it difficult to address issues of sexual violence within prisons is our collective ability to ignore and condone the everyday brutalities and degradations of prison life. Within each of our cities we all know that there are these institutions of degradation. We know that they are designed to punish and humiliate. But for whatever reason, we tolerate this. We take it for granted.

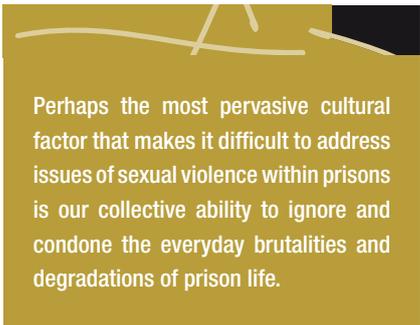
For instance, within Australian women's prisons, in which a majority of women are survivors of sexual abuse (Kilroy, 2002), strip-searching is routine. According to Sisters Inside, a woman is strip-searched approximately every one and a half hours in Brisbane's Women's Correctional Centre (Sisters Inside Inc, 2005). If we extrapolate this to women's prisons across the country, we can assume that in the time it takes anyone to read this interview, a number of women, who have previous histories of sexual abuse, will have been have strip-searched. As a broader culture we accept this.

It's my hope that in addressing issues of sexual violence in prisons we can also begin to question some of the assumptions upon which our prison systems are based.

ACSSA: How does the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project bring an analysis of the gendered dimensions of sexual assault to the work? How has this helped to shape the project?

David Denborough: That's a big question! I guess the first thing to acknowledge is that there is no way that Preventing Prisoner Rape Project would exist if it wasn't for the histories of feminist action in relation to issues of sexual violence. There would be no language with which to discuss these issues. It has been through questioning gender relations that space has been created to consider experiences of abuse both inside and outside prisons. We understand the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project as part of a much broader endeavour to address issues of violence throughout our culture. In this way we seek to be in continual dialogue with feminist organisations and individuals who are addressing issues of domestic violence and assault.

Gender relations play a huge role in how we make meaning of our experiences of life. They shape our identities and our relationships. The ways in which women in prison, men in prison and transgender



Perhaps the most pervasive cultural factor that makes it difficult to address issues of sexual violence within prisons is our collective ability to ignore and condone the everyday brutalities and degradations of prison life.

folk in prison understand their lives and actions are all continually influenced by considerations of gender. And this is just as true for those of us working on this project. We try to continually reflect upon the gendered implications of the work that we are doing and to involve outside “consultants” to offer feedback, reflection and critique.

When trying to respond to issues of sexual violence and also question the institution of prisons, there are many complexities to consider. How can we prioritise the safety of women, children and male survivors of abuse and violence, and at the same time question the brutality of the prison system?

Considerations of culture and class are also vital. The police and prisons have played and continue to play a key role in the dispossession and marginalisation of Indigenous Australians, and one glimpse at who is in Australian prison reveals that marginalised cultures are vastly over-represented. Prisons and, for that matter, issues of sexual violence, have different cultural meanings depending upon the context and the history of differing communities. We hope that the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project will provide opportunities for people of various cultures and communities to speak of their experiences. And we hope that we will create space for a diversity of cultural meanings.

Then there are considerations of sexual politics. We work hard to ensure that homophobia and heterosexual dominance play no part in the ways in which matters of rape in prison are discussed in our work. This is not always straight-forward! For instance, sometimes people or organisations have considerable energy to address rape in men’s prisons but one of the reasons they have this energy is because they believe any sex between men is problematic. We always try to make it clear that this project is trying to prevent sexual violence and humiliation in prisons, it’s not trying to prevent consensual sex.

In summary, I guess I would like to say that a gender analysis is necessary in order for us to try to understand sexual violence in prison. And it is also necessary in order to continually reflect on our work and its real effects. When trying to respond to issues of sexual violence and also question the institution of prisons, there are many complexities to consider. How can we prioritise the safety of women, children and male survivors of abuse and violence, and at the same time question the brutality of the prison system? These are complex matters and we hope to be engaged with many people in discussions and reflections about this.

On a practical note, it is important to acknowledge that our work has mostly focused on men’s prisons to date. Over time, we hope that the experience of women in prison will increasingly inform our work.

ACSSA: Are female prisoners able to access support for sexual assault-related problems? What kind of support is available and what is needed for female prisoners?

David Denborough: Because each state prison system is different, I can’t really answer what access is currently available to women prisoners in relation to sexual assault-related issues. This varies depending upon the state and depending upon the prison. There are, however, a number of dedicated organisations working to address the experience of women in prison, most notably, Sisters Inside (see www.sistersinside.com.au). If readers are not already aware of their work I strongly recommend they make contact with them.

I also suggest that workers in the community, who want to support women in prison, investigate the situation in the women’s prison nearest to them. Within some institutions, women prisoners have access to a Departmental social worker or perhaps a psychologist. If readers wish to offer something to women prisoners, they may be able to reach out to these workers and offer them support, conversation or consultation in relation to matters of sexual assault and/or abuse.

At present, women in prison rarely have access to outside organisations and services. In some circumstances, it may be possible to change this. If organisations for women (health services, rape crisis organisations etc.) were able to do outreach work in women’s prisons then women prisoners could have the same access to counselling/support in relation to experiences of sexual violence/abuse as women outside.

It's our hope that other outside organisations (including hospitals, gay rights organisations, HIV/AIDS service providers, and civil rights organisations) will also become more interested in the issue of sexual violence within prisons and make this a part of their work. Of course, some individuals and organisations have been doing this for years and have made very significant contributions.

Then there is the issue of when women are released from prison. Organisations for prisoners and ex-prisoners are often grossly under-resourced. If readers wish to reach out to women who may have experienced sexual violence in prisons, or may have experienced sexual abuse/assault prior to incarceration, then forming close working relations with organisations that support ex-prisoners would be another avenue to explore. These organisations exist within each state and territory. Sisters Inside would be able to provide contact details to those organisations most accessible to women ex-prisoners.

ACSSA: Has the project considered the experience of the family members of those who experience rape in prison?

David Denborough: I am glad you asked this, because we think that the mothers of those who have experienced assault in prison may perhaps play the most significant role in raising awareness about this issue. This has certainly been true in Tasmania, where Vickie Douglas (2006) continues to speak out about the experience of her son, Chris, who was repeatedly sexually assaulted in prison prior to committing suicide. We hope to document and share Vickie's story and the stories of other mothers and perhaps to bring them together in some way.

There is also a project about stopping prisoner rape in South Africa (see Harvey, 2002). When we met with members of the South African organisations and told them about the work of Vickie Douglas they decided that gathering mothers together around this issue would be a future direction for their work.

Eventually, we would like to produce a support package for family members. This would include the voices, ideas, and stories of mothers who have had to confront the reality of what their children have endured.

ACSSA: So, what's next for the Project?

David Denborough: Well, there's certainly an unlimited number of things that could be done. Our key aim is to support and encourage local community action—to link together people who care about this issue. We recently produced a short document titled "Preventing prisoner rape and its effects: Some ideas from the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project" which includes a whole range of ideas about ways people can get involved. I'll list some of these here:

Some key steps in preventing and responding to sexual violence in prisons include:

- people in local communities beginning to care about this issue;
- finding ways for those who have survived prisoner rape to know that others care about their experience;
- making it possible for those prisoner rape survivors who wish to speak about their experiences to do so;
- sharing and distributing the stories of prisoner rape survivors—not only the stories of the assault and its effects, but also the stories of how they survived this experience. Examples of these sorts of accounts are to be found on the Preventing Prisoner Rape (Australia) website (www.dulwichcentre.com.au/ppr.htm);
- sharing and distributing stories of how people protected themselves or others while in custody and the ways in which acts of sexual violence were avoided, prevented or minimised.
- creating opportunities for those who have survived prisoner rape (and the family members of survivors) to meet one another and discuss the ways in which they have endeavoured to deal with this experience; and
- creating opportunities for those who have prevented prisoner rape from occurring to meet one another and discuss learnings that have come from their experience. This could include those

who are imprisoned, those who have been imprisoned, prison officers, counsellors, policy officers, lawyers and so on.

These steps can occur in any local community.

Recently a small group of people concerned about this issue has begun to meet in Melbourne and we hope that similar groups might form in other communities.

Here in Adelaide, we will continue to gather double-storied testimonies from women, men, transgender folk and hopefully young people who have had experiences of sexual violence in institutions. We will also continue to offer consultations to any prison counsellors, social workers and psychologists who are using the support package. And in time, we hope to collaborate with others to develop a support package for those in women's prisons and a support package for family members. We also aim to gather a list of counsellors in each state who would be happy to volunteer to support those who have experienced sexual violence in institutions.

There's no shortage of things to do! But there are only a few of us, and we all have many other responsibilities. This is a completely voluntary, unfunded project so we'll just continue to move along quietly.

Can I just say how much we appreciate the support that ACCSA has given to this project. We really appreciate the ways in which you have let others know about this issue. Thanks for this!

For further information

The Preventing Prisoner Rape Project is based at Dulwich Centre, Adelaide. Further information about the project, a copy of the support package, can be found on the Dulwich Centre website: www.dulwichcentre.com.au. The project can be contacted at dulwich@senet.com.au, or Tel: (08) 8223 3966.

About this interview

This interview was conducted via email. Helpful comments on an earlier draft were offered by Erica Fernandez, Mary Heath, Kath Muller, Lovisa Stannow, Vanessa Swan, Beth Tinning, Manja Visschedijk, Cheryl White and the team at ACCSA.

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Book review

Real rape, real pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners

REVIEWED BY CAMERON BOYD

Real rape, real pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners. Patricia Easteal and Louise McOrmond-Plummer, Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers. 2006.

The recent Personal Safety Survey highlights the ongoing problem of sexual assault of women in relationships. An estimated 27,400 women in Australia have experienced sexual assault by their current partner, and 272,300 by a previous partner. However, these figures, which are likely to be underestimates, say little about the experience of sexual assault by a partner or the barriers women face in disclosing and escaping this violence. In *Real rape, real pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners*, based on interviews with thirty women as well as the personal experiences of the authors, Patricia Easteal and Louise McOrmond-Plummer explore the barriers to reporting partner rape: partner rape is often not recognised or named as assault; the fear of the repercussions of disclosing abuse from the perpetrator; and a fear that others will minimise or disbelieve the disclosure of abuse.

The book is written, as the authors put it, “for, not about” women. The personal stories interspersed throughout the book show how partner rape is a specific type of traumatic and abusive situation. It may occur in a context of domestic violence, but understandings of domestic violence *per se* do not adequately capture the nature of partner sexual assault. Similarly, sexual assault can occur in the context of a “once-off” incident with an acquaintance, date or stranger; this too is different from sexual abuse by a partner. While the book is primarily intended for women who have experienced or are experiencing rape by a partner, the problem of partner rape is framed as a social problem, not just as a problem of individual women. The book is organised around three main themes: Healing, Identifying sexual assaults, and Confronting society’s denial.

An estimated 27,400 women in Australia have experienced sexual assault by their current partner, and 272,300 by a previous partner.

Healing is an overarching concern of the book. Survivors spoke of the vital importance of “surround[ing] yourself as much as possible with supportive people” (p. 187). While some women have “friends who gently encourage me in my healing” (Summer, p. 5), for others finding support is not straightforward: “Who do you tell? You certainly don’t tell your parents. You can’t tell your innocent and straight co-workers. I didn’t have any friends I trusted” (Tiffany, p. 9). The book encourages a range of supports such as groups, counselling, medication and online communities and includes a chapter on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is seen as a helpful way to make sense of partner sexual assault. However, the potential for PTSD to pathologise the victim/survivor is something the book seeks to avoid. The authors state that “being raped and being traumatised are not negative personality traits” (p. 182).

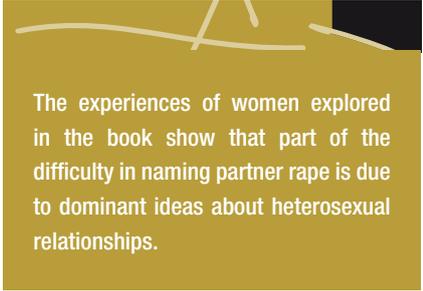
There is a clear message here that coping strategies are just that, and not a sign of weakness or pathology. Strategies that may have been helpful or necessary in the context of surviving a sexually abusive relationship, however, may become limiting when women are no longer in the abusive relationship and trying to form new relationships, or to move on. The book emphasises that making choices is an important step in women’s healing process. As one survivor recalls:

When I self-injured, I believed that I was doing it because I was raped and needed to punish myself for being dirty ... I began to understand that I could make a choice not to cut. It was not my fault that I was raped. It was not my fault I was depressed. However, while these factors could make me feel like cutting, they could not actually force me to do it. (Rachel, p. 237)

A second theme is the importance of naming partner rape. Naming rape is an act of defiance, of breaking the silence around partner rape. The book never suggests that it is easy to speak out as a survivor of partner sexual abuse and the authors explicitly identify the difficulties they each faced in reaching this point. “Each survivor who takes the risk and reveals that part of them to others is making a statement that we are not ashamed and that we won’t keep the secret any longer” (p. xvii). This is a step that both authors take in revealing that they have been in relationships involving sexual abuse by a partner.

The experiences of women explored in the book show that part of the difficulty in naming partner rape is due to dominant ideas about heterosexual relationships. The dynamics of abuse do not always appear to be so different from “normal” gendered expectations in relationships, particularly regarding issues of consent and men’s sense of sexual entitlement:

I knew from the very beginning that Maggot’s [partner’s name] acts were sexual assault but I also knew it would be next to impossible to prove that this was taking place as I was in a husband/wife relationship with him. (Jennifer, p. 29)



The experiences of women explored in the book show that part of the difficulty in naming partner rape is due to dominant ideas about heterosexual relationships.

Crucially, the chapter discussing men who rape their partners manages to explore the perceptions of abusive men without “psychologising” or explaining away their actions as the result of some kind of personal pathology. This chapter unsettles the assumption that abusive men are “sick”, or that women must somehow be complicit in the abuse. Sexual assault in relationships is about power, control and an inflated sense of entitlement, and this point is well made. Particularly compelling is the comparison between statements made by men who have raped their partner and men who have raped “strangers” (p. 66). The comparison reveals no difference, reinforcing the point that rape in relationships is “real rape”.

On a personal level, “To name can be a deeply healing exercise in taking back power and control. Until you define it as rape, you may not believe that you have a wound for which you deserve empathy, support and healing” (p. 208). The word “rape” can be extremely difficult to utter, even if a woman knows that is what happened. The connotations (personally and socially) of being a victim of rape, of describing oneself in those words, prohibit many women from naming their experience as rape. This is not framed as a personal weakness but as a reflection of societal attitudes towards women victims of partner rape.

The book argues that the difficulty that victim/survivors spoke of in naming partner rape as “real rape” is compounded by society’s denial. A profoundly harmful aspect of partner rape is the difficulty that women can face when they do recognise the abusiveness of their situation, yet find the responses of others to whom she may have turned for assistance unhelpful or unsupportive. Women seeking validation of their experience are often faced with interpretations of partner rape that suggest the rape is a sign of something wrong in “the relationship”, rather than “something the perpetrator does to control and hurt you” (p. 153).

What is especially important about this book is the recognition of the complex issues facing women who are sexually assaulted by male partners. Women who name their experiences as rape but who may find that, despite their growing awareness of the abusiveness of their situation, they are unable, or do not wish, to leave the relationship. While never condoning the violence, and encouraging women to consider leaving (to quote from one of the interviewees: “If I could advise other survivors, I’d say, “Recognise it and get out”), the authors also convey a sense of compassion for women who, for whatever reasons, stay in the relationship. Advice at either extreme—that minimises or excuses the rape, or demands that the woman must leave the relationship immediately—is equally unhelpful.

The difficulties around such decisions are discussed in detail, particularly the psychological dynamics of abuse, the material financial dependency of many women, and having children (for both pragmatic reasons or from fear that the abusive partner may use the legal system to restrict or prevent the woman’s

future contact with her children). Whatever the context, the authors emphasise that staying in an abusive relationship does not diminish a woman's right to or need for safety and respect. For women intending to leave a sexually violent or abusive relationship, planning is crucial in light of the fact that separation can be a period of high risk of violence.

Real rape, real pain validates the traumatic and abusive nature of partner abuse, and challenges many of the myths that deny or minimise the harm caused by this form of sexual assault. The inclusion of women's stories (including some detailed accounts of abuse) and the jargon-free style make it widely accessible. At just over 300 pages long, it is not necessarily intended as a book to be read cover-to-cover. As well as being directly accessible to women who have experienced sexual assault by a partner, this could also be a useful resource for counsellors as a way of addressing the profound sense of isolation that women in sexually abusive relationships often feel. The quotes from the women, interspersed throughout the book, could be particularly useful for this purpose. By emphasising healing and positive steps that women can take, the book offers hope without denying the horrific and disturbing reality faced by many women.

Further reading

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Other ACSSA resources

See Heenan, M. (2004). *Just "keeping the peace": A reluctance to respond to male partner sexual violence* (ACSSA Issues Paper No. 1). Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

See also Good practice profile: Understanding and responding to disclosures of intimate partner sexual violence, *ACSSA Aware*, 5, 25.

New additions to the ACSSA Good Practice Database

More information about all Good Practice programs is available online at:
www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/gpdb/programs.html

Dulwich Centre

Preventing Prisoner Rape Project

The *Prisoner Rape Support Package* has been developed by the *Preventing Prisoner Rape Project* to try to provide assistance to men who have been raped or sexually assaulted in prison. Still a "work in progress", the project aims to raise awareness about the issue of rape in prisons and reach out and support prison rape survivors, as well as working towards changes at legal and prison administration levels.

Imaginif

BITSS of Protective Play—A skill based workshop for family and child workers

The BITSS program is based on the traditional Protective Behaviours program, with a specific focus on child sexual assault prevention. The program is being run with a number of organisations around Cairns, and with a number of Indigenous communities around Cape York Peninsula. The program is run with small groups of parents as well as professionals. The direct participation of parents, in their own communities, is the strength of this program. (Imaginif is a privately owned fee-for-service organisation.)

Book review

The macho paradox: Why some men hurt women and how all men can help

REVIEWED BY ANTONIA QUADARA

The macho paradox: Why some men hurt women and how all men can help. Jackson Katz. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks. 2006.

In this book, American lecturer and social commentator Jackson Katz, wants to turn the issue of violence against women on its head. It is not, he declares, a women's issue. It is, rather, a men's issue. If men comprise about 99% of perpetrators of domestic violence, sexual assault, serial killings and abductions, then the time has come to have a "national conversation about the male causes of this violence" (p. 6). Jackson's focus is not on offenders, and offender treatment programs, but on the general population of men, including those who see themselves as a "good guy", to make a commitment to preventing violence against women—in the locker room, in pubs and bars, at the office.

There are two overarching tasks to this book. One task is to disrupt commonly shared perceptions about sexual violence that depoliticise it and remove it from issues of power and gender. These include the notion that violence against women is perpetrated by crazed predators leaping out from bushes, and that talking about and organising around violence against women is really a form of male-bashing. The second task is about making connections between broader social and cultural practices that enable and maintain violence against women to be a feature of our society. Katz suggests that the mores of male peer culture, the music of rappers such as Eminem, and the pervasive effects of pornography all provide common languages and alibis that excuse and normalise men's violence against women.

In elaborating on these tasks, the book moves through several distinct phases: personalising men's violence against women by appealing to them as fathers, brothers, sons, lovers and husbands; critiquing the gender-neutral languages—in news, research, and organisations—that describes men's violence against women; making connections between the consumption of "cultural products" such as hip-hop music, stripping, pornography and violence against women; and developing ways of educating and responding to young men in developing awareness of and responsibility for the perpetuation of violence against women. These last chapters are probably the most useful and productive ones in the book. It can be at other times difficult, often reading as a litany of woman-hating scenarios and sexual victimisations. Whether this speaks to men in a productive way about violence against women is unclear.

The book offers some important insights and strategies for having conversations with men about men's violence. One of these is the reminder that acknowledging male violence is not about making men feel guilty. Another is about finding ways of clarifying empirical and statistical data, which consistently shows that the majority of perpetrators of violent interpersonal crime are men. Katz observes that many men, take the statistical picture personally. Instead of hearing 99% of rapists are men, Katz writes that his audiences hear 99% of men are rapists. Attending to this "statistical dyslexia" (p. 79) is an important part of having meaningful discussions about violence against women. Katz's task in this book, however, is not to make men feel guilty, but to galvanise men into productive responses to the endemic nature of violence against women, "if the goal is to inspire more men to engage in transformative action we need to do more than simply tell them to stop behaving badly" (p. 25).

While violence against women—its extent and its impact—is no longer a taboo topic, Katz argues that in our conversations about the problem of violence against women little is said about the problem of men's violence (p. 22). *The macho paradox* seeks to reconnect violence against women to issues of masculinity, power and the cultural validation men's violence, and to do this in a way that speaks directly to the everyday man.

Further reading: www.themachoparadox.com

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The book of revelation

REVIEWED BY ANTONIA QUADARA

The book of revelation, released September 2006, limited national release, directed by Ana Kokkinos, distributed by Palace Films, classification: R.

The general release of Kokkinos' film *The book of revelation* was accompanied by much media interest. This is because the film took, as its central premise, male sexual assault. The tone of the film is not a gritty, realist examination of sexual violence against men. Instead, Kokkinos generates something of a dreamscape to explore the victimisation of a body usually seen as sexually impervious. In doing so, not only does Kokkinos diverge from the usual filmic scenario of women as (sexualised) victims, it also engages with a topic that is considered taboo for many segments of society—the sexual victimisation of men. Moreover, it examines this through the presentation of women as perpetrators and men as victims of sexual assault—a stark reversal of what we know about sexual violence. Kokkinos said of this reversal:

That fascinates me. By making a man the object of desire and the female gaze, we can explore what it means to be a victim with fresh eyes. Everyone knows the story of women as victims. By reversing roles we can examine bigger issues and make people understand that any one can abuse anyone else. (cited in Usher, 2006)

In response to Kokkinos and the film, several questions arise. First, what are the bigger issues? Second, are these issues in fact the concern of the film? Third, can Kokkinos' final statement hold? The notion that "any one can abuse anyone else" without acknowledging the deeply ingrained gendered, raced, and class dimensions of abuse is problematic. And, possibly, it's the complete suspension and reversal of gendered power relations that generates flaws in the film.

Daniel (played by Tom Long), the lead dancer in a well known dance company is abducted by three masked women and taken to an empty warehouse, where he is held for 12 days by the three women, who never reveal themselves to him, or to the audience. At the end of 12 days, Daniel is deposited in a dusty lot, hooded and trembling, clutching his keys and wallet in his hand. From there, the film depicts two experiences for Daniel: his attempts to piece his life together following the abduction, and the extreme victimisation and sexual assault to which he was subjected. This last is told in graphic flashbacks that puncture his return to "normal" life and which, the film goes on to explore, lead him down an obsessive path to find out who did this to him.

While it offers an aesthetically sophisticated exploration of its themes, in its execution and final effect, the film is significantly flawed. It is relatively easy to accept that Kokkinos' intention was not to explore male sexual assault per se, but to use masculine identity as a vehicle to examine the connections between agency, body and trauma. And this is well done. What the film manages is a powerful exploration of these connections. Throughout the film, Daniel cannot articulate what happened. At the police station, he reports that a "friend" was abducted by three women. Silence. "Poor bastard" one officer eventually replies, laughing. He cannot tell his girlfriend, or the company's choreographer. Instead, the trauma of sexual violence is felt. When Daniel first returns to work following his abduction, he simply stands on the outside of the group, still, shell-shocked. His body is no longer his own. It does not feel rhythm, or its own integrity any more. Daniel is unable to express what happened to him, has no words. The film instead conveys how Daniel's experience immobilises him in his own body.

The decision to make the perpetrators women produces a range of contradictory effects. It places female viewers in the uncomfortable position of sexual aggressors, which makes me wonder what men feel when they see themselves portrayed in this way—a far more normalised scenario. So in a sense it offers an opportunity to think more critically about the connections between gender, sexual desire and sexual violence by placing men as the victims of sexual violence, which the perpetrators carry out because "Daniel is beautiful". This, in turn, opens up a chance to refuse the normalisation of sexual violence and sexual coercions as part of heterosexual relationships.

However, the response of reviewers to this is problematic and very telling about the extent to which sex and violence remain entwined within culture. Reviews describe the film as an “erotically-charged thriller”, “deftly combining” “sex and power”, and intriguing because of the gender reversal: “some women may even feeling a little guilty pleasure at seeing men so powerless”. Statements such as these are disturbing. Not because of the suggestion that women might be sexually violent, but because of the misunderstanding of the nature of sexual violence and traumatisation. Reversing gender roles is not a “solution” or counter to it.

These aren’t really what ultimately undermines the film, however. Daniel’s trauma becomes an obsessive search for the women as a way to reclaim control. But the narrative and the camera tell two different stories about Daniel’s response to sexual assault, which is carried out with an equally graphic and repetitive portrayal of sexual liaisons in the name of finding the perpetrators. It is the equal time devoted to graphic sexual violence and graphic sexual encounters that profoundly contaminates the film, and significantly destroys the more thoughtful elements of the study. Reviews—and Kokkinos herself—offer the film as an exploration of masculinity, victimisation, trauma and the “breaking of a particularly male code of silence” (Thompson 2006), but this is not borne out with sincerity in the film.

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Contribute to *ACSSA Aware*

Service providers, researchers and those interested in working against sexual assault are encouraged to contribute to the *ACSSA Aware* newsletter. We are interested in short reviews (no more than 1,500 words) of books, conferences, workshops and projects. We will also consider more substantial articles (no more than 5,000 words) on significant issues in understanding, responding to, or preventing sexual assault.

ACSSA Aware aims to provide a lively forum for ideas, argument and comment: thus we welcome readers’ letters, comments and feedback on issues discussed in ACSSA publications.

Please email contributions in a Microsoft Word document to acssa@aifs.gov.au, or post to the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, 300 Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.

ACSSA PUBLICATIONS FEEDBACK



ACSSA welcomes any feedback that enables us to better resource the sector and provide accurate information. In this section, and with the writers’ permission, we reprint feedback of a substantial nature on our publications, particularly corrections or additions to our published material, in the interest of keeping readers well-informed and up-to-date.

We invite your views

ACSSA invites readers to discuss the issues raised in our publications through our email discussion list, *ACSSA-Discuss*. *ACSSA-Discuss* is a moderated email list for the discussion of topics of interest to people involved with the sexual assault field. To join *ACSSA-Discuss*, send an email to “majordomo@aifs.gov.au” with the message “subscribe acssa-discuss”, and leave the subject line blank. For more information about the ACSSA email discussion group, visit the Mailing Lists page on the ACSSA website at www.aifs.gov.au/acssa.

CONFERENCES

COMPILED BY HELEN ARCH, WEB OFFICER

The following conference listings are taken from the website of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. For more conferences and events visit the Conferences page on the ACSSA website: www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/conferences.html

Women and Depression Conference

23–25 May 2007
Sydney, NSW

This conference explores the challenges of depression in relation to women. The approach is multifaceted, to reflect both the diversity of women, and the complexity of depression per se. The aim is to discuss topics from a range of perspectives, and to combine a diverse audience of women with a view to increased understanding and practical strategies in the healing and management of depression.

Details available online at www.womenanddepression.herwill.net

10th European Conference on Traumatic Stress—“Truth and Trust After Trauma”

5–9 June 2007
Opatija, Croatia

The European Conference on Traumatic Stress (ECOTS) will bring together practitioners and leading international researchers working in trauma related areas. A wide range of topics will be addressed: from basic research in neurobiology and traumatic memory, to the consequences of early and complex traumatising, epidemiology, new treatment options, community interventions, prevention and policy making. Of special interest will be recommended best practice when working with diverse populations exposed to a variety of traumatic events such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, disasters, traffic accidents, organised violence, aid work or military service.

Details available online at www.ecots2007.com

National Sexual Assault Conference

12–14 September 2007
Baltimore, Maryland, USA

The conference is an opportunity to showcase excellence and innovation in the anti-sexual

violence movement and plans to offer topics that include, but are not limited to: advocacy, education and outreach, community organizing, activism, counselling and service delivery, policy change, and program development.

Details available online at www.pcar.org/nsac

14th Annual ASTSS Conference - Trauma: Consequences and Responses in Community Settings

20–23 September 2007
Ballarat, Victoria

An opportunity to listen to international key presenters such as US psychologist, John Briere and Northern Ireland psychiatrist, Kate Gillespie. In addition there will be keynote presentations from well-known scholars in Australia, including Dr Caroline Taylor, Fr Frank Brennan and Arnold Zabel.

Further information: Email: torpy.daniel.d@edumail.vic.gov.au. Details available online at www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/confdetails.html#astss07

VOTA 2007 Conference (The Victorian Offender Treatment Association)

28–30 November 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Building upon the success of the 2005 conference “Broadening Perspectives: Bringing the Community into Risk Management” this year’s conference aims to attract a wide body of representation drawing from all agencies and disciplines involved in the management of and working with sexual offenders and victim/survivors and encourage collaboration between such agencies.

Details available online at www.vota.org.au/conference/conference.html

LITERATURE HIGHLIGHTS

COMPILED BY JOAN KELLEHER, LIBRARIAN

The following are a selection of resources recently received by the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) library collection. Print resources are available via the inter-library loan system. Contact your local library for details of this system. Electronic resources are available directly via the web address.

Adolescents

School talk. (2006). Mogensen, K. *VicHealth Letter*, 28, 20–21.

The risk of violence, including sexual assault, is highest for young people. This article looks at two examples of healthy relationships and sexual health prevention and early intervention programs for secondary schools, discussing key issues in the sexual health and relationships education of young people.

Ready willing and able: A young person's guide: Consent and sexual activity. (2006). Sexual Assault Resource Centre. Education and Training Unit. Subiaco, WA: Author. 1 DVD (10 min.) with notes.

This DVD for young people contains information about, and dramatic illustrations of, consent to sexual activity. It gives definitions of consent, sexual assault and sexual abuse, and discusses drink spiking, internet safety, alcohol and other drugs, date rape and the effects of sexual assault. The accompanying training notes include suggestions for group discussion.

Adult survivors

Outsider-witness practices in developing community with women who have experienced child sexual assault. (2006). Fraser, M. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3, 52–58.

The West Street Centre is a community based service for women and young people who have experienced child sexual assault. As a feminist service, the centre is interested in addressing the issue of child sexual assault in forums beyond the therapy room and therapeutic group programs. It has been committed to finding ways to strengthen the community of women who use

the service, as well as the women who work to respond to this issue in the community. Narrative outsider witness practices and a number of other key feminist community development ideas have provided a foundation for the organisation of two community forum days over the last two years. This paper describes these community days and the thinking that informed them. (Journal abstract, edited)

Reframing responses: Improving service provision to women survivors of child sexual abuse who experience mental health problems. (2006). O'Brien, L., & Henderson, C. *Auseinetter*, 27(2), 20–21.

The Reframing Responses project aimed to improve services to female survivors of childhood sexual abuse who experience mental health problems. This article summarises the research on the service needs and service usage of these women, explains the research study design and summarises the study recommendations.

Churches and abuse

Churches as partners in institutionalised abuse: Disarming the "Bible-bashers". (2005). Hill, F. D. *Women Against Violence—An Australian Feminist Journal*, 18, 5–17.

Abuse affects all aspects of a person's life including religious experience. Since the early 1990s the avalanche of abuse complaints flowing from Australian church communities has shaken the country to its highest religious and vice regal offices, and also deeply stained Australia's national history. Church hierarchies use the Bible, and other control mechanisms, to both justify church perpetrated abuse and limited survivors' options. This paper calls on survivors to turn the tales on the "Bible bashers" by challenging how biblical material is used within church and community

contexts, and also by unmasking the ideology and church rhetoric that has traditionally legitimated abuse. (Journal abstract)

Community education

Challenging violence against women through public education. (2006). Vlasis, R., & Donovan, R. *VicHealth Letter*, 28, 27–29.

Public education campaigns that aimed to address violence against women were reviewed in a recent study. This article looks briefly at campaigns that focused on shifting general community attitudes, social norms marketing, women who experience violence, men who use violence, prevention campaigns targeting youth, and campaigns that focused on friends and family members. It outlines what communication strategies should include, and looks at an example of best practice.

Cross cultural issues

A review of literature relating to family and domestic violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia. (2006). Bonar, M., & Roberts, D. Perth, WA: Family and Domestic Violence Unit, Department for Community Development. Online only: <http://www.community.wa.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F99C99BA-66BB-47A4-A2F2-C9A73AE360F1/0/CalDLiteraturereview.pdf>

Recent and current research on issues and initiatives including prevention, service provision, and program evaluation relating to family and domestic violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities throughout Australia is analysed. The report covers Australian statistics regarding family and domestic violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities; good practice guidelines and models for working with women, families, children and men; culturally appropriate responses to family and domestic violence nationally and in Western Australia, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania; specific culturally appropriate men's programs; and barriers to accessing services for women and men.

Girls like you. (2006). Sheehan, P. Sydney, NSW: Pan Macmillan Australia.

Six brothers from a Pakistani family living in Sydney, known as the "K brothers" were charged

with several gang rapes in 2004. This book tracks the brothers' crimes and subsequent legal trials. It forms an argument about a cultural clash between Muslim men and Western women, and discusses deficiencies in the Australian legal system regarding sexual assault trials.

Domestic violence

Taskforce for action on violence within families: The first report. (2006). New Zealand. Ministry of Social Development. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Social Development. Online only: <http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/work-areas/sector-policy/te-rito/taskforce-report-action-on-violence.pdf>

The taskforce for action on violence within families was established in June 2005 to advise the Family Violence Ministerial Team on how to: make improvements to the way family violence is addressed; and prevent family violence in New Zealand. The initial program of action will focus on leadership, changing attitudes and behaviour, ensuring safety and accountability, and offer effective support services. The next program of action will have a strong focus on prevention as well as intervention. These plans are detailed in this report.

No single path: Many ways of dealing with domestic violence. (2006). Poonacha, V. Adelaide, SA: Hawke Centre, University of South Australia. Online only: <http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkecentre/events/2006events/UNIFEMNov06.asp>

There can be no single path to dealing with domestic violence in India, a country of considerable cultural diversity. Does the self help movement have potential to deal with gender violence in this context? This paper discusses the problem of accommodating cultural differences while dealing with domestic violence. It describes the self help groups movement and details one example of its operation by women in a tribal community in the heart of the Dandakaranya forest, who tried to overcome some of their cultural and economic subordination. The paper considers whether the village women were empowered, and whether the program achieved the desired results.

Analysis of family violence incidents: July 2003–June 2004. Final report. (2006). Taylor, N. Canberra, ACT: Australian Federal Police. Online only: http://www.afp.gov.au/__data/

assets/pdf_file/20631/AFP_FVIP_Final_Report_03-04_2_June_06.pdf

All incidents recorded during 2003–2004 on the AFP Family Violence Intervention Program database are collected and analysed. The results are arranged by: characteristics of incidents, day and time of incidents, roles of people involved in family violence incidents, characteristics associated with people involved in family violence incidents, relationships between victims and offenders, injury in family violence incidents, weapon use in family violence incidents, outcomes of incidents, criminal charges laid, other formal outcomes, time of day and day of week that incidents occurred by confirmed incident type, children as victims, referrals to other agencies where child victims were involved, comparison of adult and child victims, children as offenders, comparisons between child and adult offenders, comparing male and female adult offenders, child victims—operational issues, and incidents by statistical subdivision.

Measuring the impact of intimate partner violence on the health of women in Victoria, Australia. (2006). Vos, T., Astbury, J., Piers, L. S., Magnus, A., Heenan, M., Stanley, L., et al. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 84(9), 739–744. Online only: <http://www.who.int/entity/bulletin/volumes/84/9/06-030411.pdf>

Intimate partner violence constitutes a significant risk to women's health. This study aimed to estimate the contribution of intimate partner violence to the total burden of disease for Victorian women during 2001. The paper discusses the health outcomes of intimate partner violence and the results of the study.

Reconceptualising domestic violence: A history of the Howard Government's approach. (2006). Webster, A. *DVIRC Quarterly*, 3, 14–18.

The Howard government has downplayed the role of gender in domestic violence. This article discusses the incompatibility between the conservative neo liberal ideology of the Howard government and a structural or feminist approach to domestic violence, the crusade against political correctness, downsizing women's advocacy mechanisms within government, the rise of men's rights groups, a focus on the impact of violence on the family, re emphasising the intergenerational transmission of violence, and depicting violence as un Australian.

Tasmania's Safe At Home: A whole of government response to domestic violence. (2006). Wilcox, K. *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse Newsletter*, 26, 5–8.

The Tasmanian Government's Safe at Home program aims to address domestic and family violence at all levels. This article outlines key elements of the program, its philosophies and policy innovation, and how it works in relation to policing, law reform and integrated service response.

Drink spiking

Dangerous drink spiking archetypes. (2005). Lawson, S., & Olle, L. *Women Against Violence—An Australian Feminist Journal* (18), 46–55.

This paper aims to promote fresh perspectives on prevention strategies through an exploration of Australian responses to drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault and by examining the conceptual limitations of situating voluntary drug and alcohol use outside a drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault paradigm. There are inherent contradictions in prevention campaigns aimed at minimising women's "risk behaviour": they fail to uphold the rights of victim survivors and to hold perpetrators accountable. Australian approaches to drink spiking thus far have been inadequate in addressing the issue of drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault, and have offered little in the way of prevention approaches. This article explores Australian campaigns to date and ways forward in effective prevention. (Journal abstract, edited)

Gender differences

Figuring violence: The Personal Safety Survey 2005. (2006). McKenzie, M. *DVIRC Quarterly*, 3, 19–20.

The Personal Safety Survey 2005, undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, is the first national survey to compare men's and women's experiences of safety and violence. The study revealed gender differences in experiences of violence: men were most likely to be subjected to violence perpetrated by a male stranger, while women were most likely to be subjected to violence by a partner or a family member or friend. More women than men experienced violence in their relationships. (Journal abstract)

Indigenous issues

Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (2006). Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M., & Wallis, M. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Online only: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/ihw/fvaatsip/fvaatsip.pdf>

Currently available data that address family violence among Indigenous people are reviewed. The report covers the prevalence of violence in Australia's Indigenous population, causal factors of violence, violence in non Australian Indigenous populations, intervention and prevention strategies, national and state and territory initiatives, information development, defining violence and family violence, barriers to capturing information about violence, under reporting of family violence, health, community and criminal justice sectors, crime and safety surveys, health and lifestyle surveys, Indigenous specific surveys, associated harm and outcomes data, morbidity data, mortality data, victim support and counselling, criminal justice data, multi service data collections, information gaps, and data quality issues and recommendations.

Indigenous family violence and child abuse: Is anyone listening? (2006). Bradford, M. *Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research Newsletter*, 5(1), 9–11.

The release in 2006 of a report on chronic family violence and sexual abuse of children in some Indigenous communities means governments and the public can no longer plead ignorance of the nature and extent of the issue. This article outlines the efforts of governments over the last few years to investigate and address this problem. It summarises an action strategy developed in 2006 to respond to Indigenous family violence and child abuse.

Family violence IS everyone's business: Frontline service delivery to Indigenous victims of family violence in Central Australia. (2006). Clarke, P., & Lethlean, V. In *Positive ways: An Indigenous say: Conference papers*. Darwin, NT: Victims of Crime NT. Online only: <http://sitebuilder.yodelaustalia.com.au/sites/5530/Phynea%20Clark.doc>

The Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit in Alice Springs provides Indigenous victims of family violence with legal advice and casework assistance, and initial counselling, support and

referral. This paper presents an outline of the service's clients and some client case studies, and considers what the case studies say about family violence in central Australia, factors that prevent victims from engaging effectively with Australian family violence legal protections, how the service responds effectively to its clients' realities, and some recent initiatives to address family violence.

Indigenous healing for sexual violence. (2006). Cox, D. In *Positive ways: An Indigenous say: Conference papers*. Darwin, NT: Victims of Crime NT. Online only: <http://sitebuilder.yodelaustalia.com.au/sites/5530/Dorinda%20Cox.doc>

A 2001 inquiry into how best the Government should deal with widespread sexual abuse and violence within Western Australia's Indigenous community resulted in recommendations for the reintroduction of Indigenous specific service delivery models. This paper outlines changes that have been made at the Perth Sexual Assault Resource Centre office to: education and training services, Aboriginal Liaison Officer positions, cultural awareness packages, specific counselling services for Indigenous people, development of resources, and the establishment of an Indigenous Reference Group.

Aboriginal customary laws: Final report. (2006). Hands, T. L., Williams, V., & Davies, D. Perth, WA: Law Reform Commission of Western Australia. Online only: <http://www.lrc.justice.wa.gov.au/094-FR.html>

This inquiry examined Aboriginal customary laws in Western Australia and considered whether, and how, Aboriginal customary laws should be recognised within the Western Australian legal system. The Inquiry report covers various aspects of the intersection of customary law with the common law system, including the criminal justice system and civil law. Chapter seven of this report focuses on the significance of Aboriginal customary law in the family context, including traditional Aboriginal marriage, spousal maintenance and property settlement, the care and custody of Aboriginal children, family violence and the protection of Aboriginal women and children. It discusses adoption, foster care and alternative child welfare placement; family court custody disputes; causes of family violence and sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities; under reporting of family violence and sexual abuse; the need for culturally appropriate responses to family violence and child abuse;

meeting the needs of male perpetrators of family violence; ongoing monitoring and evaluation of initiatives; the Working with Children Check regime; restraining orders; and elder abuse.

Understanding the term “victim” and the concept of “justice” from an Indigenous perspective. (2006). James, K. S. In *Positive ways: An Indigenous say: Conference papers*. Darwin, NT: Victims of Crime NT. Online only: <http://sitebuilder.yodelaustralia.com.au/sites/5530/Kadeja%20James.doc>

Some tools for engaging with people in remote communities are described, which can enable the development of meaningful relationships, greater levels of social justice and greater levels of empowerment. The paper identifies concern about issues relating to victims and justice in Aboriginal contexts. It considers the need to examine and explore objectively what constitutes a victim and what constitutes justice. It examines the example of a sexual assault social action research project that was conducted in a remote Aboriginal context, looking at the need to ensure that attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are appropriate.

Remote community tackles violence. (2006). Randall, D., & Sneddon, C. *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse Newsletter*, 26, 1–3.

Strategies to address issues of domestic violence in the Mutitjulu community at Uluru are discussed. The following are considered: petrol sniffing and other substance abuse problems, education programs, police intervention, the relationship the community has with the police, the new community police station, the lack of Aboriginal police officers, the “dry” rule, and responses to violence.

Law reform

Time for change. (2006). Carr, J. *Alternative Law Journal*, 31(3), 167–168.

A recent review of Victoria’s Crimes (Family Violence) Act found that the civil protection order system often fails to offer protection to women and children who have experienced family violence. This article summarises the issues in the review and the recommendations for change made by the Victorian Law Reform Commission, which has taken a human rights based approach.

Male victims

Male survivors of sexual assault and rape. (2006). Crome, S. Melbourne, Vic: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies. Online only: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/wrap/w2.html>

The sexual abuse of males is underrepresented in sexual abuse literature, statistics and programs. Current research about male survivors of sexual assault and rape is summarised in this paper. The paper discusses definitions, theoretical perspectives, reporting, prevalence and incidence reports, victim characteristics and risk factors, impact on survivors, treatment options, policy initiatives, and service responses and limitations.

Medical guidelines

Emergency medical response to sexual assault. (2006). Royal Women’s Hospital. Carlton, Vic: Author. 1 DVD (23 min.).

The recommended medical response to sexual assault by doctors working in the emergency department of Melbourne’s Royal Women’s Hospital is described. The DVD gives a definition of sexual assault, explains the role of CASA House at the hospital, and covers issues that emergency doctors may be concerned about. These include: making reports to the police, history taking, examination, forensic sampling, investigations, screening for sexually transmitted infections, follow up support, and what happens if the patient changes her or his mind.

Tackling partner violence in families. (2006). Taft, A. J., Hegarty, K. L., & Feder, G. S. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 185(10), 535–536.

A team of clinical experts in partner violence has delivered a new set of international consensus guidelines for primary care physicians for managing the whole family when intimate partner violence is present. This article outlines the development process and the role of the guidelines.

Police role

New measures of success. (2006). Mogensen, K. *VicHealth Letter*, 28, 18–19.

A lot has changed since the introduction, in 2004, of Victoria Police’s code of practice on family violence, including an increasing

willingness by the community to call police regarding situations involving domestic violence. This article summarises aspects of the code, and progress so far, including statistics on the increase in reporting of family violence incidents.

Rape

Real rape, real pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners. (2006). Easteal, P., & McOrmond-Plummer, L. Ormond, Vic: Hybrid Publishers.

This book arose out of the authors' similar histories, determination and motivation to have the truth told about partner rape. Their reason is that they do not want other women to experience the same sense of shame, isolation and silence that they, as survivors of partner rape, have experienced. The book covers identifying sexual assaults and confronting society's denial, as well as stereotypes of women raped by their partners. It also discusses the changing values and attitudes in society and the positive role that men can play. The book concludes with a list of suggested reading and online resources.

Sexual assault. (2006). Loughman, J., Van de Zandt, P., Saw, L.-M., & Hunter, Y. Sydney, NSW: Legal Information Access Centre, State Library of New South Wales.

The following legal issues as they relate to sexual assault are summarised: myths about sexual assault; sexual offences; consent; forensic issues in sexual assault; significant events in the development of sexual assault laws in New South Wales; court process; specialist courts; sexual offenders; and support for victims.

Recidivism

Prediction of the risk of male sexual reoffending in Australia. (2006). Allan, A., Dawson, D., & Allan, M. M. *Australian Psychologist*, 41(1), 60–68.

This paper reports the findings of a retrospective study designed primarily to investigate the predictive accuracy of the Rapid Risk Assessment for Sexual Offence Recidivism, the Static 99, and two models developed in Western Australia: the Violent Offender Treatment Program Risk Assessment Scale (VOTPRAS) and the 3 Predictor model. The study involved a WA sample of violent and non violent sexual offenders. A secondary aim was to establish whether the instruments are

equally valid for Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and violent and non-violent sexual offenders. The data of 538 convicted sexual offenders who were assessed by the Sex Offender Treatment Program of the WA Department of Justice during 1987–2002 were used. The predictor variables were the total scores obtained for each instrument and the outcome variable a conviction in a court for a further sexual offence and, in the case of the VOTPRAS, also a further violent offence. (Journal abstract, edited)

Sex offenders in a risk society: Setting limits on freedom. (2006). Edney, R. *Law Institute Journal*, 80(10), 53–55.

Victoria's Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Act provides for the control of particular classes of offenders in an effort to reduce risk. This article explains the objective and application of the legislation. It looks at determining an application for an Extended Supervision Order, conditions of the order, and implications of the legislation.

Refugees

Multiple jeopardy: Domestic violence and the notion of cumulative risk for women in refugee camps. (2005). Pittaway, E., & Rees, S. *Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, 18, 18–25.

The extent of violence inflicted against refugee women in the country of origin, during flight and in refugee camps is underestimated and often totally ignored by international relief agencies in camps and by resettlement policy makers and service providers in countries such as Australia. This article applies the framework of cumulative risk to highlight some of the specific and compounding issues that make refugee women more vulnerable to domestic violence. Some universal causative factors in cases of spousal violence, including male power and patriarchal cultures, are aggravated by the abuses and disadvantages encountered by both refugee men and women in the country of origin, and subsequently when living in refugee camps. (Journal abstract, edited)

Refugee settlement, safety and wellbeing: Exploring domestic and family violence in refugee communities. (2006). Rees, S., & Pease, B. Melbourne, Vic: Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service. Online only: http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/assets/contentFiles/CAS_Paper4_Refugee.pdf

Refugees from Ethiopia, South and North Sudan, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and Iraq participated in this study, which explored the significance of cultural, psychosocial and economic factors in the safety and well being of refugee families experiencing domestic violence. This report explains the goals and methodology of the study and discusses the findings. It looks at isolation and increased risk; laws and decreased risk; seeking assistance for domestic violence; English language skills; alcohol and gambling; unemployment, education and downward mobility; trauma and violence; racism; vast and overwhelming cultural change; rights; finances; government supporting women; traditions; gender equality; and conceptions of time and leisure.

Research ethics

Feminists researching domestic violence perpetrator programs: Improving women's and children's safety or misplaced effort? (2005). Chung, D., & Zannettino, L. *Women Against Violence—An Australian Feminist Journal*, 18, 37–45.

It is increasingly argued that feminist research about men's violence is an important strategy in achieving the ultimate goal of ending violence against women and children. However, the conduct of feminist research that focuses on male perpetrators is not without its tensions and ethical dilemmas. Using two of the key findings from a research project that examined Australian domestic violence perpetrator programs, this article discusses how feminism influenced the various aspects of the research process, and highlights some of the methodological and ethical issues the authors encountered in conducting feminist research in this area. (Journal abstract, edited)

Risk assessment

NZS 8006:2006. Screening, risk assessment and intervention for family violence including child abuse and neglect. (2006). Standards New Zealand. Wellington, NZ: Standards New Zealand. Online only: <http://www.police.govt.nz/resources/2006/nzs-8006-2006/nzs-8006-2006.pdf>

This standard was prepared for screening, risk assessment and intervention for family violence including child abuse and neglect in New Zealand.

It establishes the minimum requirements that should be met by individuals, agencies and services that work with families living with family violence, child abuse or neglect. It aims to provide a consistent set of guidelines for these services and workers, and to enable a coherent response to incidents and symptoms of family violence, abuse and neglect. This standard also addresses the issue of risk assessment and the practice of intervention in the form of safety planning. The standard discusses: the role of the Treaty of Waitangi; the role of human rights; who should use this standard; its purpose, application and benefits; interpretation of the standard; Maori violence; Pacific peoples and family violence; immigrant and ethnic communities; information sharing; police; risk screening; risk assessment; and safety planning.

Victim's views

Improving service and criminal justice responses to victims of sexual assault: A report of a state-based consultation with adult victims of sexual assault, services and agencies. (2006). New South Wales. Violence Against Women Specialist Unit. Ashfield, NSW: Violence Against Women Specialist Unit, Department of Community Services. Online only: [http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/vaw/11_vaw.nsf/vwFiles/SexualAssaultConsultation06.pdf/\\$file/SexualAssaultConsultation06.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/vaw/11_vaw.nsf/vwFiles/SexualAssaultConsultation06.pdf/$file/SexualAssaultConsultation06.pdf)

This study of sexual assault victims' needs and experiences in NSW targeted individuals who reported a sexual assault to NSW services and or the police since 1995, and services and agencies that might assist victims of sexual assault. It focused on information provision to victims; access to services; take up of medical care; take up of victims' compensation; reporting to police, investigation and charging; the court process; and change to laws and or procedures.

Violence prevention

Changing men: Best practice in sexual violence education. (2005). Flood, M. *Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, 18, 26–36.

Men must take responsibility for preventing violence against women. This article discusses the participation of men in anti violence work,

and the importance for prevention work of strategies aimed at men and masculinities. It considers what works in violence prevention education with men, presenting five key features of effective prevention programs: they are comprehensive; they are intensive; they address cognitive, affective and behavioural domains; they are relevant to the audience; and they offer positive messages.

Health promotion and preventing violence against women: What does it really mean?

Conference report. (2006). Women's Health West. Footscray, Vic: Author. Online only: <http://www.whwest.org.au/docs/ConfReport2006.pdf>

The Health promotion and prevention of violence against women: What does it really mean? conference, held in June 2006, aimed to help agencies plan and implement health promotion actions that work towards the prevention of violence against women, and to consult with agencies in Melbourne's west about the actions they would like to see included in health promotion plans. This report discusses the impact of violence on women, and summarises health promotion responses to violence against women, including responses from Melbourne's west. It

presents the information and ideas that arose at the conference and outlines the conference recommendations and the results of community consultations. The appendices include: VicHealth Mental Health Promotion Framework; a public health model for the prevention of violence against women; initiatives by WHS to prevent violence against women; summary of workshops; Western Metropolitan Area Primary Care Partnerships; and recommendations for direct service agencies.

Women's rights

Violence against women: Global thinking, local action. (2006). McCarthy, T. *VicHealth Letter*, 28, 25–26.

Globalisation has created new opportunities for addressing human rights issues, including violence against women. This article looks at the history of advocacy of women's rights in the global human rights movement, and at recent initiatives, such as the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Women. It outlines challenges for the future.



We welcome your feedback

Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

Help to shape the work of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. We are interested in hearing your views on the best way to meet the needs of our stakeholders. If you have any comments on services that could be offered, possible topics for publications or areas of research, please fill in the section below and return it to the Institute. Comments can also be provided on-line via the ACSSA website, or email us at: acssa@aifs.gov.au

What other services would you find useful for your work?

What topics would you liked covered in ACSSA's publications, or considered for research projects?

Membership form overleaf ►

ACSSA services

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is funded by the Office for Women, Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs through the *Women's Safety Agenda*. ACSSA provides stakeholders with a variety of services (see below). ACSSA is located at the Australian Institute of Family Studies in Melbourne.

Resources

ACSSA is building a collection of publications and best practice literature, reports, and training resources to inform initiatives and programs directed at improving the understanding of, and response to, sexual assault. These materials are available for browsing at the Australian Institute of Family Studies Information Centre, or may be borrowed through the interlibrary loan system. Bibliographic information on these resources may be searched online via the Institute's catalogue.

Advisory service

ACSSA's research staff can provide specialist advice and information on current issues that impact on the response to sexual assault. Email research queries to acssa@aifs.gov.au

Policy advice

ACSSA offers policy advice to the Australian Government and other government agencies on matters relating to sexual assault, intervention and pathways to prevention.

Publications

ACSSA produces Issues Papers, ACSSA *Wraps* (short resource papers) and Newsletters which are mailed free of charge to members of the mailing list. Publications can also be received electronically.

Good Practice database

ACSSA is continuing to build its *Good Practice* database, to document and publicise best practice projects and activities being undertaken in relation to sexual assault.

Research

ACSSA staff undertake primary and secondary research projects, commissioned by government and non-government agencies.

Email alert and discussion lists

ACSSA-Alert and *ACSSA-Discuss* keep members posted on what's new at the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault and in the sexual assault field generally, and allow networking and communication among those working on issues related to sexual violence against women.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

← Details overleaf If you would like to join the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault mailing list, please fill in this form and return it to the Institute. Membership of the Centre is free.

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