In this issue

Welcome to the second issue of ACSSA Aware – the newsletter produced by the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, located at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. We introduce this issue on the heels of our official launch on 26 September 2003 at which Minister Vanstone kindly accepted our invitation to set the scene for the Centre’s future work and activities. See page 3 for a brief review of the launch.

This edition includes two key feature articles covering critical areas within the sexual assault field.

The first is a stirring keynote address delivered by Jackie Huggins, Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia. Presented at a recent conference in Queensland, the address speaks to the issue of family violence in Indigenous communities, which was the focus of a recent summit convened by Prime Minister John Howard. Following the summit, the Australian Government pledged 20 million dollars to address the consequences of violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities. The funds will support a range of initiatives that attend to issues of drug and alcohol abuse, communities in crisis, and provide grant support for non-government organisations to develop programs targeting substance abuse. Funding was also provided under the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault to assist in developing programs aimed at preventing sexual violence among young Indigenous people.

The second article is a discussion piece by ACSSA researcher Alexandra Neame that looks at notions of prevention in responding to adult sexual assault. The discussion briefly examines the ongoing debate within the sexual assault field of how to adapt or work within traditional prevention frameworks. It acknowledges the residual tension between victim advocates and prevention theory, where women’s groups were highly critical of prevention approaches that spoke of “rape avoidance” and treatment programs without considering the wider social and cultural context that shaped the traditional understanding and response to rape.

Each issue of the newsletter will endeavour to profile services, programs and projects that help to inform us of current issues in sexual assault service delivery. In this edition, Tim Bavinton speaks to ACSSA about the Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault (SAMSSA), in the Australian Capital Territory.

This issue also contains our regular columns – ACSSA’s website update, information on the development of our Good Practice database, forthcoming conferences and events, literature reviews, and notices of new publications. Information on how to access the Events Calendar for “16 days of activism against violence against women” in individual states and territories is also published in this edition.

We encourage all readers to make good use of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. Sign up to the ACSSA mailing list to receive our publications; submit your programs/projects for consideration to the Good Practice database; send us your ideas or comments on what you think should be considered key areas of research in sexual assault; and give us your feedback on what the Centre provides. Many thanks in anticipation!
The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is seeking to develop a national collection of “good practice” programs and/or approaches that aim to improve our understanding of, as well as our responses to, sexual assault. The programs will be incorporated into a public access database and will be available via the ACSSA website or through the Australian Institute of Family Studies website. The database will also be used to inform the work of other service providers who are developing or refining best practice models in responding to sexual assault.

“Good practice” approaches might be those that specifically:

- take account of contemporary research and practice developments in the field of sexual assault;
- position diversity as key to the development, understanding and delivery of good practice models;
- contribute to improving systems responses to sexual assault, or directed at preventing sexual assault;
- demonstrate a sensitivity towards the barriers faced by victim/survivors in disclosing and reporting sexual assault;
- have a clearly defined conceptual framework;
- include processes of accountability and evaluation; and
- demonstrate a capacity for replication (that is, other services and organisations could adapt or model the program for their use).

The Centre welcomes submissions to the Good Practice database from service providers, policy and program developers, educators and trainers, researchers and others working to address sexual violence.

If you or your organisation is involved in developing or conducting a program, initiative or approach related to sexual assault we would like to encourage you to contribute your program to the database by completing a specially designed program questionnaire. Submissions are assessed through the questionnaire by ACSSA research staff against the above criteria. We will respond to individual submissions within two weeks of the lodgement date to indicate whether the program has been selected for inclusion.

Contact or email the Centre for copies of the Good Practice database questionnaire, or download it from the ACSSA website. Please feel free to contact ACSSA research staff for any assistance you may need in completing the programs questionnaire.
The Australian Institute of Family Studies was delighted that Senator Amanda Vanstone (former Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women) was able to visit the Institute to officially launch the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) on 26 September 2003.

In her address, Senator Vanstone remarked on the continued high levels of under-reporting of sexual assault, and acknowledged how critical it is for sexual assault to be recognised as a crime more often committed by people well known to the victim, as opposed to the levels of danger posed by strangers.

The launch marked the release of the Centre’s first publications. The Briefing Paper, entitled What lies behind the hidden figure of sexual assault? Issues of prevalence and disclosure, considers how the experiences of victim/survivors of sexual assault may be even less visible for those who are homeless, or whose first language is not English, or where the assaults occurred when they were children. Emphasis is also given to the difficulties faced by sex workers who are often assaulted on multiple occasions in the context of their work. Not only are these victims less likely to figure within the estimates of large-scale victimisation studies, they are less likely to disclose or report their experiences to police. Nor are they amongst those victim/survivors who feel more able to access support.

The Centre’s first newsletter, ACSSA Aware No. 1, was also launched by the Minister. It featured the Centre itself in terms of its operations and services, its research and advisory functions, and its Good Practice database. The newsletter’s feature article focused on the criminal justice system in reviewing the Victorian Law Reform Commission’s Interim Report on Sexual Offences which recommends further changes to those laws and procedures that continue to work against the fair treatment of sexual assault victim/survivors who go to court.

The launch received a wonderfully positive response from the public, including service providers, victim/survivors, academics, and researchers who extended their best wishes and their encouragement for the future work of the Centre. We wish to thank them for their generosity, kind words and support, and we look forward to working collaboratively with them in the future.
Indigenous leaders and experts met with Prime Minister Howard on 23 July 2003 to discuss the issue of family violence. More than half of the delegates were Indigenous women, most of whom viewed the summit as a significant demonstration of the Australian Government’s commitment to working with Indigenous leaders to address family violence.

During the press conference that followed the meeting, the Prime Minister said that he had listened to the participants, and had been particularly struck by the voices of Indigenous women who repeatedly highlighted the “dimensions of the problem” well beyond the current statistics. He acknowledged that female leaders within Indigenous communities had been calling for action for some considerable time, and said that the meeting “brought home to me the great importance of enhancing the leadership role of women within Indigenous communities” (Press Conference 23 July 2003).

Recently, the Prime Minister announced a commitment of $20 million as an initial “down payment” for addressing violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities. Sexual assault was specifically recognised in the decision to allocate $400,000 to “increase awareness amongst young indigenous people on sexual assault” (Media Release, Prime Minister John Howard, 10 October 2003). The program will be developed under the auspice of the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault.

It seems Indigenous women’s fight to have violence against them recognised is drawing important results. Recently the Western Australian Inquiry by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities, known informally as the “Gordon Inquiry”, urged governments, service providers, and members of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to look to strategies and approaches that respond to family violence in ways that are integrated, holistic, and designed in collaboration with Aboriginal communities.

Among the terms of reference for the Inquiry were calls to examine current research into the prevalence, causes and options for preventing Aboriginal family violence. Emphasis was also to be given to identifying the barriers in relation to disclosing and reporting family violence, and the capacity of government agencies to better address the associated issues. There was acknowledgement also of the extent to which child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities had reached critical levels and the need for urgent measures to attend to the systemic failure of current systems to provide an adequate response (Gordon, Hallahan and Henry 2002).

Jackie Huggins, Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, was one of the women who attended the summit in July. She described the event as a “highly significant symbolic act of reconciliation on the part of the Prime Minister towards Indigenous Australians” (The Australian, 30 July 2003).

A week later, Jackie Huggins presented a keynote speech at the International Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Conference held on the Gold Coast in Queensland. In it, she calls on Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike to maintain the momentum, to struggle against attitudes of complacency and defeatism – in effect, to act at this pivotal time in Australia, when political and community will must remain steadfastly committed to addressing violence against Indigenous women as part of a broader commitment to Reconciliation.

ACSSA Aware is pleased to publish the following edited extract from that keynote address by Jackie Huggins.
I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay respect to those who have gone before us. This conference is taking place at a pivotal time in Australia – when, for the first time, national attention is being paid to the horror of Indigenous family violence in this country.

For the first time, an Australian Prime Minister has held a summit in the national capital to listen to concerns and ideas on this issue from a group of Indigenous leaders. For the first time, we are reading editorials about it in our newspapers. For the first time, perhaps we now have a chance to do something solid, sensible, sensitive and coordinated to stop the violence that is killing our women and children, and destroying our communities.

This spark of national interest came after an address at the National Press Club in Canberra a couple of months ago by Professor Mick Dodson, a fellow director from Reconciliation Australia. In essence, Mick’s strong speech incorporated three key messages about Indigenous family violence – the term preferred by Indigenous people:

• Violence has reached epidemic proportions in Indigenous communities, and is so entrenched that child victims become perpetrators themselves in a cycle that is destroying our people.
• This violence was never a part of Aboriginal culture and that any suggestion it was, or is, constitutes either a desperate excuse by perpetrators or else a shameful cop-out by those who continue to look on while this scourge is killing fellow Australians each and every day.
• Only with strong, committed leadership, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and across this vast nation, can we turn the situation around.

Mick’s speech had a powerful impact. It was intriguing that the media and the Prime Minister responded as though these desperate calls had not been made before – as though courageous Indigenous women had not been raising the alarm for decades. But perhaps – and I hope it is true – we are more ready now to take this desperate problem seriously.

So why, despite these attempts to draw attention to Indigenous family violence over many years, have we seen things go backwards rather than forwards? For the general community, the answer to this question is quite elusive. It tempts people to fall back on dangerous stereotypes about Aboriginal people and the choices we make and don’t make for ourselves.

The reality is that what has stayed the same over these years is the inability of government agencies and mainstream service providers to address our problems effectively. And when problems like these are chucked in the “too hard basket” over long periods of time and no one does anything about it, they get worse and worse until they reach the kind of crisis levels we now face in family violence.

Having attended last week’s meeting with the Prime Minister, I would say this of the opportunity we now have to make a fresh start: it was clear in the meeting that despite the genuine concern about children shown by all parties, there is still a reluctance to accept that we cannot help women and children without appreciating the broader environmental context in which they live.
We cannot stop a woman or child being beaten if we can’t appreciate what makes communities like ours dysfunctional, and what helps them learn to be functional, want to be functional. While alcohol and drugs are major factors, they are not the only ones, and should not be looked at in isolation. And here I would also make the point that within the Australian context, within the domestic violence sector, there also needs to be more acceptance of the need for flexibility and insight in addressing Indigenous family violence.

The conference program this week is heavily focused on the criminal justice system and its role in addressing domestic violence. That’s understandable, given the struggle many of you have waged over many years to have domestic violence taken seriously by our legislators, our courts and by police. But if you continue down this road without reflecting on the wishes of Indigenous women, without considering alternative policies to meet the needs of our communities, our issues, a word of caution: we will find ourselves very quickly on a collision course.

I am not so expert as many of you are in this field to be recommending particular models of restorative justice or community conferencing as alternatives, but I am sufficiently mindful of the concerns of my sisters to advise you to keep an open mind, and to accept, as the Prime Minister did last week, that one size doesn’t fit all. And to accept that a white, feminist approach to domestic violence is not always right in every situation for every woman. This is where we have struggled so much in this sector and continue to do so. In a few cases, cooperative coalitions have been forged with white women.

I come here to this conference in my capacity as Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, the nation’s peak body promoting reconciliation in a way that will deliver tangible outcomes for Indigenous people and make their lives better. I won’t spend too much time here today talking to you about the incidence of Indigenous family violence because most of you know about it only too well. You’ve heard the statistics, some of you live and work with them every day.

You recognise that this, the saddest of all forms of violence, is a problem across the community, in every cultural, socio-economic and faith group in Australia and around the world. But the fact that the figures are so much worse for Indigenous women and children – 45 times greater in fact – and that a society like ours continues to tolerate it, is nothing short of a mind-boggling, national disgrace.

I’ve said it before and I say it again – if this devastation was happening to any other community, any group other than Indigenous people, it would be a source of public outrage. Whatever resources it took, whatever specifically targeted approaches, it would be stopped. But as our women and children continue to die, that kind of serious response is yet to materialise, although we are hopeful that the Prime Minister’s intervention may signal a serious, fresh start.

Apart from this development, some important inroads have been made in recent times where the right information is at hand and decision-makers have been prepared to take it on board. Sue Gordon’s ground-breaking report into Indigenous family violence in Western Australia last year went a long way to identifying the many aspects of the system that have been working against Indigenous people and, in effect, exacerbating the problem of family violence.

While the Western Australian State Government’s response, I believe, still relies too heavily on repairing existing programs, its commitment of $75 million represents a good start and, when we see it matched and extended by governments across the country, we might be in a better position to say that Australia is truly committed to tackling this problem.

It will take nothing short of great leadership to recognise this problem as being an above politics, genuine, no-strings-attached commitment and genuine, heartfelt concern for fellow Australians. I think it is important for me to point out here today that blaming the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission alone for the failure to deal with family violence is simplistic and unhelpful. They are a supplementary funder here.

It is government at all levels, particularly state governments and including government agencies (along with mainstream service providers, I might add) that have let us down and the right response, if and when it finally comes, needs to come in a coordinated way from every level.

Hence the call for a national, concerted effort.

And as I said earlier, this effort will need to be culturally sensitive because past failures should have made it blatantly clear that our women won’t go to refuges that refuse their sons. We won’t be part of
a separatist regime that vilifies men. And the statistics show that our women will almost always return to their men. We know that our men have been damaged too and have learned destructive behaviour, and the evidence again shows that Indigenous women want to live with them in well-functioning communities, keeping our families together.

This does not, however, condone men’s violent behaviour. Quite clearly, they must wake up to themselves. In fact, the establishment of men’s groups are great initiatives whereby men are owning their behaviours and attempting to do something about them.

Family violence is a tough issue to handle in any society, but it is harder when it presents in communities with poor local governance and is handled under complex inter-governmental arrangements. It is why Reconciliation Australia will continue to press for a coordinated national response to Indigenous family violence, through the Council of Australian Governments, and through our dealings with leaders at all levels of government, in everything we say and everything we do to promote reconciliation.

It may seem odd to you that I have linked the issue of Indigenous family violence to the process of national reconciliation. Certainly a lot of media commentators fail to understand the connection. Some have suggested that in accepting a pragmatic framework for action, Australians, including Indigenous leaders themselves, have left behind the ideals of reconciliation.

But the reality is that reconciliation is about many things, and its practical and symbolic aspects have and always will be essentially interwoven, as they were in last week’s summit. At a political level, we have a tendency to overcomplicate the notion of reconciliation where, in reality, we may be closer than we realise to reaching the next milestone.

Although the violence summit agenda was framed around practical problems facing Indigenous communities, this fresh start in relations between the Government and Indigenous leaders could represent something much more. It is important that it be seen for what it was – a highly significant symbolic act of reconciliation on the part of the Prime Minister towards Indigenous Australians. And as I said last week, we’ll be on his tail to make sure things happen.

To you who are working at the grassroots of domestic violence, I can only offer encouragement to also take on this issue in its broadest sense. As you consider your policy positions, your lobbying messages, your posters and brochures, think too of their implications for reconciliation between our peoples. I would also suggest to the organisers and delegates of conferences like this that the opportunity will be wasted if all you walk away with is a sense of frustration with this particularly difficult area of violence against women – if you cop-out because it’s all just too hard.

For the Australian delegates here, I urge you to make this gathering action-driven, so that you might leave here with a strong message to deliver to politicians, to media, to government officials and to Indigenous people themselves in all the workplaces and areas of study and interest you represent. And that message must be absolutely clear and uncompromising in communicating to these people that Aboriginal women and those who care about their plight are not prepared to put up with this violence any more. And, as always, it must be owned by Indigenous people and spoken about on our terms. We must deliver the message in an empowering way for our community as a whole.

Ultimately, I remain confident that these barriers will be broken and that solid progress will be made, as it has been in other Indigenous communities around the world. If we continue to bolster our response on all the different fronts, through government, service providers, through Indigenous action and through brave public debate, the only way to travel will be in a forward direction.

Jackie Huggins is a member of the Bidjara and Birri Gubba people and is the Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia. This is an edited extract from her keynote speech at the International Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Conference, held in Broadbeach, Queensland, on 30 July 2003. We are very grateful to Jackie for allowing us to reproduce her paper in this edition of ACSSA Aware.
The notion of preventing sexual assault, particularly sexual violence against women, has traditionally been met with ambivalence by most feminists and victim advocates. This is largely a response to conventional prevention approaches that emphasised the role women should play in modifying their behaviour to reduce their risk of victimisation. Preventing rape was about women not wearing “suggestive” clothing, not going out alone, and so on; in short, not engaging in any of the activities thought to “precipitate” rape.

However, in recent years, prevention has assumed greater social and political currency in the context of adult sexual assault as communities are forced to grapple with ever increasing rates of disclosure from women reporting experiences of sexual violence.

This discussion piece aims to explore and prompt discussion about the unique challenges and complexities that adult sexual assault poses for prevention, and the extent to which traditional prevention frameworks have tended to work against the philosophical underpinnings of victim advocates committed to a broader social change agenda.

The article begins by tracing the work of the feminist movement throughout the 1970s where approaches to “prevention” were about challenging the many myths that served to reinforce the dominant perception of rape. It considers whether approaches to breaking the silence in relation to sexual assault and other community awareness raising strategies are examples of feminists “doing” prevention work. Finally, it asks whether there might be contemporary scope for feminist engagement with prevention in the light of more progressive models that seek to understand sexual assault within a structural context that sees gendered power relations as central to their frame.

Early responses to the notion of “preventing” sexual violence

Campaigns against sexual violence were particularly fervent in the early 1970s when the women’s rights movement positioned women’s personal experiences as a critical part of the struggle against gender oppression. Consciousness-raising was seen as instrumental in revealing the extent of sexual violence that women experienced and often remained silent about. “Speak-outs” became an important method through which victims publicly disclosed their experiences of sexual violence and, for those who reported, the often intimidating, insensitive and degrading treatment they received at the hands of police officers, the medical profession, and the courts. As women continued to describe the dehumanising processes that operated in these contexts, activists remained steadfastly committed to developing victim service frameworks that advocated for women’s rights – to be believed, to access counselling, to be treated sensitively and respectfully, and to have their rights to justice acknowledged (Largen 1985; Scott et al. 1995; Orr 1997).

While advocates were unlikely to position their work as being “about prevention”, there was an implicit assumption that more women speaking out about sexual assault would reduce men’s capacity to offend with impunity. In other words, as women became more aware of their rights, their confidence in disclosing, making police reports, going to court, and securing convictions would presumably also increase.

Having successfully drawn the public’s attention to the difficulties faced by women victims, there was greater potential for women’s groups to engage the cooperation of relevant government institutions.
and other professions (police, medical and legal) to reform policies and practices to try to improve the treatment of rape victims. Liz Orr (1997: 83) describes this as the start of a new era in which: "Feminist understandings of sexual violence attained state legitimacy. Women struggled to obtain state funding for services based on feminist principles and practices, and this was achieved."

The magnitude of this achievement, at a time when general public sector spending was limited, cannot be overestimated. An alliance was forged between the new area of women’s health and victim support services, and new models of service delivery developed that continued to give emphasis to advocating for victims’ rights at an individual and public policy level.

National momentum was also successfully harnessed by women’s groups to ensure that legislatures and the administrators of criminal justice introduced reforms that would redress the systemic bias contained in sexual assault laws and procedures. However, the reform agenda remained firmly aligned with analyses that spoke of the broader social and cultural landscape of violence against women lying within institutionalised gender oppression.

In contrast, traditional prevention frameworks in response to rape and sexual assault have tended to call for individualised responses, in terms of crime control (for offenders); rape avoidance or risk reduction strategies (for potential victims); and therapy or treatment (for victims and offenders). Rape avoidance exemplifies the individualisation of sexual assault prevention, and the tendency to position women as responsible for stopping sexual violence.

**Prevention through “rape avoidance”**

The 1980s saw a great deal of interest in strategies of victim resistance, and rigorous attention was given to whether verbal and/or physical resistance is an effective rape avoidance strategy (Bart 1981; Bart and O’Brien 1984; Kleck and Sayles 1990). These studies examined completed and attempted rapes, statistically analysing the effectiveness of a variety of resistance strategies that may be employed singly or in combination – for example, pleading, fleeing, screaming and fighting, and so on. The efficacy of resistance (and the likelihood of further injury) is assessed with reference to further variables, including the victim’s relationship to the perpetrator, the location of the assault, and the perpetrator’s use of verbal and/or physical violence.

Despite the large body of literature on the subject, and the sophistication of the methods used, a focus on victim resistance as a preventative measure was theoretically questionable. According to victim advocates, in attempting to prevent individual instances of rape, the broader consequences of a sexually violent society are likely to be ignored. Sparks and Bar On (1985: 3) describe victim resistance strategies as "stopgap measures, for individuals in crisis, which fail to link an attack against one victim with attacks on others". They further pointed out how the “knowledge that one can fight if attacked is also a very different kind of security from enjoying a certainty that one will not be attacked at all”.

Seen in this light, little attention has been paid to whether women see forceful verbal or physical resistance as a realistic response to sexual assault. For example, Ullman (1998) says “the fact that so few women fought back forcefully in this sample is noteworthy and is also characteristic of other study populations”; yet her interest in a low resistance rate appears limited to its effect on the study’s generalisability, not whether resistance is useful or possible for women.

This raises the most important critique of the rape avoidance strategy: its reliance on a limited conception of rape, as a surprise attack by a stranger in a public space. It is well established that the majority of rapes take place in a private home, and that the victim usually knows the perpetrator (VLRC 2003; ABS 1996), in a context where the potential for re-victimisation is highly probable, as is the case, for example, where the perpetrator is a current partner.

Feminists would certainly suggest these approaches place the victim as the regulator of their own victimisation. In short, they would suggest that the methods used to describe and evaluate a classic
preventative measure, such as rape avoidance, are not capable of addressing the reality of sexual assault as women experience it. Rather, resistance strategies tend to presume that sexual assaults are isolated incidents, committed by strange and pathological men, which individual women may be creative and brave enough to avoid.

**A brief explanation of classic prevention frameworks**

In the simplest terms, prevention frameworks are concerned with systematic ways of preventing undesirable outcomes in a particular area. The idea of prevention is based on the recognition that undesirable outcomes are not randomly distributed, but follow patterns that can be discerned, with causes that can be defined. Prevention theory aims to elucidate the reasons for the non-random distribution, and then to identify modifiable risk factors that can be targeted for intervention (Mantak 1995; McMahon 2000).

Prevention frameworks are often described with reference to three levels of intervention: primary, secondary and tertiary. **Primary prevention** strategies tend to focus on stopping the problem from ever occurring. **Secondary prevention** aims to intervene in the early stages of a problem, to prevent it from escalating or spreading. Secondary prevention may also identify individuals or groups at particular risk for a problem, and target prevention efforts appropriately. **Tertiary prevention** attempts to minimise the harm resulting from an occurrence of the problem. There are obviously points at which these approaches cross over – a strategy identified as secondary prevention in one framework may appear as tertiary intervention in another.

Table 1 does not attempt to describe sexual assault prevention comprehensively. Rather, it positions some of the major responses to sexual assault within the broad categories of prevention. In addition to the three “levels” (primary, secondary and tertiary) of prevention, the target for intervention (victim, offender or environment) is also included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Major responses to sexual assault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies for prevention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Preventive goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of prevention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Victim directed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>To prevent sexual assault from occurring in the general population in the first place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early intervention with sub-populations identified as particularly “at risk” for either offending or victimisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>To minimise the long-term harm following sexual assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>* Rather than the primary/secondary distinction, a more useful way of categorising strategies that target the environment is between those concerned with the physical environment (street lighting, cameras at train stations) and those that attempt to alter the socio-cultural environment (for example, decreased tolerance for sexually aggressive behaviour in licensed venues).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proponents of prevention strategies for adult sexual assault might suggest there is far more common ground between victim advocates and prevention theory than is immediately apparent from a table such as Table 1. Indeed, they might point to victims groups’ continued engagement with strategies
designed to increase community awareness and/or educate the public about sexual assault as an exercise in prevention from a feminist standpoint.

Preventative education

Education has been identified as a key tool for the primary prevention of sexual assault (New South Wales Standing Committee on Social Issues 1996), and school programs designed to give children the skills to “detect and avoid potentially abusive situations” (Tomison and Poole 2000: 59) have been implemented on a somewhat ad hoc basis. While education as a strategy to prevent adult sexual violence is rare in Australia, it has been widely adopted in United States universities since the 1980s, probably as a result of the impact of studies revealing a high incidence of “date rape” among college women (Koss 1988; Koss and Cook 1993). Programs of varying duration and intensity have been delivered to college-age students, employing numerous strategies including the discussion of rape scenarios, videos, peer education, presentations by victims and police, and the discrediting of rape myths.

However, there has been considerable debate about the effectiveness of preventative education (Lonsway 1996; Fonlow and Richardson 1992) and the difficulties of evaluating the programs (Schewe and O’Donohue 1993). While these debates will not be discussed here, the United States experience again points to a distinction between traditional prevention, and attempts by women’s groups to integrate a gendered analysis of sexual assault into prevention strategies. A key way of categorising programs is by distinguishing those with a traditional focus on women’s risk management from feminist education programs that attempt to create a space for men’s responsibility in preventing sexual assault.

Education programs delivered to women focused on raising awareness of sexual assault and dispelling women’s belief that “it won’t happen to me”, encouraging women to reduce or avoid “risk”, and enhancing “protective factors”. Proponents of these programs argue that “although men are always responsible for their acts of sexual aggression against women, ethical considerations suggest that methods need to be designed to educate women to lower their risk for victimisation” (Hanson and Gidycz 1993: 1046). Concern that educating women to avoid victimisation reflects the historical tendency to blame women for sexual assault led to feminist education programs delivered to mixed audiences and to men exclusively (Frazier et al. 1994).

Feminist education programs differ from both rape avoidance and education to reduce women’s risk, by providing a gendered analysis of sexual assault, often organised around debunking rape myths. The target for intervention is transferred from women’s risky behaviour to men’s “rape supportive attitudes” (Foubert and McEwen 1998). This is an example of feminists actively attempting to shape prevention discourse. These programs tend to rely on a psychological model in which violence is positioned as the manifestation of individual rape supportive attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the vast majority of programs and evaluations focus on men’s attitudinal change, although questions have arisen around how attitudinal change can be effectively measured, how long its effects last, and whether it is related to behavioural change.

New directions in prevention

While this discussion has focused on some tensions between feminism and traditional approaches to sexual assault prevention, contemporary prevention approaches have been developing in ways that respond to many of the concerns discussed above.

For example, an approach sometimes described as the “New Public Health” agenda has extensively critiqued models of prevention that focus on behavioural change strategies targeting individuals ➤
(Baum 1998). There is also increasing emphasis of the need to take an “ecological” view of social problems, which suggests attention be given to analyses of gender and power in understanding sexual violence.

These shifts in prevention theory have led to growth in the public health literature on primary prevention and sexual assault (Mantak 1995; Becker and Reilly 1999; McMahon 2000). While new prevention discourses cannot adequately be described here, it should be noted that they offer a productive site for a more successful integration of feminist work in sexual assault with more formal prevention frameworks.

Contemporary approaches to primary prevention

Victim advocates have recently begun to position themselves as participants in debates around primary prevention in relation to sexual violence. Work by Moira Carmody and Kerry Carrington (2000) exemplifies this new engagement. Carmody and Carrington acknowledge the achievements of radical and liberal feminists to promote better responses to sexual assault summarised above: raising community awareness; engaging with state institutions for the provision of victim support services; and securing legal reform to redress the criminal justice system’s bias against sexual assault victims. However, they argue that despite these significant improvements in the response to sexual assault, little has been achieved in preventing sexual assault. Their particular concern is with sexual violence between intimate partners, which remains invisible and normalised, and therefore unresponsive to the kinds of preventative interventions discussed in this article.

A concern with intimate partner violence, and its resistance to prevention, leads Carmody and Carrington to propose a theory of primary prevention that begins with the recognition that sexual assault cannot be prevented by focusing on individual pathology in certain men, or the “risky” behaviour of certain women. According to these theorists, since sexual violence is rarely the result of aberrant behaviour, but often normalised under particular social conditions, it can only be prevented if models of “ethical sexuality” replace current configurations of gender and sexuality.

From this perspective, prevention work must “challenge those cultural norms that normalise intimate sexual violence as a ‘natural’ or ‘exaggerated’ expression of innate male sexuality” (Carmody and Carrington 2000: 355). One aspect of this project involves examining how masculine and feminine identities, and the practices that constitute sexual relations, are culturally produced, often in ways that sanction aggressive, coercive and exploitative sexual behaviour. Importantly, alternative sexual practices that allow men and women to negotiate consensual, reciprocal and mutually pleasurable sexual relations, are what these authors say needs to be promoted.2

Efforts to create spaces where women’s sexual relations with men might be non-exploitative and non-violent signals a re-emergence of the initial anti-rape movement’s interest in eliminating all forms of violence against women. However, there have been significant changes in analyses of the reproduction and transformation of gender relations and sexuality over time, and how active intervention in these processes can effect change.

Carrington (1995: 229) advocates shifting the burden for preventing sexual assault back onto men by problematising normative male sexual conduct, and cultivating a masculine sexual identity in which aggressive or coercive sexual encounters are viewed as “shameful, unethical, and undesirable forms of . . . conduct”.

The work of Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) is one example of this type of primary prevention. MASA aims to challenge dominant forms of masculinity, and encourages men to see sexual assault not as an isolated act, but as part of a broad spectrum of attitudes and behaviours that sustain men’s power over women. MASA critiques the therapeutic approach to treating individual offenders, arguing that such programs have failed to recognise the benefits that men accrue from their violent behaviour, instead portraying men as helpless victims, and minimising their responsibility in favour of concepts of provocation and shared responsibility (Pease 1995: 261). MASA also identifies the focus
on individual behaviour change as problematic, given the lack of attention and resources directed toward social change.

Analysts have also examined the ways in which social governance mechanisms (including prevention programs) shape identity and gender relations. Margot Rawsthorne’s (2002) work on preventing sexual violence among rural young people can be read as advocating a shift toward programs promoting “ethical sexuality”. She notes that most school or health based education programs emphasise “responsible sexuality”, which focuses on the risks and dangers of sex in terms of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, while remaining largely silent about pleasure. In contrast to this approach, Rawsthorne advocates “providing young people with the skills to “peel back” the layers of meaning surrounding sexuality” in order to interrogate the labels (for example, “frigid” or “slut”) and relationship dynamics (an exclusive focus on heterosexual intercourse) that constrain the types of identities and practices available to them. In this way, young people may be able to fashion non-violent and non-exploitative ways of being masculine or feminine.

Contemporary approaches like this simultaneously challenge, and attempt to reconstruct, traditional models of prevention. An explicit feminist engagement with prevention theory, and the integration of feminist analyses of sexual assault into formal prevention frameworks, may signal the emergence of a new collaboration in the struggle to end sexual violence.

Endnotes

1. As interest in rape avoidance grew, researchers became concerned with whether resistance increases the violence of the perpetrator and, therefore, the risk of injury to the victim (Ullman 1998; Quinsey and Upfold 1985). The question of whether there is a relationship between resistance and victim injury has been a difficult one, because it initially appeared that forceful resistance correlated with increased injury. However, the consensus now seems to be that what appeared as a causal relationship (victim resistance causes the perpetrator to become increasingly violent), in fact flows the other way: victim resistance increases proportionally to the initial violence of the attack.

2. Carmody and Carrington’s interest in promoting “ethical sexuality” reflects moves in wider prevention discourse to develop a dual focus on prevention and promotion. It is well recognised, in child protection literature, for example, that “models framed around prevention without promotion may be considered to offer a somewhat restrictive means to address social ills” (Tomison and Poole 2000: 11).

References


Given the uneasy alliance that has historically marked a divide between formal prevention models and victim advocates’ agendas, the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault invites readers to discuss these issues through 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.
Male survivors of sexual assault

ACSSA talks to SAMSSA Coordinator Tim Bavinton about a support service established in Canberra to assist male survivors of rape and sexual violence.

The Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault, known as SAMSSA, is a non-profit community service providing support, information and referral services to male survivors of sexual assault in the Australian Capital Territory, and their partners, friends, family and other supporters.

SAMSSA also provides professional development training, community education and schools programs on male sexual assault and related issues. The Service is auspiced by the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, with which it works collaboratively while maintaining an autonomous service delivery and management structure.

Researchers at the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) asked Tim Bavinton, the Coordinator of SAMSSA about the development of the Service, and the kinds of issues that relate to working with male survivors of sexual assault.

ACSSA: What was the need for a men’s sexual assault service?

Tim: In 1995 the ACT Government conducted a review of sexual assault services for adults that highlighted the need for sexual assault support services for male survivors. The need for a separate service for male survivors was identified primarily by counsellors, youth workers and other community service providers who worked directly with men who were increasingly disclosing experiences of sexual abuse as children or adolescents, but as adult men were often being excluded from counselling and support services that were exclusive to women and children. Moreover, little research had been conducted at this time to explore the issues that faced male survivors of child sexual assault, or the extent to which men were also the victims of adult rape.

ACSSA: How did SAMSSA get started?

Tim: The Service initially took the form of a pilot “needs assessment” project in 1997. The survey results of the project overwhelmingly supported the establishment of services for men and helped to design the framework and philosophy that would inform service delivery. The surveys also contributed important information about the nature and impact of sexual violence against men, which was also consistent with the more rigorous academic studies reported in the field. The results led to SAMSSA receiving funding through a service-purchasing contract with the ACT Government that enabled the employment of a second part-time worker.

ACSSA: What is the SAMSSA philosophy or framework for providing service?

Tim: One of the early tasks of the SAMSSA Steering Committee was to develop a comprehensive statement of philosophy and clear aims and objectives that would inform service delivery. Specifically, the Service aims to support men recovering from sexual assault and child sexual abuse, to educate and inform the community about male sexual assault issues, and to assist men to eradicate sexual violence perpetrated against men, women and children.

SAMSSA also aims to offer a service that is relevant, responsive, safe and accessible for individual service users within a pro-feminist analysis of sexual violence, and to work cooperatively with, and acknowledge the work of, women’s services in the area of sexual assault.

The Service’s philosophy states explicitly that:

- SAMSSA is opposed to all forms of sexual violence and domination.
- SAMSSA is a male-positive, gay-affirming and pro-feminist service.
- SAMSSA supports healthy, non-violent, life-affirming and creative ways of being men.
- SAMSSA recognises and welcomes the challenges and opportunities of diversity in the Australian community.
ACSSA: What are some of the difficulties you face in running a sexual assault support service for men?

Tim: The main difficulty arises from being a small agency with two part-time workers and finding a sustainable balance of resourcing versus need. In particular:

- the potential need to provide individual support services must be balanced against what is realistic within funding resources;
- the demand for education and training services (schools programs, professional development training, community groups) is high, and must be balanced against making information, referral and support services accessible and responsive to the needs of individual men seeking support;
- adequate time must be allocated to address service development, issue and profile-raising in the community, and participating in the infinite range of possible network development, systems advocacy, and consultations processes which are never reflected in funding agreements (that is, service contracts).

In terms of providing a sexual assault service for men, the difficulties lie in ensuring that the service is accessible and relevant to men, who are not a homogenous group, and hence a “one size fits all” approach is neither effective nor reflective of the diverse needs of Indigenous men, young men, gay and bisexual men, men from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, men with a disability, and so on. We have found that having a separate service identity that specifically names male sexual assault has been critical to men’s identification with the service.

**Table 1: Impacts and effects of sexual violence in men’s lives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMSSA Needs Assessment Survey, June 1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about sexuality, gender roles and/or body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of not being believed or not being taken seriously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem and self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt and/or self-blame for the assault or abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship difficulties or breakdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger / Hurt at being a victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about mental health / wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual difficulties or dysfunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts about suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust of others (particularly men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears about safety and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger at / hatred of men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholism (to avoid feelings and memories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissociation (psychological distancing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult relationships with co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addictive/compulsive use of drugs and alcohol (to avoid and repress feelings and memories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of anger and rage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep disturbance / nightmares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addictive/compulsive sexual behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme risk-taking behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks to and memory triggers of the assault or abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears of becoming a perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation and alienation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of other men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others a lot, training in the helping professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame and humiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of confidence and assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of injustice / passion for justice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACSSA: What are the general characteristics of male victim/survivors (for example, recent assault against adult males as distinct from adults who have experienced childhood sexual abuse/assault)?

Tim: The vast majority of men who use SAMSSA’s support services are adult survivors of sexual violence that occurred in childhood or during adolescence. Survivors of recent assaults are generally referred through the 24-hour Sexual Assault Crisis Counselling Service operated by Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, or through the police. Many men do not define their experience as sexually abusive even when they may have had very negative feelings and long-term impacts from particular experiences, and this is where community education work is important in allowing men to name that experience as sexual violence.

ACSSA: What are some of the key issues facing male victim/survivors of sexual assault?

Tim: The SAMSSA Needs Assessment Survey, undertaken in 1998, asked respondents to list the impact and effects of sexual violence in the lives of men, and the kinds of issues that are relevant to consider when working with male survivors.

The issues identified through the survey ranged from concerns about sexuality and gender (which are almost universal for male survivors); men’s sense of isolation (“I’m the only person this has happened to”) arising from a combination of personal and social shame and community silence on male sexual assault issues; and issues about the gender of the counsellor-worker allocated to work with survivors. With respect to this last issue, SAMSSA’s experience is that most men are either ambivalent about the gender of their counsellor, or appear in roughly equal numbers in terms of having a strong...
preference for working only with men or women. This is often influenced by the gender of the perpetrator, or specific socio-cultural needs.

**ACSSA: How are male victim/survivor’s needs similar to and/or different from women’s?**

**Tim:** The issues for male survivors are often similar to the issues identified by women. The major exception concerns sexuality and gender roles – most male survivors report confused feelings and thoughts about their sexuality, where this is not so prominent an issue for women. Alongside the fear many men have of being disbelieved, the level of social homophobia that exists across communities works to often silence men from speaking out about their experiences of sexual violence. The order of processing emotional responses can also be different for men. Workaholism as a numbing strategy is socially sanctioned for men much more so than women. The degree of self-harming behaviour or suicide may also differ between men and women survivors.

**ACSSA: Are there unique issues at stake for male victim/survivors when considering whether to pursue a criminal justice response?**

**Tim:** Not generally. I think the same issues are relevant for men and women – the difficulty in prosecuting historical matters, the emphasis on consent in the burden of proof (“my word against his”), re-victimisation through the process. These are all issues of concern to men as well as women. I think the issues survivors consider in pursuing a criminal justice outcome are less related to gender, and more to culture and ethnicity, (dis)ability, access to legal advice (financial resources), and credibility in “the system” (mental health status, previous criminal history etc). Clearly some men and women are more advantaged than others on this basis.

The basic problem arises because the justice system purports to be the forum where rights are upheld and grievances addressed in our community, but this is rarely the experience of the sexual assault survivor within that system. Instead, it becomes the forum where a survivor’s overwhelming experience of sexual violation is reduced to a few generic charges, where once a report is made to police decisions are made outside of their control: they can be harassed and bullied in the giving of their testimony, they are not generally recognised or treated as the aggrieved party in our criminal justice process but a witness to a crime against an impersonal State/Crown, and sex without consent is routinely deemed consensual (or at best unproven) by judicial fiat.

**ACSSA: What advice would you give others in the community about responding to a male friend/partner/relative who discloses sexual assault to them?**

**Tim:** We consistently advocate that everyone in the community can respond to a disclosure of sexual assault or sexual abuse without requiring a specialist degree or years of training. The two messages that are most important for a survivor to hear at the time of disclosure are “It’s not your fault,” and “I believe you,” because these are the two things that survivors fear – that they are to blame for what happened, and that they won’t be believed when they tell. These messages allow a survivor to continue to talk and to seek further assistance.

Another useful tool for us all is to consider how we respond if someone tells us they have been in a car accident. The range of emotional, psychological and behaviour reactions are similar for survivors of sexual violence. And if partners, family and friends respond as they would, giving plenty of space to tell the story, assisting with medical and legal information, expecting a range of reactions etc, then they will be on the right path. Community acknowledgement and acceptance are central to the recovery process for survivors of all kinds of traumatic experiences.

**ACSSA: Do counsellor/advocates need different or additional skills when working with men?**

**Tim:** The diversity of men and men’s needs and experiences requires a diversity of support options. The critical skills and attitude of the supporter are the same regardless of the gender of the client. A willingness to listen, understand and empathise with the client’s experience, and the capacity to engage and build rapport is central to the therapeutic or support relationship. No single counsellor, therapist or support worker is capable of being all things to all people. I think there are useful strategies and ideas for working with young men, or Indigenous men, for example, that facilitate that rapport and allow the greatest opportunity for sustaining the connection, but I don’t think it’s a simple gender issue. My general response to any “working with men . . .?” question is to ask “which men?”
ACSSA: Does SAMSSA have a working relationship or established procedures with ACT police? For example, in Victoria the Police Code of Practice mandates that police must ensure victim/survivors of recent assaults receive crisis care from a Centre Against Sexual Assault within two hours of the report being made.

**Tim:** SAMSSA has call-out arrangements with Canberra Rape Crisis Centre in terms of providing an immediate crisis care response. Under the auspice of the Centre, SAMSSA is also party to protocols with the Australian Federal Police Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team. The relationship with that unit is very positive, but further work in building and extending the protocol to general duties officers is required.

ACSSA: Is the recognition that men can be victims of sexual assault stalled or growing?

**Tim:** I think recent media coverage of sexual abuse of boys in education, religious and sporting institutions has increased community awareness of male sexual assault in general. However, I think we will face difficulties in having sexual abuse within the family (and extended social network) recognised and addressed.

It is easy to be scandalised by the paedophile priest, or outraged by stranger assaults. It is much harder to sustain that rage when it is our family members and friends. This is the most difficult aspect of sexual violence for the Australian community to grasp – that the family and the family home are foundational to the stability of society, and are happy, safe places for many people and at the same time the family (and school, church, club, sporting team etc) is the location of horrendous levels of violence and abuse for many others.

The other impediment to the recognition of the impact of sexual violence for boys and men is the attitude that even if it does happen, they are not harmed or affected by it, that sexual abuse is not really an important issue for our community. I think that the scale of sexual victimisation and exploitation of women, children and men, and the way it is normalised and/or ignored, is so overwhelming that most people cannot stay aware of it for too long without having their basic ideas about the safety of the world and the goodness of humanity profoundly challenged. So most people simply don’t think about it for very long.

ACSSA is grateful to Tim Bavinton for taking the time to discuss the work of SAMSSA.

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**Non-reporting and Hidden Recording of Sexual Assault: An International Literature Review, Dr Denise Lievore of the Australian Institute of Criminology for the Australian Government’s Office of the Status of Women, Canberra.**

While there is a substantial international literature on sexual assault, much about its extent and nature remains unclear, partly due to the hidden nature of the offence and high levels of under-reporting to police.

A recently published report by Dr Denise Lievore draws on a range of international data sources to offer a comprehensive analysis of:

- socio-cultural, personal and situational factors influencing women’s reporting decisions;
- differences in reporting and recording of sexual assault in rural and urban areas;
- the hidden recording of sexual assault as an aspect of attrition within the criminal justice system;
- recording of sexual assault in other systems; and
- current gaps in knowledge.

Dr Lievore gives particular emphasis in her report to how these various issues and factors impact on Indigenous women, women from other culturally diverse communities, women in prison, and women in rural Australia.

Her overview highlights that there are many commonalities in the reasons for non-reporting across countries and cultures. However, cultural and social specificities often mediate the significance of particular barriers to reporting for women in certain cultural groups, thus demonstrating how marginalisation is both a key risk factor for sexual assault and a barrier to accessing the justice system. The report suggests that a range of initiatives are required to increase the confidence victim/survivors have in seeking support from services, from their communities and from the law.

This report provides an excellent resource for those who seek contemporary and reliable estimates on the hidden figure of sexual assault in Australia.

To obtain a free copy, phone Jennifer Farley on (02) 6271 5623, or download a pdf file version from the Office of the Status of Women website: www.osw.dpmc.gov.au.
The annual 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women Campaign has been an organising strategy by individuals and groups from around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Beginning in 1991, the Campaign calls for an understanding of violence against women that sees women's rights as human rights, emphasising that all forms of violence, whether perpetrated in the public or private sphere, are a violation of human rights. The dates chosen for the Campaign symbolically make this link: 25 November marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and 10 December is International Human Rights Day. The 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including 1 December – World AIDS Day; 3 December – International Day of People with a Disability; and 6 December – the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

For a full list of conferences and events visit the Conferences page on the ACSSA website: http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/conferences.html

The work listed in these pages comprise selections from the new additions to the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault library collection over the last six months. They may be borrowed from the Australian Institute of Family Studies library via the interlibrary loan system. Compiled by Institute Librarian, Joan Kelleher.

**Campus culture and sexual assault**


This study of over 4,000 female college students uses two different survey methods in parallel to learn about the sexual assault of women. The authors estimate that, based on their findings, women at a college with 10,000 female students could experience more than 350 rapes per year – a finding with serious policy implications for US college administrators. The study also reinforces the importance of improving education and knowledge about sexual assault.


This book explores sexual assault and relationship violence within the American campus culture. Topics discussed include date rape, acquaintance rape, same sex assaults, and explores college prevention strategies in the light of student culture.

**Court procedures**


This book examines how the English criminal justice system responds to sexual assault crimes. Specifically, Lees examines current statistics and attrition rates for rape offences, and through court transcripts explores the current operation of legal and judicial attitudes in applying the rules of evidence and procedure in rape cases.


This article examines the extent to which women’s sexual histories are used as evidence in rape trials, based on a study of rape trials in the County Court in Victoria. The article looks at the frequency of use of women’s sexual histories in rape trials with a focus on the mechanisms used for assessing whether a woman’s sexual history is relevant in the determination of rape allegations. Findings are compared with other recent Australian studies.


The sexual offence charges laid against swimming coach Scott Volkers in late 2002 piqued public attention and significant interest in the transparency of decision-making processes by the police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This led to a decision by Queensland’s Crime and Misconduct Commission to conduct a formal inquiry into how the criminal justice system deals with sexual offences. The Inquiry did not limit itself to child sexual abuse, but included all forms of sexual abuse whether perpetrated against children or adults. This report covers sexual offence research and legislation, before considering how the Queensland criminal justice system responds to reported sexual offences. The Commission makes several recommendations for reform of the criminal justice system.

**Cultural diversity**

*Cultural diversity and services against sexual violence: a report from the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASAV)*, by W. Weeks, Melbourne, Vic, CASA House, 2002.

This report presents findings and recommendations from research into the access and equity practices of funded sexual assault services across Australia in relation to service delivery to women and children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander populations, and culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Challenges facing services against sexual violence relating to access and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and culturally and linguistically diverse communities are explored, and barriers to access are identified. Case studies of projects and initiatives by services are presented as examples of effective access and equity practices for service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and culturally and linguistically diverse women and children.

**Drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault**


This article reviews studies on the use of alcohol in the context of sexual offences, looking specifically at consumption levels found in or reported by victim/survivors and offenders. The article links prevention with behaviour modification (mostly by victims), assesses the risks and outcomes of alcohol use, and suggests the extent to which alcohol figures in sexual offence cases is significant.

An increase in reports of drug-assisted sexual assault, including those involving spiked drinks, has been noted by a range of service providers across NSW. The project described in this article explores the way young women use alcohol in social situations, their attitudes towards risk and safety and, in particular, their perception of the risk of having a drink spiked. The paper concludes that to have an impact on the incidence of spiked drinks, health promotion interventions need to be multi strategic and involve collaboration with stakeholders from different sectors. (Journal abstract)


This article explores drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault in Australia. The background of sexual assault involving drink spiking in Australia is discussed. Responses to drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault are examined with a focus on community education and information campaigns, as well as the implications of these campaigns on victim/survivors of drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault. Implications for the state of women’s social action and sexual assault services are also discussed.

Feminist anti-rape movement


This book examines the feminist anti-rape movement, and discusses American feminist, political and social attitudes to rape and rape prevention.

Intimate partner violence


This book discusses the incidence and emotional impact of sexual assault by women against women, featuring case studies from an American survey. The book also discusses the response and attitudes of the legal system and social services, language and definition issues, and societal attitudes to lesbians.

Law reform


The author outlines the main recommendations of the Victorian law Reform Commission’s report ‘The Sexual Offences: Interim Report’, a report that aims to make the legal system less intimidating for victims of sexual assault. He discusses how the report has been received, and includes statements by commentators to the effect that the report is a step towards a more sensitive legal system.


This report outlines current sexual offence laws in Victoria. It also considers the police and criminal justice response to sexual assault including a study that considers changes in reporting figures and prosecution outcomes. Specifically, the report looks at: the trauma of giving evidence, the need for special arrangements to be made for children, and the current legal definition of rape and the meaning of consent, and other sexual offences.

Risk factors


This study uses data from the 1999 US Youth Risk Behaviour Survey to determine the prevalence of date violence in adolescent females and suggests there are demographic, psychological and behavioural factors that place young women at greater risk of sexual assault victimisation.

The Women Against Violence journal

The Women Against Violence Journal is a national journal examining issues relevant to the work to stop violence against women. The Journal is founded on the belief that those working against violence against women welcome the opportunity to document initiatives, policy and practice development and encourage debate. The Journal reflects a feminist philosophy and a social justice framework.

The editorial committee is interested in receiving contributions which may stimulate debate on current policy directions, practice issues or share information about new initiatives relating to women as the targets of violence in our society.
**National Project on Drink Spiking**

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) has been commissioned by the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department to conduct a national project investigating the nature and extent of drink spiking in Australia.

The AIC defines “drink spiking” as an incident where drugs and/or alcohol are added to a drink without the consent of the person who will be consuming the drink. To get a clearer understanding of the circumstances surrounding incidents that involve drink spiking (location, time, type of drink spiked, type of agent added, effects of agent, whether additional crimes were committed, whether offender is known or unknown to the person spiked), the AIC intends to conduct telephone interviews with people who believe they have been a victim of drink spiking in either 2002 or 2003.

Victims are encouraged to call 1800 008125 (toll free) to discuss the circumstances surrounding the incident. Interviews will commence on Monday 17 November 2003, and conclude on Wednesday 17 December 2003.

It is hoped that the information from the telephone interviews will improve knowledge and understanding about the nature of drink spiking incidents in Australia and assist in the development of effective prevention and information strategies.

For further information about the interviews, access the AIC’s website at www.aic.gov.au or contact AIC senior research analyst Natalie Taylor on (02) 6260 9254.

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**Sexual offenders**

Behavioural indicators of sadistic sexual murder predict the presence of sadistic sexual fantasy in a normative sample, by N.S Gray…[et al.], *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.18, no.9, Sept. 2003, pp. 1018-1034.

To shed more light on the etiology of sadistic sex crimes and risk assessment, this study compared non-offending males with sexual murderers using a set of behavioural, experiential, and clinical indicators.


This study focuses on the likelihood of those within the general criminal population committing their first serious offence (murder or sexual assault of an adult women, including rape). It examines the possibility of looking back at the previous criminal histories of those who have been convicted of murder or sexual assault to see if they might provide an insight into patterns in offending behaviour.


This article reviews the definitions of sexual sadism used in diagnosis with sex offenders, and comments on their clinical value.

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**Trafficking in women**


The author suggests that any excitement about the Federal Government’s claim that it will combat the trafficking of women should be held in check until real measures are introduced to protect the victims and prosecute offenders. She discusses the case of Puongtong Simaplee, a victim of sexual slavery who died in detention. The author suggests measures for preventing the trafficking of women into sexual slavery.


This article examines the new United Nations ‘Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children’, which opened for signature in December 2000. The author presents a feminist analysis of the Trafficking Protocol and of the feminist discourse involved in its development, beginning with the re-emergence in the 1980s and 1990s of significant feminist concerns about trafficking and prostitution. The author offers a critique of the Trafficking Protocol, concluding that it has some strengths, but also some major weaknesses.

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**Treatment programs for sex offenders**


This article reviews the use of drug therapy, including hormone therapy and antidepressants, to reduce the sex drive of sex offenders as an adjunct to psychotherapy. Preliminary results from a trial of depo-Provera hormone therapy are considered.


This paper discusses the importance of community education in the prevention of men’s physical and sexual violence against women. The focus is on lessening the cultural constructions of masculinity involving dominance and aggression, and undermining the social supports that operate to reinforce violence against women. Community education campaigns are outlined according to three strategy areas: defining manhood as non-violent; drawing on alternatives within masculine culture; and men “speaking out” against violence against women. Key challenges in violence prevention work with men are identified and discussed.


This literature review examines the effectiveness of various factors and techniques in psychotherapy and cognitive behaviour therapy for treating sex offenders, focusing on therapist characteristics and therapeutic frameworks.
You are invited to help 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 suggestions for possible areas of research, please fill in the section below and return it to ACSSA at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Comments can also be provided on-line via our website, or email us at: acssa@aifs.gov.au.

What other services would you find useful for your work?

What topics would you like covered in the Centre’s publications, or considered for research projects?

Online conference papers

The following on-line papers were given at a Sydney conference in February 2003, titled “Practice and prevention: contemporary issues in adult sexual assault conference,” Sydney, NSW, NSW Attorney-General’s Department, Crime Prevention Division, 2003, Online only.


Based on his experience with the Toronto Police Service Sex Crimes Unit, including his involvement in the restructuring process and development of a new mandate for the Sexual Assault Squad, the author presents a guide for law enforcement agencies interested in establishing or enhancing a Sex Crimes Unit or Sexual Assault Squad. He provides a history of the Sexual Assault Squad, which was formed in 1989, and discusses the judicial inquiry that was concerned with the investigative process, the subsequent Campbell Report, and the restructuring of the Sexual Assault Squad. He also discusses the squad’s new mandate principles: intelligence led policing, risk management, and pre sexual assault indicators.


Claire L’Heureux-Dube, the celebrated though retired Supreme Court Justice in Canada, discusses legislative moves in Canada and by the United Nations to address the widespread problem of violence against women, and in particular, sexual assault. She emphasises the importance of eliminating myths and stereotypes about gender from law, and ultimately from social values and customs. She explains how the legal process can revictimise complainants, undermine their credibility and deny them justice through biased legal interpretations of concepts such as rape, consent, discovery and self-defence. She presents cases in which myths and stereotypes were recognised by the Supreme Court of Canada and discusses three sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that potentially affect the way in which the state treats sexual violence against women.


The author discusses the context of state organised or state sanctioned violence and sexual assault, the intention of sexual assault as a weapon of war, the effects that this has upon victims, survivors and their families and community, and the implications for refugee survivors of sexual assault and their communities of the increasingly state sanctioned voicing of racist opinion and commentary in Australia today. The author discusses her experience of working with refugee women clients and warns that the current Australian political climate of racism will only further the trauma experienced by these women.


In considering the issue of people with an intellectual disability who have been sexually assaulted, the author discusses the following areas: understanding the meaning of disability; a profile of sexual assault for this group of people; and responses to these issues. She presents information on the diversity of people with an intellectual disability and some historical background on how they have been treated by the community and by the law. In profiling sexual abuse of this group,
the author identifies ways in which victim/survivors face particular difficulties in disclosing and/or in accessing support in relation to sexual assault. She also outlines the effects of the abuse, components of prevention, addressing safety, and interviewing about sexual assault.


The author documents the growing awareness of the prevalence of rape in Aboriginal communities across Australia from the 1980s until the 1990s, and the work being done to address the problem. She remains incredulous that there is still inadequate information about the topic to work with and emphasises the need to act now to prevent the continuation of the extremely high levels of violence being perpetrated against Aboriginal women and children.


Some of the evidentiary considerations relevant to sexual assault cases are the reason that many victims avoid reporting sexual assaults. Justice Wood presents a checklist of directions that judges are now obliged to deliver to juries in sexual offence trials. He details the distinction between a comment and a warning, and then discusses a range of the directions in more detail that include: the Murray Direction, the Longman Direction, and evidentiary considerations, including coincidence, relationship and ‘guilty passion’ evidence, the use of evidence where there is more than one complainant, the hearsay rule, the issue of delay in, or absence of, complaint, and evidence of recently recovered memory. Some suggestions for reform are also considered.


The author offers a critical analysis of the existing data concerning adult sexual assault in the NSW criminal justice system. She engages with questions about the role of the criminal justice system in responding to sexual assault and challenges the assumption that punitive policies allied with law and order rhetoric offer improved safety for women. She discusses how partial our knowledge about sexual assault is in that the criminal justice system responds to only a very small proportion of sexual assault matters that are then the subject of continuous attrition cases proceed through the courts. (Author abstract, edited)


The author discusses the protection of the individual’s human rights within sexual assault cases. He outlines international declarations and conventions that uphold human rights, and discusses to what extent the ways in which sexual assault offences are prosecuted in domestic law raise human right implications. He states the need for a balance to be struck so that victims are not revictimised and the legitimate rights of accused persons and others involved in the process are not infringed upon.