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Book Reviews

Henry N and Powell A (eds) (2014) *Preventing Sexual Violence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Overcoming a Rape Culture.* Basingstoke, UK and New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan.

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In the past five years, in the US, Canada, the UK, NZ and Australia, we have witnessed an expansion of government policy and program initiatives directed at preventing sexual violence before it occurs. Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell's edited collection, *Preventing Sexual Violence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Overcoming a Rape Culture*, is the first to critically question and examine such policies. The collection draws together a unique group of international scholars from diverse interdisciplinary perspectives incorporating a broad range of theoretical frameworks. The book lays down a challenge to governments, primary prevention practitioners, educators and the public generally: take nothing for granted in striving to develop and improve best practice prevention policies that work.

Several authors address the question of what is the 'best' conceptual framework upon which primary prevention policies should be built. A number of the chapters (notably chapters by Bob Pease and Gillian Fletcher, respectively) question the 'public health models' at the heart of many primary prevention policies. Such models treat violence as an 'illness', and endeavour to isolate 'risk factors' that need to be tackled in order to eradicate the 'disease'. As Pease warns, such models risk individualising the causes and impacts of violence, and may fail to address the structural and cultural scripts that enable men's violence against women. The confronting but important point is that if the conceptual or theoretical framework for policy formation is misguided, the types of intervention practices that such policies produce will also miss their marks.

Fletcher argues that there is a 'black box' at the heart of primary prevention work. There may be agreement about the need for a less violent culture, yet many policies are vague on important 'how to' questions, such as how to 'promote respectful gender relations' and 'enhance parenting of young women' (138-139).

Moira Carmody reflects on the scant literature on the process of designing, implementing and evaluating the training of personnel who deliver primary prevention programs. Articulated models for educator training are rare, and this results in variation and unevenness in the delivery of training. This deficit is no easy one to fix. Carmody suggests that educators can themselves contribute to filling the gap by writing about their experiences in the field (166).

Given all the articles and books written in the past four decades on sexual violence and its prevention, it is hard to imagine that uncharted territories still exist. Yet, this book draws

attention to the further gaps in our current knowledge. Antonia Quadara considers the relative paucity of information about the 'undetected perpetrators' of sexual violence. While the manner in which they offend may differ from detected perpetrators, Quadara argues the distinctions between the two groups may not be so great. It is not that undetected perpetrators are '"all-too-normal" but that their behaviours, desires and interactions are *normalised* ...' (44; emphasis in original). Strategies must target the ordinariness of perpetrator tactics to ensure that behaviours (for example, consuming degrading pornography, group drinking, verbally pressuring for sex) are not normalised as simply 'boys being boys' but are recognised as behaviours of sexual coercion. The point is well made that masculinity is a key site of engagement for primary prevention policy and practice.

New forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) also need to be recognised and addressed. Henry and Powell argue '...that the contours of a global rape culture have become more prominent or visible in the era of the user-generated content and social networking sites typical of Web 2.0.' (86) While there needs to be recognition of the unique characteristics of technosocial sexual violence, they argue that certain existing prevention approaches may be applicable to this 'novel' form of sexual violence. They advocate fostering education initiatives towards a digital citizenship that includes both individual and organisational commitments to protect Internet users.

Given that studies indicate a person other than the victim and the perpetrator is present in approximately one third of sexual assaults (170), bystander programs are another important area for primary prevention initiatives. As Alison Cares, Mary Moynihan and Victoria Banyard argue, effecting attitudinal change must be linked to changing behaviours to encourage active intervention and discourage inaction, which serves to support sexual violence. Powell, drawing on the first survey of Victorian attitudes towards intervening in relation to sexist and discriminatory behaviours, argues that bystander approaches have the capacity to refocus prevention to address individuals, organisational, institutional and societal levels of social change.

While the criminal justice system is often understood as a tertiary response to sexual violence, Wendy Larcombe argues that law's regulatory and communicative functions have an important primary prevention role. In theory at least, the criminal law aims to promulgate norms to guide social conduct, but in the context there is a disconnect between aim and achievement. While the criminal law states that consent must be 'free and voluntary', in practice evidence of force, threats or the use of a weapon are indicators of a prosecution more likely to succeed. Furthermore, well-intentioned statutory reform has increased complexity. Rules speak largely to 'experts' and institutional players – police, lawyers, judges – and not to the broader community. Law's potential to communicate norms and play a part in preventing sexual violence is unrealised (79).

This book is an important resource for a wide readership. My only 'complaint' is that it so powerfully documents gaps and poses questions, I was left wanting more 'answers' and 'solutions'. I want to: read the Primary Prevention Policy that is theoretically framed around questions of patriarchy and the processes of gendering; recover the 'black box' and listen to its recordings; read the narratives of practitioners who have written about their experiences of developing and delivering successful Sexual Violence Prevention; use technology within an ethos of digital citizenship; live alongside bystanders that promote and model gender equity; and teach and practise with sexual assault laws that clearly articulate ethical norms and guide good behaviour. Nevertheless, this collection provides a strong interdisciplinary framework for the next steps in these directions.

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