

Engaging men in sexual assault prevention

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This paper examines men's role in the prevention of sexual assault. Sexual assault prevention has seen shifts from risk-avoidance messages aimed at women to a more inclusive paradigm that proposes both women *and* men have an important role to play in the prevention of all forms of violence against women—including sexual assault and domestic and family violence. There is a lack of empirical evidence of the impact or outcomes related to men's involvement in sexual assault primary prevention. However, there is evidence that indicates that gender equality and respectful relationships are key to reducing sexual violence.

Knowing *why* it is important to engage men in primary prevention efforts does not tell us *how* to achieve this goal. Examples of prevention programs that seek to engage men are presented in this paper. The concept of resistance to prevention messages is salient for men who may feel helpless, defensive, or a lack of legitimacy in a field that has traditionally been seen as a feminist space. In seeking to engage men in this space, it becomes necessary to balance a tension between the need to employ language that is based on male gender stereotypes (e.g., men as competitive, aggressive, dominant) with the goal of challenging those same gender stereotypes. A strong belief in gender stereotypes and a weak belief in gender equality are key determinants in the perpetration of sexual violence.

KEY MESSAGES

- The next step in sexual assault prevention is to engage men—both as facilitators and as participants in prevention.
- If men are to be engaged in the prevention of sexual assault there must be a shared understanding of the fact that men have a positive role to play.
- A consideration of how to engage men in prevention efforts must take into account the ways in which some men may resist prevention messages—whether that resistance stems from discomfort, rejection of ideas, or from other sources.
- There is a tension when masculine gender stereotypes are used as a tool for engaging men in prevention while evidence suggests that these same stereotypes can contribute as underlying factors in the perpetration of sexual assault and violence against women.



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Introduction

Prevention of sexual assault has traditionally been a space occupied by women—both as educators and as the audience for messages on how to keep safe from the threat of sexual violence. More recently, the principles informing prevention of sexual assault have shifted to acknowledge the importance of men as facilitators/educators and as participants in sexual assault prevention programs.¹ This is because the social and economic determinants of (hetero) sexual violence are:

- gender inequality between men and women;
- subscription to gender norms and stereotypes;
- hostile attitudes towards women;
- cultures in organisational and peer contexts that are based on masculine norms; and
- social and institutional cultures which accept gender inequality and gender stereotypes as “normal” or “natural”, or at least fail to condemn them (VicHealth, 2009).

Rather than the focus being specifically on reducing sexual violence, the focus is on creating gender equality, interrogating gender stereotypes, using information to correct hostile attitudes toward women, and supporting a shift in cultural and institutional attitudes around gender and sexuality (VicHealth, 2007; World Health Organization [WHO], 2010).

These aims are very much a whole-of-society approach and therefore it is logical to encourage and empower men to be part of the sexual assault prevention process. It takes both men and women to achieve gender equality, to foster respectful relationships and to support a safer community. This has led to questions of how best to engage men in the sexual assault prevention space. Several prevention organisations have begun the work of recruiting and engaging men (see Tables 3–5 for more details). This paper presents the shifts in how the prevention of sexual assault has been conceptualised and how this evolution has led to the idea that engaging men in prevention is an important next step in the fight to reduce sexual violence.

In the process of engaging men, it is important to highlight the difference between engaging men as facilitators/educators and as recipients of prevention

¹ This paper is concerned with sexual assault perpetrated by men against women. It is not meant to suggest that men are not victims of female perpetrated sexual assault, nor that sexual assault does not occur in same-sex relationships.

messages or participants in prevention programs. The concept of men's resistance to sexual assault prevention messages is an issue for consideration in the prevention field. Messages may come in the form of a newspaper story, billboards, education campaigns on television, or programs for first time parents. Resistance to messages may come from men's discomfort in talking about issues of gender and sex, or they may be an articulation of a rejection of the ideas included in prevention messages—such as the need to break down gender stereotypes and work toward gender equality.

Strategies to overcome resistance by seeking to relate to men in masculine language and via “masculine” interests (e.g., sport) may create contradictory prevention messages. For example, prevention strategies may use stereotypical masculine language or concepts while simultaneously telling men that violence and aggression are not acceptable. This is exemplified by the prevention campaign “My Strength is Not for Hurting” created by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA, 2005), which uses men's strength both as a gender stereotype and as an expression of anti-violence—it is examined later in this Wrap.

Although there is no clear empirical evidence that engaging men will be of benefit to the field of sexual assault prevention, there are a number of reasons to consider it a good next step. Any direct indications that prevention is working as a strategy may take years to become apparent, and will most likely be evident in sexual assault incidence and prevalence statistics, as well as crime statistics. This Wrap will consider some of the concerns around engaging men, taking for granted that engaging men is a worthwhile strategy in this space. Therefore the issues considered in this paper are about men's engagement, their possible resistance and any correctives to resistance.

This Wrap is aimed at practitioners working in the field; those who facilitate prevention programs, or do community outreach for the purpose of preventing sexual violence against women. The paper will explore all of the issues outlined above in five sections. The first will be a brief history of prevention of sexual assault and how we got here. The second section explores men's role in sexual assault prevention. The third section is a discussion on what is meant by

Box 1: Consultations with practitioners in sexual assault prevention

ACSSA consulted with five practitioners from four organisations working in both primary and tertiary prevention, or currently implementing prevention policies in their workplace. Their responses to questions about their work are included throughout the paper.

Moreland City Council, Victoria

Andrew Day: Director of Social Development for Moreland City Council
Moreland City Council, like many councils in Victoria and around Australia, is committed to supporting women and children in their communities. Moreland City Council have made a commitment to prevent domestic violence in their area by focusing on increasing gender equity through policies such as the fair and equitable access to sporting activities for women and girls. The building of gender equity sits firmly in the primary prevention framework. <www.moreland.vic.gov.au/>

No To Violence, Victoria

Rodney Vlasis: Policy and Practice Coordinator

No To Violence, the Male Family Violence Prevention Association, is the Victorian peak body for men's behaviour change programs, providing training, professional development, resources, standards or practice and sector advocacy. No To Violence also works in the primary prevention arena. They work closely with other family violence agencies and align themselves with women's agencies in the family violence sector. Men's behaviour change programs usually work with men who are using violent and controlling behaviour against women. Clients can be self-referred or court mandated to participate in the program. <ntv.org.au/>

Women's Health Victoria

Petra Beggall: Program and Strategic Development Manager
Rose Durey: Policy and Health Promotion Manager

Women's Health Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. Women's Health Victoria run “Take a Stand”, which is a workplace primary prevention program that encourages individuals to speak up when they hear or see attitudes or behaviours that support violence against women. <whv.org.au/what-we-do/take-a-stand-against-domestic-violence>

YMCA, Victoria

Scott Holmes: Healthy Workplaces Senior Advisor, YMCA

YMCA Victoria has begun a process to introduce prevention training to managers and senior staff in the workplace. YMCA has 150 sites across Victoria and close to 6,000 staff and volunteers. The focus will be on primary prevention through the Preventing Violence Against Women Program, which seeks to build capacity in the organisation and it's employees to prevent gendered violence. <www.victoria.ymca.org.au/>

Note: A range of projects and educators across the country were approached. The above four projects—which coincidentally were all from Victoria—were the ones that responded and were able to speak to us. If you are aware of other prevention programs with men, do please let us know about them.

engagement. The fourth section examines the challenges in engaging men and includes an exemplar of the tensions in challenging gender stereotypes while using the same stereotypes to draw in a male audience. The final section presents implications for practice.

The paper includes the comments of several practitioners (see Box 1) currently working in the field of primary and tertiary prevention, or those currently implementing prevention policies in their workplace. These stories from the field are an important component of our understanding of how sexual assault and violence prevention actually work on the ground, considering that practice may sometimes outdate theory, particularly for primary prevention where there are more men involved than ever doing prevention work in their day-to-day jobs (R. Imbesi, personal communication, 20 May 2013).

A brief history of sexual assault prevention strategies

There are three distinct levels of prevention as they relate to sexual assault and violence against women: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Primary prevention of sexual assault and domestic and family violence is concerned with preventing violence before it occurs. “Some primary prevention strategies focus on changing behaviour and/or building the knowledge and skills of individuals” (VicHealth, 2007, p. 9). Primary prevention began as awareness raising, such as an advertising campaign on television² and billboards, or information sessions at work organised by human resources departments. However, it now goes beyond that. Primary prevention now aims to change attitudes and behaviours.

Quadara and Wall (2012) elucidated:

Primary prevention is concerned with collective behaviour change rather than only about increasing knowledge or awareness about sexual assault (though it may do this as part of the process). This is an important distinction. The overall goal of primary prevention is to reduce the actual incidence of sexual assault within the population. Working backwards then, it targets the factors that give rise to, or create the conditions for gender-based violence, including sexual assault, and influence behaviour. These conditions include the structural barriers of gender inequality and gender socialisation, and social norms that enable gender-based violence. Essentially, primary prevention must strengthen protective factors and overcome risk factors that facilitate sexual assault. Increasing knowledge or awareness of sexual assault may well be a characteristic of primary prevention but it is not a sufficient outcome.³ (p. 5)

Secondary prevention refers to early intervention strategies targeted at groups or individuals who may indicate a risk of perpetration or have perpetrated violence or controlling behaviour (possibly) for the first time. Similarly, secondary prevention may target groups who are identified as at risk of being victimised or of perpetrating violence and/or sexual assault.

Tertiary prevention relates to interventions after violence has occurred. This can include legal sanctions for perpetrators and therapeutic interventions for victim/survivors and perpetrators. A tertiary prevention initiative explored in this paper is men’s behaviour change programs. Men’s behaviour change programs seek to educate men on the inappropriateness of sexual and physical violence and to help them change their thinking and behaviour toward more equitable and respectful relationships with women. Men can volunteer for behaviour change programs or may be required to attend due to court order.

2 For example, the television awareness raising campaign “Violence against Women. Australia says No” <www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCCT-Bo07oc>

3 For a more comprehensive account of sexual assault primary prevention, please see: *What is effective primary prevention in sexual assault: Translating the evidence for action* (Quadara & Wall, 2012).

The history of sexual assault prevention conceptual frameworks has been clearly outlined by Moira Carmody (2009). Carmody indicated the following evolution in the thinking related to sexual violence against women.

Table 1: A brief history of theoretical approaches to sexual assault prevention	
Decade	Feminist and theoretical approaches to sexual assault prevention—shifts over time
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feminism discussed sexual violence as a matter of public, rather than private concern. ▪ Services and policies were being funded and established to deal with the issues of sexual violence against women. Funding directed toward specialist responses, ranging from sexual assault counselling, to police and health services. ▪ The language of gender tended to deny the diversity amongst women and men and positioned women as victims and men as perpetrators. ▪ A growing understanding that many women were sexually assaulted by men they know.
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual violence was considered a highly gendered crime. Lack of understanding that masculinity was also a gender and that men could be sexually victimised. ▪ Eventually diversity amongst women was recognised. This means an acknowledgement that different women experienced sexual violence in different ways and required different responses. ▪ Masculinities studies began to emerge, acknowledging that there were many ways to enact masculinity—men’s groups formed, looking for a way to understand the causes and responses to sexual violence
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A more complex understanding of gender was explored in the 1990s. Gender and its intersections with race, class, sexuality and age informed prevention efforts and understandings of how men and women interacted amongst themselves and with each other.
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A strong focus on tertiary prevention characterised the early 2000s as a response to a greater understanding of the long-term harm of sexual violence. ▪ Under-reporting of sexual violence continued however, meaning that there was no attention on how to intervene, or indeed prevent sexual violence before it occurred. ▪ Collection of data and evidence around the underlying factors which led to sexual violence led to a greater focus on primary prevention as a strategy.

Adapted from Carmody (2009)

Prevention strategies also shifted, evolving beyond the initial spotlight on women’s behaviour change that was positioned as a risk avoidance strategy. Risk avoidance is concerned with changing women’s “high-risk” behaviour and constructs all men as potentially dangerous (Carmody, 2009). Carmody stated that women have been targeted for prevention messages in ways that “individualised approaches to sexual assault, fostering fear in women, a denial of gender and ignoring the broader aspects of violent societies” (p. 9). For example, historically women have been encouraged to wear modest clothing, avoid walking alone at night, learn self-defence and avoid engaging in behaviour which may encourage men’s “uncontrollable” lust, amongst other strategies to avoid sexual violence (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012).

These forms of prevention of sexual assault are based on notions that women are responsible for their sexual victimisation; rather than the perpetrators of violence being held responsible, and being targeted for intervention (Piccigallo et al., 2012). These forms of prevention also ignore intimate partner and acquaintance sexual assault, intergenerational sexual assault, and sibling sexual assault (Cashmore & Shackel, 2013; Stathopoulos, 2012; Tarczon, 2012; Wall, 2012). Targeting women’s behaviour does very little to change the behaviour of those perpetrating sexual and physical violence, or the structures and determinants that allow sexual violence to occur.

At the same time as the above shifts were occurring, economists, social justice advocates and public health organisations around the world began to consider the social and economic costs of domestic violence and sexual assault. An issue that was once considered a “private” affair came to be seen as a public health concern. Table 2 outlines some of the reports released and the momentum of understanding that began to build around the issue of the harms of interpersonal violence and the importance of preventing harm before it occurred.

The reports in Table 2 demonstrate that sexual assault affects everyone, from individuals to communities, and invariably impacts all of society (Morrison, Quadara, & Boyd, 2007). There are health, economic, and social costs associated with sexual violence. To leave men out of the prevention space is to mobilise only half of the potential available resources in the reduction of sexual violence. Further, as elucidated by Flood (2006), “prevention must address men because largely it is men who perpetrate this violence” (p. 26). It would also not be possible to foster greater gender equity, respectful relationships, and decreased subscription to gender norms and stereotypes without including both men and women in this goal. Engaging men *and* women in prevention efforts is about seeking to restructure the social and cultural norms that are the determinants of sexual assault. For these changes to be realised, men are needed to join women in becoming both the communicators and the recipients of prevention messages and initiatives. A good place to start is asking what role men may play in the prevention of sexual violence against women.

What is men’s role in sexual assault prevention?

If men are to be engaged in the prevention of sexual assault there must be a shared understanding of the fact that men have a positive role to play (Flood, 2006). Efforts to engage men need to motivate and inspire them to feel a sense of empowerment and ownership about their role in sexual assault prevention. The question of how to engage men meaningfully also leads to questions about the importance of men’s relationships with each other—how they might best support one another to engage, particularly in the face of stereotypical male gender norms that connect masculinity with violence, female objectification, sexual aggression, and undervaluing of, or hostility to, women (Flood, 2006; Katz, 2006; Kurnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002).

Masculinities and sexual assault prevention

What are masculinities?

The concept of “masculinities” is an important component of sexual assault prevention. Many academics have grappled with issues of men’s relationship to violence and coercive sexuality as a demonstration of masculinity (see Cowburn, 2010; Kurnen et al., 2002). The idea that a man has to be dominant, tough, always ready for sex, physically able to play sport, and be competitive are socially based ideals (Connell, 2005; Messner, 2005; Pease, 2009). In any given time and culture, there are unspoken ideas about what it means to be a man that go beyond biology. Kaufman (2012) stated that “we might assume it is biological, we might think it comes from being a man ... but in truth, each culture makes it up” (para. 5). Masculinity is the catch-all word that describes these facets.

Edley and Wetherell (1996) pointed out that:

Any adequate theory of men and masculinity has to have the concept of *power* at its centre ... [and has to] reflect the fact that masculinities are both “structured” in dominance and, in turn, help maintain or reproduce that dominance. (pp. 97–98)

However, as Pease (2009) stated, “the centrality of male power within heterosexual relations is not static or unchangeable” (p. 163).

Table 2: The costs and determinants of violence against women

Year	Organisation	Report	Findings/recommendations
2002	World Health Organization (WHO)	World Report on Violence and Health	This report named sexual assault alongside other forms of interpersonal violence. The report presented interpersonal violence as a public health issue that requires attention at the individual, relationship, organisational and societal levels with a focus on prevention. The report offered nine recommendations, including the need to enhance the capacity for data collection on violence, to promote primary prevention, to enhance the response to victims of violence, to promote gender and social equality, and to increase collaboration and knowledge transfer on violence prevention (WHO, 2002).
2004	Access Economics	The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy: Part 1	Access Economics were commissioned by the Australian Government's Office for the Status of Women to provide a "comprehensive economic estimation of the cost of domestic violence" (Access Economics, 2004, p. vi). The purpose of the report was to raise awareness of the costs of domestic violence. The report estimated the cost of violence for the period 2002–03 at \$8.1 billion (Access Economics, 2004, p. vii). The estimated social and economic costs took into account further harm such as drug and alcohol misuse, juvenile crime, and the ongoing costs (such as economic productivity and social participation) to the community when women and children are exposed to domestic violence.
2004	Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)	The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence	VicHealth released a report detailing the health costs of intimate partner violence. One of the aims of the report was to raise awareness. The report also named the prevention of intimate partner violence as a goal. Although the reasons for violence are complex, one important underlying factor to consider for prevention efforts is the unequal power distribution between men and women (VicHealth, 2004). The report presented intimate partner violence as requiring equal attention to other public health issues such as "high blood pressure, cholesterol and obesity" (VicHealth, 2004, p. 30). It also prioritised prevention as a key strategy for alleviating the burden (economic and social) for current and future generations.
2007	VicHealth	Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria	VicHealth built on previous work by WHO and Access Economics in presenting an ecological public health model framework for the primary prevention of violence. The ecological model sets out different environments and levels in which to promote the prevention of violence. It was stated in the report that the message of anti-violence must be consistent for individuals, organisations, and society and this should occur in schools, social clubs, workplaces, sports clubs, the media, and government. The messages of prevention centred on the need for gender equality, the building of non-violent social norms and respectful relationships between men and women (VicHealth, 2007). The framework comes from the above mentioned reports and evidence which indicates that gender inequality, hostile attitudes to women and a subscription to gender norms/stereotypes are underlying determinants in the perpetration of violence against women and children.
2010	WHO	Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence	WHO called for more evidence to be generated on prevention programs in order that effectiveness may be assessed. This report also clearly outlined steps needed to begin primary prevention work. Namely the report states that legislative change that supports and drives individual and organisational change toward male–female equity is required for the reduction of intimate partner and sexual violence (WHO, 2010).

Scott Holmes, the Healthy Workplaces Senior Advisor at YMCA, offered his view on the importance of men engaging with the concept of masculinities as a gateway to engaging with prevention:

I think we need to be really clear that masculinity is also a gender. Because I often do feel that we're very clear that femininity is a gender but often in the conversation we hear about men and about men's violence against women it begins to sound as though men are never going to change, that men are actually just a sex and not a gender. That for me is an important one.

He went on to say:

I think there's a connection between men's power over women and men's experience of power amongst themselves because of the way that masculinity is set up, reproduced, and practised. That's something that men don't talk about much amongst themselves, that there is a hierarchy of power amongst men. I think those sorts of conversations about the way that masculinity uses power within its own world and then the way that it is used against women is vital.

There exists an idea that men are leaders and that the world is built to advantage men if they adhere closely to these masculine gendered norms. However, it is important to note that men can also be disadvantaged by strong adherence to gender stereotypes—such as the need to always be seen as strong, capable, and emotionally detached (Connell, 2005; Foster, Boyd, & O'Leary, 2012). Having to subscribe to behaviours and attitudes that do not reflect your true beliefs just to be accepted as a “real man” can be challenging. Conversely, if men do feel a strong connection with the dominant masculinities, being told that stereotypical masculine norms are underlying determinants of sexual violence may be quite confronting. Unpacking the concept of masculinities will help to expose the unquestioned privileges as well as the disadvantages faced by men in their every day lives and increase awareness of how masculine gender norms intersect with sexual violence (Connell, 2005; Pease, 2010).

Andrew Day, Director of Social Development for Moreland City Council, spoke to ACSSA about masculinities and the importance of talking about difficult issues such as sexual assault and violence against women:

Men have to get comfortable talking about the uncomfortable truths regarding gender inequity, the prevalence of violence by men towards women and the ways in which some men seek to exert power in explicit and subtle ways. Talking about gender based violence and gender inequity is not actually aimed at removing a male's capacity to express who they are as males; it is about how men express themselves in a respectful way and a way that doesn't detrimentally affect someone else, in particular women. We need to redefine what it means to be male in our society. I think we've got a long way to go and [these] are the sorts of really mature conversations that we've got to have.

How men relate to other men, and how men relate to women plays a big role in the construct of masculinities. Traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity need to be questioned, including how they relate to one another—often oppositionally and hierarchically—and how maintenance of these traditional gender stereotypes is a determinant of sexual assault and violence against women (Council of Australian Governments, 2011).

The following section brings together literature and the views of practitioners in the field on engaging men, both as the targeted audience/participants of the prevention message and as facilitators/educators.

What is meant by engagement?

This Wrap is concerned with engaging men as both as the primary audience/participants of sexual assault prevention messages and as facilitators/educators of prevention programs. So what does it mean for men to be engaged with sexual assault and violence prevention?

Men as recipients of prevention messages and participants in prevention programs

Targeting men as the recipients of prevention messages means that the messages are aimed at men and are relevant to their needs. Yet achieving this aim can be quite difficult and requires thoughtful understanding of the intended audience and creating a balance between drawing men into the discussion on prevention while challenging beliefs about gender and equality.

As a starting point, being engaged in prevention can be considered a process, such as the following:

- to listen and take note of victim/survivors stories and statistics about sexual violence;
- to interrogate one's attitude about gender, masculine norms and stereotypes;
- to change behaviour;
- to seek to change other people's attitudes about gender, masculine norms and stereotypes;
- to seek to change other people's behaviour; and
- to commit to reducing sexual assault against women (adapted from Crooks, Goodall, Hughes, Jaffe, & Baker, 2007).

Petra Begnell and Rose Durey from Women's Health Victoria spoke to ACSSA about engaging men in their workplace prevention program and some of the challenges they face in delivering the program:

It's not so much about having messages that don't challenge men. We work within a strong feminist framework and we were quite conscious of that in designing the program that we used in workplaces. But part of it was about bringing men on the journey. So we had to feel confident that men were going to stay the course and sit through something. It had to be appealing to workplaces and allay some of the concerns that HR would have about what we actually did in the workplace. So that was essentially positioning men as positive bystanders, positive and ethical bystanders with a role to play in preventing violence against women.

Women's Health Victoria have created a balance between challenging gender while providing a safe space for men to learn and be empowered. The Preventing Violence Against Women Program, run by the YMCA, engages and empowers men using the bystander approach.

The bystander work is saying [that] an important way to start to challenge all that sexism, is to challenge those small little things that get said around the barbeque or around the water cooler. It's looking at what will up-skill people to feel confident to intervene. It doesn't matter what you say [as a bystander] ... it's more [about] saying it at that moment so that other people who are around are hearing it and [the sexism] in that social [situation] is called into question. (Scott Holmes—primary prevention)

For Petra and Rose at Women's Health Victoria, being primary prevention educators in the workplace means they work with men and women. They have a keen awareness of how to engage their audience.

I think we try and engage everyone on an equal basis. Nobody wants to turn up to training just to be told that they're doing the wrong thing, no matter who they are. As a trainer, you want to engage people in a positive way. You want to draw on what they already know and draw that out to kind of use that. I think for real change, both men and women have to be on board and not feel excluded from the space. There's a difference between positive reinforcement and pandering. You can challenge these [gender] norms without being antagonistic and turning people off. (Petra Begnell—primary prevention)

According to Crooks et al. (2007), engagement in prevention activities can include “helping men make a profound personal commitment to stopping violence against women” (p. 218). As demonstrated through our consultations, practitioners in the field are mindful of how they approach participants and this approach results in more positive engagement by male (and female) audiences with prevention messages.

Tables 3 to 5 present some current prevention programs that engage men at various sites and at different stages of life—such as new fathers, in the workplace, following their favourite sports team, at university, and in their communities.

Table 3: Primary prevention—stopping sexual assault before it occurs

Program	Program logic	Men’s engagement
Bystander approach	The bystander approach is about empowering individuals to speak out against sexist language, jokes, or comments. The empowerment and confidence comes from knowing that if you speak up you become part of the cultural change needed to reduce sexual violence through the eradication of the determinants of sexual violence (e.g., sexism, hostility to women, violence supportive attitudes). In the VicHealth bystander report, Powell (2012) stated that although a simple joke may not <i>seem</i> harmful, it promotes the idea that being sexist is okay when it is actually an underlying determinant of violence against women. See < www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/bystander > for more information.	The bystander approach is a fairly new approach in Australia and there are some programs in workplaces that teach men to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ build skills to speak up against sexism and violence supportive attitudes; ▪ acknowledge that they may be challenged if they speak up; and ▪ model positive behaviour to other bystanders.
Baby Makes 3 (Whitehorse Community Health Service)	This program seeks to prevent sexual and physical violence before it occurs. The logic is to “increase the capacity of first time parents to build equal and respectful relationships in response to the lifestyle and relationship changes that follow the birth of a child” (Flynn, 2011, p. 1). The program runs for three sessions and gives couples an opportunity to learn to “negotiate their parenting roles” (Flynn, 2011, p. 1).	This program engages men by acknowledging their involvement in parenting early on in their child’s life. It gives men a forum to discuss their expectations of fatherhood and share these with other men. They learn how traditional gender roles may impact on the expectations they have of their partners and of themselves. Impact evaluations done with male participants have been positive.
Take a Stand against Domestic Violence: It’s Everyone’s Business (Women’s Health Victoria [WHV])	Take a Stand is a workplace training program that seeks to change attitudes and behaviour that support violence and stop violence before it occurs. The three elements of the program are Lead, Train, and Promote. The program promotes the bystander approach that encourages men and women to openly acknowledge a distaste or disapproval of anyone promoting sexist or harassing attitudes or behaviours towards women. WHV provide workers with “the skills and confidence to speak up when they hear or see attitudes or behaviours that support violence against women” (WHV, 2013, para 4).	Men are engaged by empowering them to see themselves as positive contributors in the anti-violence space. Men are given information on why gender equality is an important facet of violence prevention. They are given information on how to verbally take a stand in the face of sexist language and hostile attitudes toward women (bystander approach). The programs also “encourage a safe and respectful workplace culture” and a chance for men to feel empowered to be part of the cultural change toward gender equality (WHV, 2011, p. 42)
White Ribbon	The White Ribbon organisation is piloting an accreditation system for workplaces. This is for workplaces who have leadership, training and policies related to preventing and raising awareness of domestic violence and the impacts in can have on individuals, organisations and communities (White Ribbon, 2013). White Ribbon Day is an Australia wide campaign in which men pledge not to use violence against women.	Men are engaged in that they can seek accreditation for their workplace, or may be part of a workplace that seeks accreditation and may participate in training and awareness raising sessions on the negative impacts on violence against women. Men engaged in White Ribbon Day are empowered to become ambassadors for the prevention of violence against women. Male sports stars and celebrities are often prominent in advertising White Ribbon Day.

Table 3: Primary prevention—stopping sexual assault before it occurs

Program	Program logic	Men's engagement
AFL Respectful Relationships Community Education	The AFL website has a page which discusses respectful relationships between men and women. There are facts and statistics regarding women's physical and sexual victimisation in Australia, as well as straightforward advice on what to do if you find yourself in a situation where someone is using sexist language and/or sexually harassing someone. Additionally there is a discussion on men and violence—how some men may equate violence with masculinity and how this may not be as "natural" as some assume.	Men's engagement is multi-faceted here. Firstly AFL players participate in programs about respectful relationships. AFL clubs have a large following and the website, as well as the players' participation, means that male spectators and fans engage with that space. The bystander advice helps men to understand and support other men to speak out against violence against women in a safe way.
Respectful Community Initiative (Monash University)	"A prevention strategy aimed at preventing sexual and interpersonal violence within the Monash University Community" (Monash University, 2013, para 1). The strategy includes discussion groups, presentations and promotional campaigns toward the "creation of a safe, welcoming and inclusive community" (Monash University, 2013, para 6)	The initiative targets all students, both male and female. The message of a respectful community becomes a whole of community responsibility and is offered in a variety of formats that can reach a wide variety of students. Mathew Kerr, the co-ordinator of the programs, states that "in the most part men are responsive and active participants" (M. Kerr, personal communication, 3 June 2013).

Table 4: Secondary prevention—early intervention with at risk groups

Program	Program logic	Men's engagement
Bystander approach	The bystander approach can also be considered secondary prevention or early intervention. This means that a bystander might intervene if an argument breaks out, if violence seems imminent, or if a woman is being physically challenged or sexually threatened.	Secondary prevention "is aimed at specific individuals or groups who show evidence of becoming perpetrators or victims of sexual violence" (Quadara & Wall, 2012, p. 3). Having a program aimed at boys and men that seeks to change attitudes and behaviours which may lead to physical and sexual abuse helps break the cycle of abuse before it becomes entrenched.
Love Bites	Love Bites is a respectful relationships education program for 14–17 year olds, supported by youth-led community campaigns. The program is delivered in a number of settings and focuses on the prevention of domestic and family violence and sexual assault by supporting young people to develop healthy and respectful relationships. Young people are given the opportunity to deconstruct gender, power and violence with the aim of fostering equitable and respectful relationships.	Young people are often targeted for prevention work as they may be at risk of perpetration or victimisation. Young men are targeted here for education and participation in discussions that relate to violence, such as issues of gender. The programs aims to engage young men by and empowering them, through capacity building, to be active bystanders.

Table 5: Tertiary prevention—changing attitudes and behaviours so sexual assault and violence do not occur again

Program	Program logic	Men's engagement
No To Violence (NTV)	NTV is the Victorian peak body for men's behaviour change programs. Usually men who participate in these programs have already used violent and controlling behaviour towards women. These men "learn new skills, and ... practice and integrate these in their lives" (NTV, 2013). The program also supports the partners of men who have been violent. These programs acknowledge that it is not only individual men's responsibility to change, but a whole of society change toward gender equality that will reduce violence against women.	Participants include self-referred men, those referred by others, and court mandated referrals (NTV, 2013). Men and women facilitate this program, but only men are the participants.
Men's Referral Service	Men's Referral Service promotes men's behaviour change programs. The website states that "men's behaviour change groups are for men who have been violent and controlling towards a current or previous partner and are now starting to think about change. Participants talk, share information, and challenge and support each other to be better men, partners, and fathers" (Men's Referral Service, 2013, para 1).	This website offers information for men who are seeking to connect with a service for their violent and controlling behaviour. They may already have sexually assaulted or abused their partner or someone they know and are looking for help to stop the behaviour. The language and information here are straightforward and help can be accessed through a telephone counselling service.

Tables 3–5 outlined a number of ways that services and organisations are engaging men in sexual assault prevention efforts. They can be participants in programs that educate men on the importance of respectful relationships. Such education seeks to change attitudes and behaviours—particularly at the tertiary level where violence has already occurred. Organisations such as sporting clubs offer men engagement through websites. Workplaces and schools are also important sites that can introduce men to the concept of the bystander approach to violence prevention, and the power of articulating resistance to sexist and violence supportive comments.

Men as educators and facilitators of prevention messages and programs

Men can be powerful allies in sexual assault prevention. There are many men working in the field whose agenda is gender equity and respectful relationships. Flood (2003) asserted that it is important for men to see other men speaking out against violence. He stated that although it would be ideal for men to understand the need to prevent sexual and physical violence by hearing about women’s collective experiences, many men tend to seek approval from other men. Flood wrote that typically, men organise their relations based on “collective norms” (p. 28); that is, the social processes that a group abides by. Masculinity has a set of collective norms—behaviours and responses that are considered appropriate—however this does not mean they are enacted by every man and may in fact be highly contested. These collective norms are one of the facets of how masculinity is constructed, through, and for, men’s relationships with each other.

Empowering and encouraging men to work as facilitators or educators in the prevention of sexual assault is an important avenue to speak directly with men. The men (and women) who work in the field of sexual assault prevention are passionate about being involved in the prevention of sexual violence. Working in prevention as a facilitator or educator can look different depending on whether the work is in primary, secondary or tertiary prevention. It also depends on the organisation. Some primary prevention work can take the form of going out to workplaces and educating organisations and workers about primary prevention. For others it is about adopting a primary prevention framework and creating policies and training workshops for their staff. Sometimes there can be a mix of strategies as is evidenced below.

Andrew Day, of Moreland City Council, provided an example of how one-on-one awareness-raising can encourage others in the workplace to give priority to prevention of violence against women.

Organisationally ... we have a White Ribbon action team, which is made up of staff across the council whose objective ... is to promote [violence against women] as a serious health and wellbeing issue in our community. I had a colleague email me and say they have real concerns that the focus on preventing violence against women detracts from the focus on the need to deal with violence more generally. This was borne out of his lack of understanding around the issue ... he was very open and honest [about that]. I actually made a time to sit down and have a chat to him. It wasn’t about proselytising; it wasn’t about trying to get him on board. It was more about going and having a chat with him about my perspective on the issue, coming at it from a number of different angles including the health and wellbeing component. Trying to make him understand [the importance] of trying to address gender equity, trying to remove those power imbalances [between men and women]. It was a really productive conversation ... [and] he was courageous enough to say what he was feeling about it. (Andrew Day—primary prevention)

For men who work in prevention, there can be the opportunity to reflect on their work in a way that is quite personal, but that also feeds back into the process of educating others. No To Violence use male and female co-facilitators, and have found this to be a powerful tool in modelling gender equity.

For male facilitators, we’re all—should be—looking at our own journey of undoing privilege and entitlement as much as we can. I’m not saying all of us are on that journey. Being able to debrief afterwards about reflecting on our own processes and what we’ve decided to do and not do in relation to our [female] co-facilitator is important for us as men to look at how we may have, subtly, placed the burden of responsibility on her as

the co-facilitator. So for us, if we don't [reflect on any of] that, then it's not good for us as [male] facilitators too. So there are multiple reasons for [female co-facilitation]. (Rodney Vlais—tertiary prevention)

Knowing what is meant by engagement and *why* it is important to engage men does not always tell us *how* to engage men. Any strategy concerning engagement of a group requires a consideration of what avenues may be best to engage them.

The following section explores the literature on challenges in engaging men in sexual assault prevention programs. Quotes from practitioners are used to expand on the literature with real world examples of the tensions that can surface when trying to engage men in sexual assault prevention.

Challenges in engaging men

Two key challenges in engaging men in prevention were identified both in the literature and in consultation with prevention facilitators and educators. The first is the use of masculine stereotypes to engage men in sexual assault and violence prevention. The second is the notion of resistance in relation to prevention messages and programs.

Using masculine stereotypes to engage men in sexual assault and violence prevention

When considering how to engage a particular audience it is important to identify language, interests and ideals related to that audience in order to be able to speak directly to them, to capture their attention and interest. Herein lies one of the dilemmas of engaging men in sexual assault and violence prevention. As stated earlier, some of the issues that require interrogation in order to change attitudes and behaviours for the realisation of a more equitable society are masculinities and gender stereotypes. However so many sexual assault and violence prevention campaigns use masculine gender stereotypes to draw in a male audience. An example of this is the use of masculine sports imagery and stars to promote anti-violence, anti-sexual assault messages.

Sports and masculine violence are closely related, as are sports and masculine aggression,⁴ and it is these stereotypes that prevention programs seek to interrogate (Flood, 2011; Messner, 2005). However, prevention campaigns/messages using masculine interests and stereotypes such as sport do so because it makes it easier to engage a male audience. It is a difficult and contradictory space.

Male sports stars are hired or volunteer to act as “champions” or spokespeople for violence and sexual assault prevention messages in the media. It is theorised that male sports stars are a credible source of information and knowledge. Prevention messages are more likely to be taken seriously and internalised if they come from such a source—a respected and well-known sports star may have what Crooks et al. (2007) called “cognitive authority” (p. 228). An Australian example is the NSW “Violence Against Women: It’s Against All the Rules” campaign which featured sportsmen denouncing violence against women. The campaign evaluation found that 83% of respondents reported remembering the campaign message (Hubert, 2002). This may be in part to the high profile sports stars featured. However, as noted, this strategy is not without its tensions:

You'll get a sporting man or you'll get a celebrity man and somehow they've got more credibility. Maybe they do but the danger, it seems to me, is that that reinforces a narrow range of masculinity again so you're back to square one. Instead of actually challenging the narrowness of masculinity you're reinforcing it in the name of trying to actually get some credibility. I think there is a tension there (Scott Holmes).

Flood described a continuum from “complicity to challenge” in relation to using masculine gender stereotypes in sexual assault and violence prevention campaigns (Flood, 2003). This means that at

⁴ For a more in-depth discussion on masculinities and sports, please see: *Still a Man's World? Studying Masculinities and Sports* (Messner, 2005).

one end of the continuum, messages would be complicit with masculine gender norms—they would not challenge stereotypes related to the conflation of violence and masculinity. On the other end of the continuum, messages would challenge masculine norms— unpacking the facets of masculine gender. An example of the tension of using masculine stereotypes in sexual assault prevention is the prevention campaign run by the Californian Coalition Against Sexual Assault. This campaign created much debate in the field of prevention and some of the issues raised in that debate are presented in Box 2.

Crooks et al. (2007) reiterated that prevention campaigns could be about more than just challenging masculinity; they can be about activism and involvement. Encouraging men to take part in activities that promote gender equality can be the catalyst for them to begin the process of changing core beliefs about gender and sexuality. Crooks et al. (2007) lamented that boys and men are often held to an impossible standard of already having to demonstrate a strong pro-feminist point of view prior to participating in activities promoting gender equality. They suggested that boys and men with good intentions should be encouraged to participate in sexual assault prevention activities and learn as they go.

Box 2: My Strength is Not For Hurting campaign

A prevention campaign by the Californian Coalition Against Sexual Assault used the message “my strength is not for hurting”. Prevention messages that seek to redefine masculinity as non-violent create a tension with the cultural understanding of masculinity as violent. As Crooks et al. (2007) noted, “the link between traditional notions of masculinity and violence makes it difficult for many men to be able to actively participate in violence prevention while maintaining their sense of masculine identity” (p. 219). Murphy (2009) stated that the campaign sent “a confusing and contradictory message” (p. 118) regarding men’s strength and the connection to violence.

On the other hand Flood (2003) stated that the campaign approach “represents a strategy of both complicity in and challenge to masculinity” (p. 3).

Some sexual assault prevention messages may need to achieve balance between what might be viewed as complicity to gendered norms, in order to draw in their audience. If men are to challenge their core beliefs around gender and sexual entitlement, providing them an entry into this world via their interests and language is vital. Once men are engaged in this space, they have the opportunity to learn more, to be empowered to act as positive bystanders and therefore spread the prevention message to a wider number of their peers.

Men’s resistance to prevention messages

There are many reasons why men may feel resistant to the information being presented to them via campaigns and prevention programs. Practitioners and policy makers can use men’s resistance to understand how to better target their audience and create more effective prevention messages and campaigns. The following section explores men’s resistance and the possibility that their discomfort to messages may lie in their lack of exposure to the idea that they can be powerful allies in the prevention of sexual assault and violence against women.

An understanding of men’s resistance to sexual assault primary prevention messages must be informed by the knowledge that men are not a homogenous group; they don’t all feel, act and think the same way. Connell (2005) highlighted that although each society, community and group may have their own version of a hegemonic or celebrated form of masculinity, these are always contested categories. While a man may enjoy a high status in one social field, he may be quite marginalised in another. Therefore, ideas of gender inequality may be challenging for men who hear about a need to help women achieve equality while feeling quite powerless in their own lives.

Many of the men think that gender equity has been achieved in our society and that in fact it's gone the other way, that women now have more power than men. (Rodney Vlasis—tertiary prevention)

There is no one way in which resistance can be conceptualised. While issues of sexuality, ethnicity, religion and class may influence men's receptiveness and resistance, inevitably they also inform primary prevention messages. Not all men are the same so several strategies may be required to appeal to diverse groups of men.

Crooks and colleagues (2007) theorised that there are four major obstacles or points of resistance for men in engaging in anti-violence spaces. These are:

- defensiveness/denial/disbelief;
- helplessness;
- lack of prioritisation; and
- fear of not being welcome (i.e., lacking legitimacy in the prevention space).

The hidden nature of sexual and physical violence against women is a key factor in men's defensiveness about the prevalence of sexual violence.⁵ Many men may not be aware of, or have trouble accepting such statistics—this may also lead to a belief that prevalence statistics have been exaggerated (Crooks et al., 2007). A sense of helplessness in the face of such overwhelming statistics is a fairly standard position.

Defensiveness stemmed from “the perception that they had been vilified and were seen as part of the problem, rather than approached as an important part of the solution” (Crooks et al., 2007, p. 219).

When you start to talk about preventing violence against women with men, what you often find is that they're surprised at the prevalence. It immediately plugs into all sorts of personal issues that might be there for them about does this mean they think I'm a perpetrator? Does this mean they think all men are perpetrators? It can very quickly get to a point of shame, shutdown, not engaging. (Scott Holmes—primary prevention)

Historically, sexual assault has been denied, minimised, silenced and kept hidden (Carmody, 2009). The widespread notion that gender equality has already been achieved can create the conditions for some men's “cultural inoculation” against the prevalence of sexual and physical violence against women (Crooks et al., 2007, p. 228). The conditions of some men's lives may also make them resistant to the idea of gender equality more broadly. Petra Beggell and Rose Durey found that some men expressed agitation at feminist ideas.

I can recall being in training sessions where one guy was very agitated and upset about our feminist stance and women and all these dads who don't get custody and that kind of thing. (Petra Beggell & Rose Durey—primary prevention)

Jackson Katz (2006) explored the reasons why men may deny or disbelieve the extent of sexual violence against women in *The Macho Paradox*:

As a man, once you are aware of the degree to which women suffer from gender violence and all forms of sexism, you can't simply go about your business and pretend everything is fine ... this is where denial comes in. Denial is a tried and true method of coping with disruptive, traumatic, or discomfoting information; much less painful than facing the truth. (p. 33)

Rodney Vlasis described how denial of the effect of violence on women by some men may manifest into further abuse.

We're very strong at looking at all types of violence. We often come back to things like emotional abuse two or three times because many of the men don't get it. But sexual violence is probably the hardest. Look at the typical example of “make-up” sex. There's so many situations like that where men won't look for signs regarding consent ... and there

⁵ For sexual assault prevalence statistics, see *Facts & Figures* <www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/statistics.htm>

are many times when she (his partner) doesn't feel comfortable enough to say no. Further, men don't think about whether "make-up" sex is ever appropriate after he's recently used violence against her. But it's very, very hard to get a focus on [that]. There certainly are ways and we've got to get better at it. (Rodney Vlasis—tertiary prevention)

Conversely, men who become sensitised to issues of sexual violence through personal experience—either themselves or someone they know—may feel a sense of helplessness at not being able to "fix it" (Casey & Smith, 2010).

Due to the long history of feminist discourse and activism surrounding issues of women's sexual victimisation, many men may feel they have no place in active forms of prevention. The "Violence Against Women: It's Against the Rules" campaign evaluation found that although there was high recognition of the campaign slogan amongst the target audience of 21–29 year old males, the issue of violence against women is not something men in that age group felt comfortable talking about with their peers, and they would not seek to start such a dialogue (Hubert, 2002).

Men who have been exposed to sexual violence or know someone who has experienced it are more likely to prioritise anti-violence ideals (Casey & Smith, 2010). Men who have had no such exposure may be faced with defensiveness, helplessness, and a fear of not being welcomed in the space. Piccigallo et al. (2012) theorised that this can lead to a lack of prioritisation of activism or participation in the sexual assault and violence against women prevention space.

Petra Begnell and Rose Durey discussed resistance and how they have dealt with it during training sessions.

We've got to be careful about interpreting questions or agitation because I don't always think it is [resistance]. It's just discomfort for people in raising an issue like this.

[When there is resistance, it is] ... often through body language, people sitting up the back, folded arms, just not engaging or kind of snickering or telling jokes or whatever. We don't want to derail the training. You don't want to derail it by kind of conversing with one person on one issue, where other people might be engaged and listening to you. (Petra Begnell & Rose Durey—primary prevention)

Resistance due to defensiveness, helplessness, fear of not being welcome in a discussion about sexual assault prevention and lack of prioritisation are important in considering *how* to engage men in sexual assault primary prevention. How resistance is conceptualised and then overcome by people working in the field is valuable practice knowledge that can be used in reconceptualising messages.

Resistance at the tertiary prevention level is qualitatively different to primary prevention as men in behaviour change programs have already used violent and abusive behaviours. However denial is still a relevant category, as Rodney Vlasis explained:

There is resistance that comes from the ways in which men will not take responsibility for their behaviour and deny and minimise their behaviour, blame others and have violence supporting narratives that locate responsibility elsewhere.

So there's all of those processes where men will then, through their sense of entitlement, will have entitlement based expectations of their partner or ex-partner. Then when those expectations aren't met, the men will have righteous anger and see themselves as a victim and choose to use violence. So men's resistances and defensiveness come out of that, come out of wanting to hold onto their belief that she's the one who's being unfair. She shouldn't be doing this. "I only pushed her. You know what it's like mate". So a lot of the resistances come out of that. (Rodney Vlasis—tertiary prevention)

Implications for practice—overcoming resistance

Theoretical frameworks for understanding men's engagement are now being informed by practice. More studies are being undertaken to understand men's pathways to prevention (see: Casey & Smith,

2010; Crooks et al., 2007). Casey and Smith (2010) considered men's pathways to being allies in anti-sexual assault activities to be a long road, citing parallels with other social justice ally building activities engaged in by men, such as anti-racism.

Crooks et al. (2007) suggested a cognitive behavioural theoretical framework that includes the setting of goals, developing a variety of ways to "be a man" and acknowledging men's good intentions in becoming involved in anti-sexual assault and anti-violence activities. A major goal for the engagement of men in sexual assault primary prevention is to challenge "maladaptive core beliefs" (Crooks et al., 2007, p. 226). However not being involved in primary prevention is hardly a maladaptive core belief. It is part of a broader culture of disengagement bred by notions such as lack of ownership over the problem, or the problem of sexual assault being seen as a women's issue.

We work with them about how their attitudes and their beliefs and perspectives around entitlement and gender are getting in the way not only of the safety of their partner and children and what they want out of the relationship, but they are getting in the way of the type of man that they want to be. (Rodney Vlasis—tertiary prevention)

Providing a message that men are an integral part of the solution is a positive pathway to men's engagement as participants. Prevention programs and campaigns are designed to provide men with the incentive to feel an ownership over gender and relationships and give them a sense they can contribute positively in their own lives and in their communities.

The bystander approach was something that we felt met our needs in terms of having been developed by pro-feminist men, or aspects of it had anyway. We did constantly revisit our principles. We thought carefully about the language we used. We do challenge ideas around masculinity in ways that don't switch men off from the outset. We receive great feedback and they tell us they've never really had a chance to talk about this stuff before. (Petra Begnell & Rose Durey—primary prevention)

For programs aimed at small groups, both at the primary and tertiary levels of prevention, those working in the field stress the importance of men and women acting as co-facilitators as a fundamental imperative for imparting the anti-violence message. The modelling of respectful relationships and equal cooperation between genders is an integral factor in the non-verbal demonstration of gender equality.

Rodney Vlasis, Policy and Practice Coordinator at No To Violence, spoke to ACSSA about the importance of working with women:

The female co-facilitator is important because it means that there can be some modelling of male and female co-facilitators working together well. That's just the example of, if the men are challenging her, the fact that the male co-facilitator doesn't just suddenly jump to her rescue.

It's important too, because, while it shouldn't be the responsibility of women all the time to represent women's voices and bring women's views into the room, having a female co-facilitator does contribute towards women's voices being in the room too. There's an example of men seeing a woman relating with power and confidence. If it's an all men's session, then the invitation from the participants for the facilitators to collude with their narrative is going to be greater. (Rodney Vlasis—tertiary prevention)

The issue of resistance to prevention messages is difficult to interpret. Facilitators and service providers cannot take for granted that what may look like the rejection of ideas is not just discomfort, or embarrassment, or a lack of understanding and exposure to the issues involved in reducing sexual assault and violence against women. The value in using resistance is incorporating its possible manifestations and building that knowledge into conversations and programs that empower men to engage. This can occur and be effective at a societal, organisational, or personal level, as has been demonstrated through consultation with facilitators and educators.

Conclusion

The next step in sexual assault prevention is to engage men—both as facilitators and as participants. A consideration of how to engage men in prevention efforts must take into account the ways in which some men may resist prevention messages—whether that resistance stems from discomfort, rejection of ideas, or from other sources. There is a tension when masculine gender stereotypes are used as a tool for engaging men in primary prevention while pointing to these same stereotypes as a determinant in the prevention of sexual violence—however, it is better to have men involved in the prevention of sexual violence, as prevention is a cultural change that requires a whole of society approach.

The primary prevention of sexual assault is a vitally important process of change—cultural, organisational and individual. Although our responses to sexual assault (legal and therapeutic) should always be well-funded and readily accessible, prevention activities offer an opportunity for cultural change.

Part of the process of engaging men in primary prevention is an understanding of the discomfort that it may bring to some. Some men's resistance to primary prevention messages and in-depth discussions about gender stereotypes, sexist language, and the connection with sexual violence includes elements of discomfort, disbelief, and perhaps even rejection. Research shows that these responses are normative and the process of changing core beliefs is just that—a process (Crooks et al., 2007).

Crooks et al. (2007) reminded us that there are men who have the best of intentions but may not yet have the language to articulate their commitment to prevention, knowledge of statistics, or still have unquestioned beliefs around gender. In other words, not all men will be “primary prevention ready”, yet they may still have a commitment to reducing the incidence of sexual violence in our community. If enough men are welcomed—by the men and women working in prevention—and offered support and education, then the more positive and quickly change will come.

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