

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RAPE INTERVENTIONS

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Introduction

Based on research culminating in forthcoming article

2 problems surrounding (a) rape- prevention / reduction and (b) conviction and attrition rate

Former is micro problem latter macro

I am interested in the former - prevention

Started off going to schools – gathered momentum!

Research aims

- ▣ To research the effectiveness of rape education on changing attitudes and /or behaviour
- ▣ Analysed the USA research
- ▣ 'Clery Act' 1998- all federal college campuses required to develop and implement sexual assault preventions programmes

Methodology - USA

- ▣ USA experience – all research by psychologists
- ▣ 1980s and 1990s focus on the impact of interventions on levels of rape myth acceptance and attitudinal change.
- ▣ Research in this area typically involves the assessment of attitudes to rape before and after an intervention
- ▣ The **Rape Myth Acceptance Scale** (Burt 1980) or the **Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale** (Payne ,Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999) are usually used to assess attitudes
- ▣ 11 questions relating to rape myths, with a choice of answers ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.
- ▣ In addition other measures like the **The Rape Empathy Scale** (Deitz & Byrnes 1981) are sometimes used used to assess the degree of empathy towards the victim and offender.

Content of interventions

These usually:

- ▣ provides statistics
- ▣ tackle rape myths
- ▣ discuss strategies that women can use to increase personal safety, strategies for men to avoid situations that can end in rape
- ▣ involve theatre and role play
- ▣ give information re: support agencies
- ▣ allow discussion

Research assessing attitudinal change

- ▣ Mixed results
- ▣ Positive impact
- ▣ Fisher (1986) - positive impact on both male and female attitudes
- ▣ Lenihan et al (1992) found only changes in women
- ▣ Pinzone- Glover et al (1998) one hour intervention – increased empathy towards victims . Mens' attitudes towards women changed more than women's attitudes to women
- ▣ Kress V et al 2006 - 174 college freshmen- 2 1/2 hour intervention - Students completed this 10 minutes before the intervention began and immediately after it was completed. - significant decrease in rape myth acceptance

- ▣ Little or no impact
- ▣ Schewe (2002) no change in attitudes
- ▣ Lonsway (1996) reviewed 21 previous programmes- concluded that in only about half did the participants show a change in attitudes and knowledge; in fact rape supportive attitudes went up for men in 2 studies

1990s' - can changes in attitude lead to changes in behaviour in terms of victimisation and offending.

- ▣ This is usually assessed by asking participants after the intervention about their personal sexual experiences

Positive impact on behaviour

- ▣ Hanson and Gidycz (1993)- one hour intervention reduced the risk of sexual assault victimisations in women with no prior history of sexual assault by 43% at a 9 week follow up
- ▣ Foshee et al (2004) Assessed at 2 years and 4 years – the 'Safe Dates' intervention had a significant effect on sexual victimisation- both genders benefited
- ▣ Rothman and Silverman (2007) The control group had 1.74 times the odds of reporting sexual assault. There were positive effects for both men and women.

- ▣ Bradley , Yeater and O' Donohue (2009) 2-week follow-up period - the single session intervention was effective at increasing men's victim empathy and challenging rape myths but ineffective in changing women's knowledge and sexual communication strategies.
- ▣ Hillenbrand -Gunn et al (2010) men as allies' approach -try to encourage men to be active participants rather than passive bystanders in changing rape supportive culture. Exposed that what men think other men think about sex is wrong - so they can feel happy in their own decisions
- ▣ Attitudes to rape held by both male and female participants also changed

No or little impact on behaviour

- ▣ Breitenbecher and Gidycz (1998) found no effect on victimisation or knowledge of sexual assault after a 9 week follow up regardless of sexual assault history
- ▣ Berg , Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999) - 25-minute presentation where factual information regarding acquaintance rape was discussed with men plus 50 minute audiotape of a female or male victim describing their account of acquaintance rape victimisation on behaviour
- ▣ Two weeks after the intervention participants completed five measures to assess behavioural intentions ...
- ▣there were no changes regarding empathy....
- ▣in addition, the participants who had heard the female tape reported a greater likelihood to engage in rape-supportive behaviors
- ▣

- ▣ Breitenbecher and Scarce (1999) analysed behaviour 7 months after the intervention and found that it had been successful in increasing knowledge of sexual assault but not the incidents.
- ▣ Gidycz *et al* (2001) at the nine week follow up period the program had not effected levels of female victimisation and had not effected men's self reported sexually aggressive behaviour.
- ▣ Foshee *et al.* (2004) -after initial success , after 1 year behavioural effects had disappeared.

Limitations

- ❑ Questionnaire overload (Berg, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999) 11 questionnaires
- ❑ Differences as to when the impact measures were completed by the participants. - Pinzone-Glover et al research - participants were tested only one week after the intervention. In the Kress study the IRMA was completed by participants immediately after the intervention
- ❑ Some participants have already been exposed to rape education or an intervention

- ▣ Lack of control groups
- ▣ Research comparisons are difficult to draw because of the different contents, the length and depth of the interventions also differed. In most the intervention was about two hours - risk of information overload and too short to internalise the information
- ▣ Variety of techniques. not possible to ascertain which elements had the most / least success in changing attitudes and/ or behaviour

- ▣ But....I think the main limitation is preoccupation with emphasis on demolishing rape myths (psychologists!)
- ▣ This is of course desirable but is it a precondition of altering behaviour? Is empathy really required?
- ▣ Behavioural changes may occur even though attitudes, including the level of RMA are maintained
- ▣ Partly based on classical theories of deviance - deterrence theory
- ▣ 'General deterrence'- people refrain from engaging in criminal and deviant activity if they fear apprehension and punishment. This requires that citizens are aware of the law

- ❑ Within rape interventions overemphasis on the psychological and sociological elements of rape at the expense of rape law. An illustration of this is the way that rape myths appear to have been approached.
- ❑ in a vacuum divorced from the legal background in which most of them surface. Whilst a few rape myths are only erroneous expressions of factual situations, most rape myths are misstatements of fact *and* law.
- ❑ e.g The myth that 'rape requires violence' is an erroneous statement of the law because violence this is not required by s.1.
- ❑ Common definitions of rape myths neglect to use the word 'law'.

- Within rape interventions there appears to have been a lack of emphasis on the fact that rape is against the law - overemphasis on the psychological and sociological elements of rape
- E.g.- rape myths often approached in a vacuum divorced from the legal background in which most of them surface...
- Whilst a few rape myths are only erroneous expressions of factual situations, most rape myths are misstatements of fact *and* law.
- E.g The myth that 'rape requires violence' is an erroneous statement of the law because is not required by s.1 SOA 2003.
- Common definitions of rape myths neglect to use the word 'law'

- ▣ knowledge of the legal position might, in itself, encourage individuals to consider their own behaviour more carefully...
- ▣ Men now knowing what the law is plus sanctions may be deterred from offending...

However, acquiring such knowledge does not mean that moral attitudes will necessarily change and that rape myths will simply dissolve. Example - withdrawal

- ▣ In relation to women rape law knowledge and an understanding of consent may legitimise sexual choices including a decision to withhold consent. This is particularly important in relation to young girls . Knowledge is empowering....
- ▣
- ▣ As with men though, legal knowledge does not necessarily change attitudes regarding others...example - clothes

▣ Interventions concentrating on the law

There have been few studies conducted involving participants who had received an intervention that focused on the law.

Temkin and Krahe 2008 - third year law students had previously studied rape, were presented with 5 scenarios. The research showed the existence of RMA...

..... but attitudes before the intervention were not collated. For this reason it is not possible to tell whether the rape law instruction had any impact on changing attitudes or behaviour

My research – different angle

Objectives

- (1) Assess knowledge of the law governing rape amongst school and university students
- (2) Assess the extent to which rape law education impacts on knowledge levels regarding rape, and the extent to which this knowledge is retained
- (3) Examine whether a correct understanding of rape law can change behaviour (recognising that this may or may not be based on changing attitudes)
- (4) Suggest ways to improve rape intervention programmes

Methodology

The methodology was similar to that followed in other studies; there was a pre-test, intervention and post test stage. The intervention provided rape law information exclusively

Studies

3 studies....first just assessed knowledge (inc. Schools)

Study 2

2 groups of university students - 2009-10

Pre-testing

Pre- intervention test stage

Group 1 (113) ← 208 → Group 2(95)

law students (L1)

law students (L2)

Test measure

This was the 'Knowledge of the law of rape ' questionnaire (KLR-25)

25 legal propositions

17 related to general aspects of rape

8 related to the issue of consent

Most related to rape myths

Answer true or false as to whether a
of the law (no certainty scale)

Some 'true' were correct and some 'false' were
correct

▣ Examples.....

- ▣ Women can be raped but men can not be raped (F)
- ▣ To be rape a man must use some violence against a woman, however slight (F)
- ▣ A man can rape a woman even though his penis is not fully inserted into to the vagina(T)
- ▣ A woman is not raped unless she says 'no' and tries to fight back (F)
- ▣ A woman who has had a consensual sexual relationship with a man in the past can be raped on a subsequent occasion if she does not consent (T)
- ▣ A woman who agrees to sex but then changes her mind is not raped (F)

The intervention

▣ Differed...

Group 1

Immediately after pre-test

10 minute explanation /answers / relevant law

Group 2

Immediately after the pre test

- ▣ 20 minute explanation /answers / relevant law

Further intervention 6 weeks after the pre-test

- ▣ 6 hours spanning 3 weeks – law, law, law!!
- ▣ 4 hours imparting knowledge - SOA 2003, definitions, explanations, sentencing, sex offenders register
- ▣ 58 real and decided cases on all the relevant issues
- ▣ Exclusively law- no other content

Post – testing (KLR-25)

- ▣ Group 1 (10 minute intervention) – 5 weeks later
- ▣ Group 2 (20 minute intervention)- 5 weeks later
- ▣ Group 2 (6 hour intervention) – 14 weeks later
- ▣ Group 3!! – L3 students who had the 6 hour intervention the previous year- 1 year later

Key results -levels of misconception re: the law of rape

- ▣ Study 1 and study 2 very similar levels of misconception!
- ▣ The percentage of incorrect responses(ICRS) was identical in relation to three questions. There was only a 1-2% difference in relation to 6 questions and a 4-5% difference in relation to 7 questions
- ▣ Main points ...
- ▣ **21% - 30% of respondents did not know :**
 - that non consensual oral sex is rape
 - that most rapes are acquaintance rapes
 - that a past sexual relations does not mean consent on a future occasion
 - that flirty woman who make the first move can be rape

- ▣ **31% to 45% respondents did not know :**
 - ▣ that few accusations of rape are false
 - ▣ that rape can occur even though a woman does not fight back or say 'no'

Between 50% and 60% did not know :

- ▣ that penile penetration is required and that non consensual sex with a vibrator /object/ other part of body is not rape
- ▣ that a rapist can be sentenced to life imprisonment
- ▣ that drunken but conscious woman can still consent
- ▣ **75% thought that women can commit rape.** In each study there was shock on discovering the correct answer to this question.
- ▣ These results confirm that knowledge of the law is poor (and may also show rape myths)

Results re: whether rape law education impacts on knowledge levels and the extent to which any knowledge is retained.

- ▣ 10 minute intervention assessed 5 weeks later
- ▣ Led to an increase in the level of ICRS in 5 of the first 17 questions (for example- confused as to whether women can rape)
- ▣ However, even here ICRS were less in relation to 8 of the first 17 questions
- ▣ Re: questions on consent-
 - ICRS were less in relation to 5 questions,
 - same level for 3 questions
 - did not increase in relation to any of questions

20 minute intervention assessed 5 weeks later

- ❑ ICRS - decreased in relation to 15 / first 17 questions (and quite considerably in some cases)
- ❑ In relation to the questions on consent, ICRS decreased in all but one case which remained level

6 hour intervention 14 weeks later

- ❑ ICRS increased in relation to one question (men can not be raped)
- ❑ but were less in relation to 16 of first 17 questions(considerably)
- ❑ In relation to the questions on consent, there were less ICRS in relation to all questions (considerably)

- ▣ One year after the 6 hour intervention
- ▣ there were less ICRS in relation to 15 of the first 17 general rape questions
- ▣ ICRS were about the same in relation to 2 questions
- ▣ The responses to the questions specifically about consent improved in relation to 7 out of 8 questions(confusion on women changing mind)

Conclusions

- ▣ All the interventions positively improved levels of rape law knowledge
- ▣ The short 10 minute intervention did lead to some confusion and should be avoided
- ▣ In relation to the questions on consent law (and corresponding rape myths) with the exception of the question relating to the right of a woman to change her mind, there were dramatic improvements in knowledge of the law

- ▣ Participants who completed the KLR-25 14 weeks and one year after the intervention were asked to consider how much of the law of rape they thought that they would remember in 5 years time

- ▣ 118 responded...
 - 8% said they would remember all of the law
 - 60% said nearly all of it
 - 32% said they would remember more than they forget
 - No one answered that they would remember none or hardly any of the law

- ▣ It appears that focusing on the law governing rape does improve knowledge of the law and that this can be retained over the course of time

The impact of rape law education on sexual behaviour

- ▣ **Note: this may not require a corresponding change in attitudes**
- ▣ **Participants were not asked to comment on their personal experiences post intervention**
- ▣ **However, participants who completed the KLR-25 at 14 weeks and one year were asked to respond to the following proposition:**
- ▣ *“The lectures and seminars on the law of rape have had/will have an impact on my own sexual behaviour in terms of how I evaluate situations, react to others and make choices”*
- ▣ **The answer choices were (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Possibly (4) Disagree (5) Strongly disagree**

- ▣ **Of the total number of women who responded in the 14 week study ($n = 88$)**
 - 28% strongly agreed
 - 40% agreed
 - 22% answered 'possibly'

 - Therefore 90% recognised some actual or possible positive impact of the intervention on behaviour

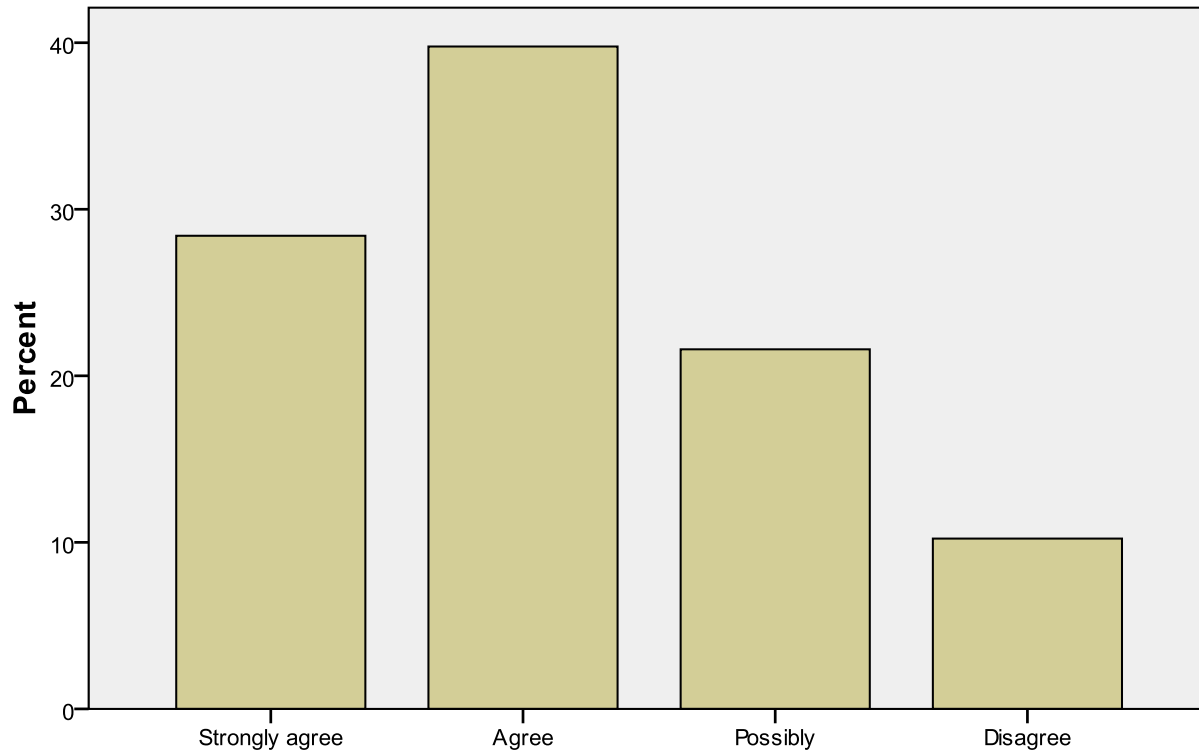
 - A total of 10% of the respondents disagreed with the statement with only one strongly disagreeing. ..

 - Several of these respondents wrote comments like *"I would have said no anyway"*.

The female students answering the question a year after the intervention 41% said they strongly agreed – encouraging result !

Total female respondents

Women only -the sessions have / will impact on behaviour



Women only -the sessions have / will impact on behaviour

- ▣ In the course of this research several women made comments to the effect of :
- ▣ *“if I knew that it might be rape I wouldn’t have had sex’ or “I wish I had known what I know now before; I would have acted differently.”*

Men were asked the same question re: effect of the intervention on sexual behaviour....

Of the total :

- ▣ 27% strongly agreed
- ▣ 46% 'agreed'
- ▣ 18% answered 'possibly'
- ▣ 9% said that there had or would be no impact on behaviour

One male here made the comment *"I was not a rapist in the first place"*.

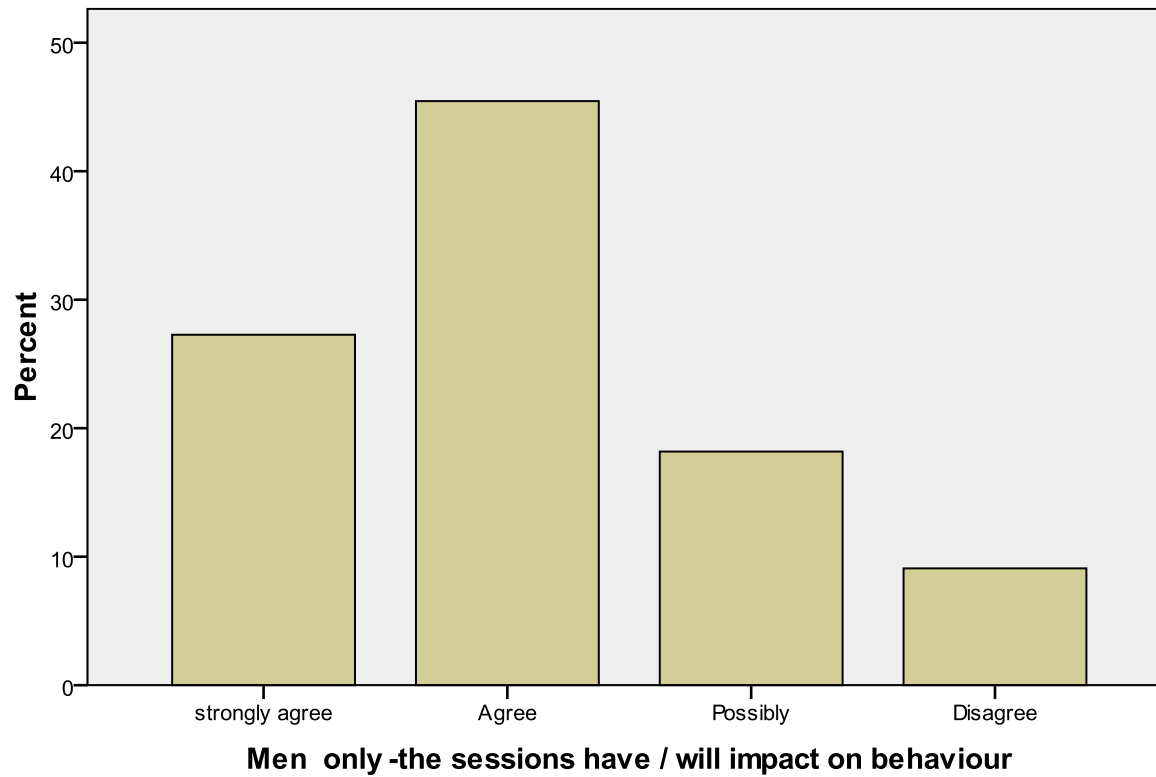
No males answered 'strongly disagree'

The responses were almost identical for those answering 14 weeks after the intervention and those answering a year later

▣

Total male responses

Men only -the sessions have / will impact on behaviour



Ideal content for interventions?

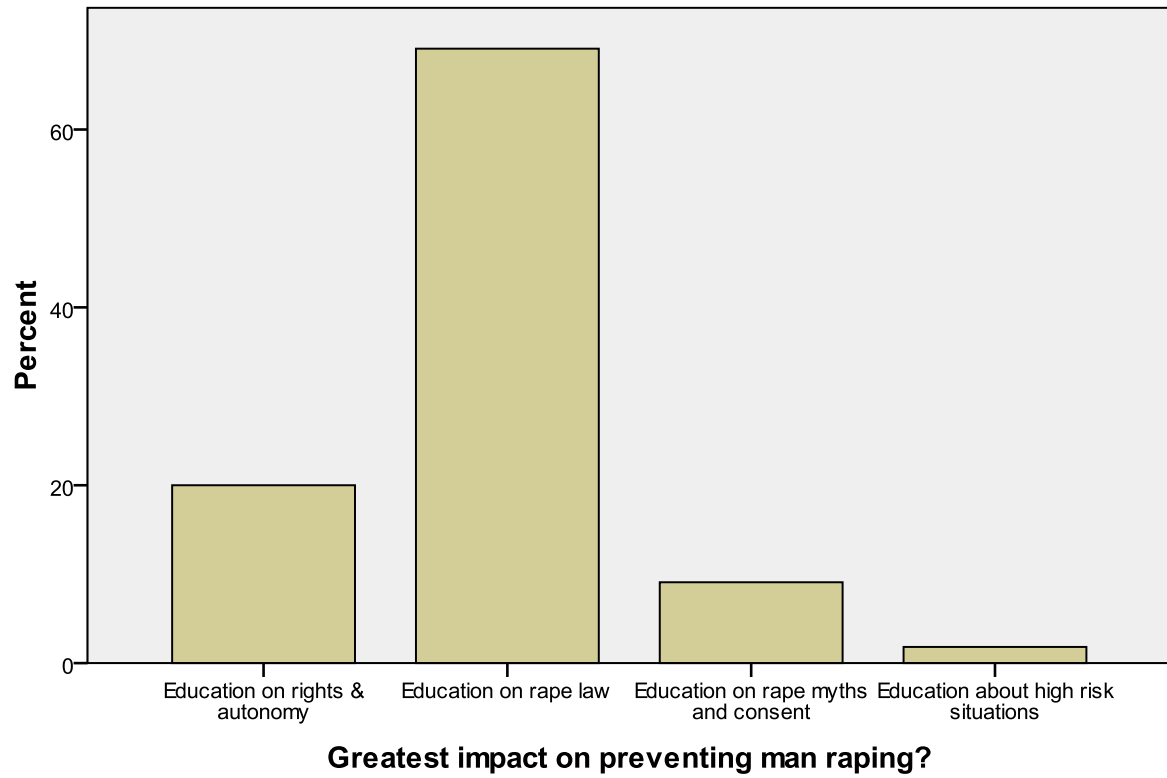
The same male and female participants ($n = 110$) were asked which of 4 suggested contents for a rape intervention programme did they think **would have the greatest impact in preventing men commit rape**

The options were:

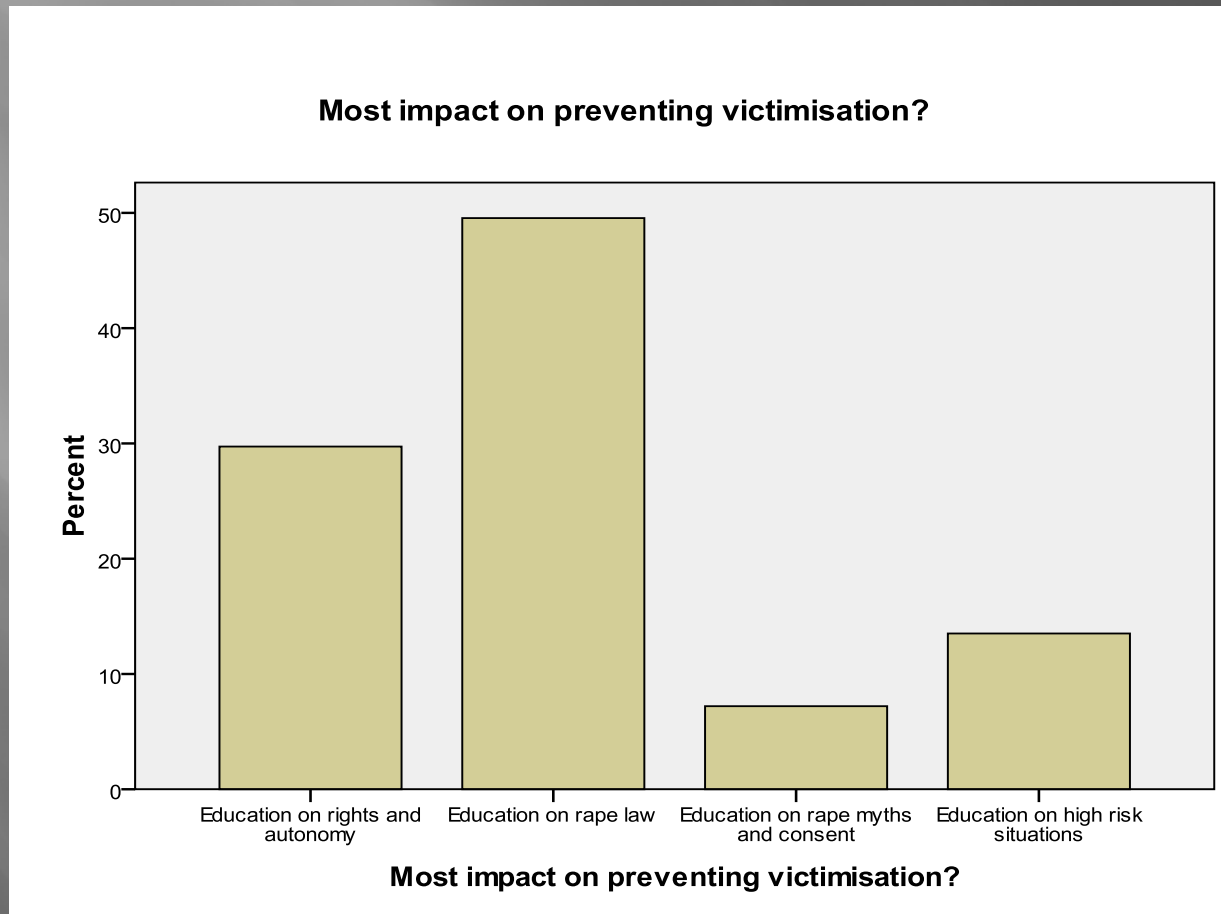
- (1) education on the importance of individual choices, rights and sexual autonomy
- (2) education on the law of rape, including when consent is legally given /not given
- (3) education about rape myths
- (4) education about high risk situations (like the effect of alcohol) and how to avoid them.

Out of the total responses 69% said rape law education

Greatest impact on preventing man raping?



- Participants were also asked to consider which of the 4 suggested contents would have the **most impact in helping a girl/ woman to feel comfortable in choosing 'no'**
- 50% chose rape law education (**distorted figures ???**)



The way forward in the UK

- ▣ Pre-occupation with attrition and conviction rate problem at the expense of prevention problem
- ▣ Citizens are expected to adhere to the law, although they know little about it
- ▣ Sexual offences are particularly misunderstood
- ▣ Rape and sexual offence education is desperately required
- ▣ Teenagers and young adults are particularly prone to victimisation and offending- specific targeting

Sporadic efforts:

- Star Project Southampton(30,000 young people)
- SARC in Whitechapel (the Haven)
- Both developed a sexual violence prevention training programme for young people
- But these are geographically limited ; there is no centrally coordinated government programme in schools

- ▣
- ▣ National curriculum for schools is based on the premise that certain types of knowledge are essential in order to have productive, fulfilled and successful lives. Knowledge of maths, English, science, religion and IT is seen as so essential that these are compulsory subjects. Why is it more important to understand simultaneous equations or fractional distillation of crude oil than to know what a contract is, or what constitutes criminal behaviour?

- ▣ Law can be studied at 'A' level (17 and 18 years) or in some schools at GCSE (15 and 16 years).
- ▣
- ▣ PSHE focuses on relationships, predominantly in relation to respect, tolerance, religion, racism, bullying, rights and finance. Sexual relationship education (SRE) does occur, but as the name suggests, this concentrates on relationships, and quite often the physical aspects of sex and sexual disease become more prominent.

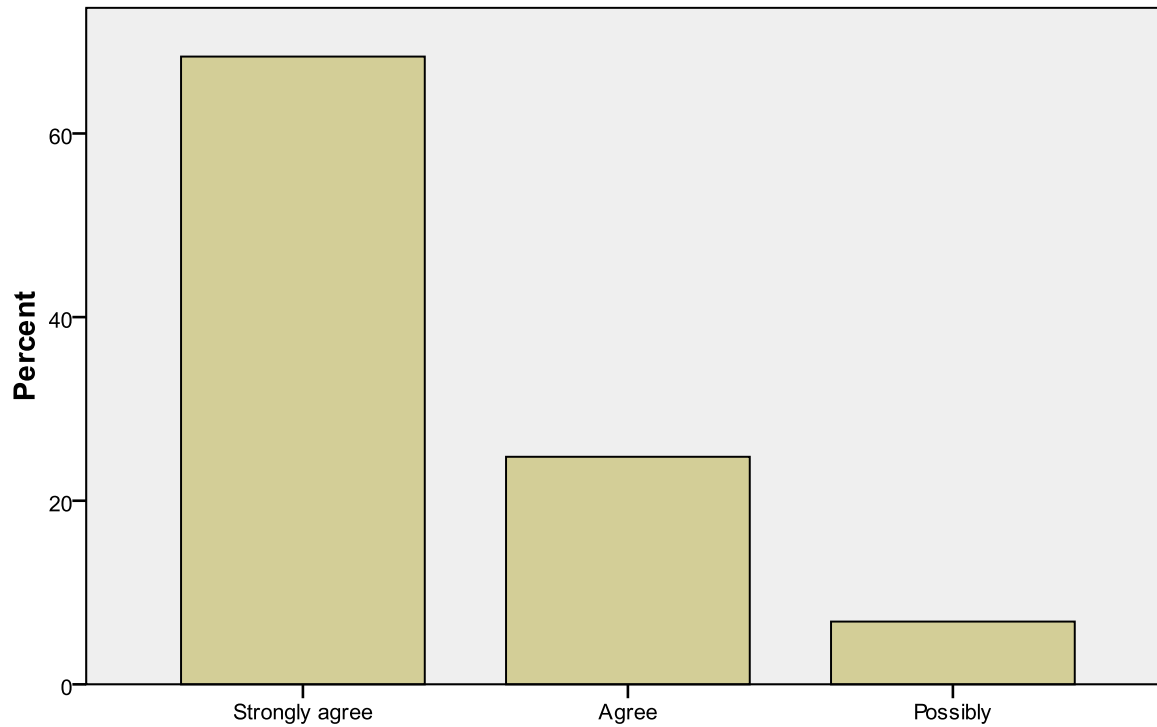
- ▣ Currently Citizenship is a statutory compulsory subject in state run secondary schools. Most students study citizenship at the age of 11-12 and all 14-16 year-olds must study Citizenship, but there are no exams and few assessments. This is more politically based = there are fleeting references to the law ; consumer rights are mentioned as is the criminal justice system, but Criminal offences are not discussed.

- There is a complimentary programme that teachers can utilise on the Ministry of Justice Website (www.justice.gov.uk). Here there is a fictitious community called 'Crownford Rise', where the residents experience the law through a set of scenarios. The scenarios are linked to the relevant specifications of the Citizenship and PSHE syllabus. There is only one reference to sexual offending; this is a scenario where photographs are taken of young people kissing.
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- It is submitted that 'law' should be a compulsory national curriculum subject, and that sexual offence education should feature heavily within this. If this is not possible, then selected aspects of the substantive law should be taught in a more systematic way, in particular those which are most relevant to young people. At the very least England should follow the American example and introduce rape and sexual offence interventions in schools, colleges and Universities.

- ▣ It is clear that young people benefit from rape and sexual offence interventions and recognise the value of these programmes. As part of the 3 studies research, participants who completed the KLR-25 after the 6 hour intervention at 14 weeks and one year, were asked whether rape law education should be taught in universities and schools. ($n = 118$). No respondents answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.



Rape law education should be taught in Universities and schools



Rape law education should be taught in Universities and schools

- ▣ The government now appears to be making an effort to tackle this issue. The Stern Review states that *“It is important that the 2003 law is understood”* the Department of Health is developing a number of products to promote evidence-based interventions for prevention. There will be new action in education which will help foster healthy attitudes and relationships and help young people respect themselves and others. Gender equality and violence against women will be included in the school curriculum via Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) and Sex and Relationship Education (SRE).



- ▣ These developments are welcome, but as with the American interventions, the main objective appears to be challenging attitudes and dispelling myths. It is hoped that the illegality of rape will not be lost within the delivery of these discrete elements, given that knowledge of the law can impact on behaviour.

- Ideal content for rape interventions

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- Conclusion

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- The UK has been slow to address the problem with rape prevention. There has been a pre-occupation with solving the attrition and conviction rate problem.

- the Stern Report has reconsidered the need to address the problem and has suggested possible solutions. The government response is to address the youth problem in particular, and school interventions are planned, albeit through the delivery of the PSHE curriculum. Although it is submitted that rape law and indeed law *per se* should be included in the curriculum, this is unlikely to happen. Interventions are a welcomed compromise.

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- It is hoped that the proposed interventions will focus on all those aspects that have proved effective in the American experience. However, it is hoped that this paper has shown how effective legal education can be in changing behaviour. This is by allowing a woman to recognise a rape situation and by legitimising a decision to withhold consent. In relation to men, it has been argued that knowledge of the law identifies the boundaries or acceptable sexual behaviour. It brings a realisation that the onus is on the man to ensure consent and exposes many rape myths as erroneous expressions of the law. Ultimately knowledge of sentencing and the knock on effects of conviction, like inclusion on the Sexual Offences Register, serve to deter offending behaviour. It is hoped that future interventions will elevate the law of rape into one of the most central components of the overall content.

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The Stern Review acknowledges the importance of public awareness campaigns – note recent TV campaign by The Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) targeted at violence in teenagers' relationships.

Teenagers and young adults are particularly prone to victimisation and offending- specific targeting