

Student Athletes' Perceptions of Sexual Harassment Lynn Hunt-Long

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Abstract

Purpose: *This qualitative study examined the perceptions of student athletes regarding sexual harassment and other forms of gendered harassment (homophobic bullying) as well as knowledge of and/or experiences with harassment in high school and university settings, primarily in athletic school culture. **Methodology:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-seven former high school athletes/active university athletes. The data were analyzed regarding theme and their relationship to the reviewed literature.*

Findings: *Findings indicate that the athletic culture poses particular issues pertaining to the vulnerabilities and persistence of sexual bullying and harassment. **Discussion:** Educators, coaches, and administrators must understand harassment, work to establish and implement an educational precedent and policies to decrease the likelihood of occurrence and acceptance, and provide resources for addressing discrimination and hostility on campuses.*

Introduction

Sport is a gendered and social environment with dominant roles that may contribute to complex relations between athletes, athletes and coaches, and athletes and trainers and other staff. This study underscores the assertion that the social, academic, and vocational landscape for young women and GLBQT youth remains hostile (Bradenburg, 1997; Quinn, 2002; Meyer, 2008). While there have been great strides made in educational equality and acceptance, sexism still is deeply in place and presents itself in a variety of ways, including sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, and even assault (Hill & Kearl, 2011).

We contend that sexual harassment as a gendered phenomenon in educational contexts is worthy of study. Taken from the Department of Education, Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance Document (2001):

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment of a student can deny or limit, on the basis of sex, the student's ability to participate in or to receive benefits, services, or opportunities in the school's program. Sexual harassment of students is, therefore, a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX under the circumstances described in this guidance. (para. 2)

Similarly defined, gendered harassment is any behavior, verbal, physical, or psychological, that polices the boundaries of traditional heterosexual gender norms and includes (hetero)sexual harassment, homophobic harassment, and harassment for gender non-conformity (Meyer, 2008).

Sexual and gendered harassment are rarely given prominence within the popular discourse on bullying, defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance (StopBullying.gov). In fact, we agree with (Stein, 2007), the discussion of sexual harassment has been "muted" since its origin in the 1970s. This is not to suggest that bullying is not an important phenomenon to examine. However, sexual and gendered harassment must also be explicitly studied, and the connections between bullying and sex role expectations need to be made explicit.

We believe that the sexist ideologies that persist in society serve to promote much of the aggression that takes place within all academic settings, and certainly student athletes are no exception, both as victims and perpetrators. In fact, a number of studies (cited below) have shown that student athletes are more likely than other students to experience harassment. Below is a brief overview of some relevant facts:

- harassment by peer university athletes is greater than harassment by authority figures (Fasting, Brackenridge, Miller, & Sabo, 2008);
- of 210 university athletes in the United States, just under 1/5th reported experiencing sexist or derogatory comments (Volkwein-Caplan & Sankaran, 2002);
- there is a high tolerance in sport of sexual harassment, abuse, hazings, initiations, and bullying within teams (in Kirby & Demers, 2013);
- researchers at Northeastern University and the University of Massachusetts reviewed 107 reported sexual assaults at 30 NCAA Division I schools over a 2 year period, they found that at 10 of the schools “student-athletes comprised only 3.3% of the male student body, but were involved in 19% of the reported sexual assaults” (Hogan, 2006, 329).

Further, we argue sexism is embedded in a web of –isms [e.g., intersectionality (Collins, 2000) of racism, homophobia, sexism, gender role expectations, etc.] that forms the foundation for both sexual harassment of young women (ways women are continuously subjected to harassment and objectification) and the harassment based on sexual orientation and bullying. Recent national attention has illuminated allegations and/or cases of the sexual harassment and/or assault of athletes as well as by athletes with such cases seen at Penn State (Viera, 2011), Syracuse University (Thamel, 2011), University of Oregon (Hunt, 2014), University of Connecticut (Westerholm, 2013), and Florida State University (The Associated Press, 2013). These cases and the reported statistics justify the need to examine the existence of sexual harassment within the culture of student athletics. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of student athletes regarding harassment and knowledge of and/or experience(s) with harassment in high school and university settings, primarily in athletic school culture.

Context of Study

There remain persistent forms of sexual harassment in the lives of high school and university athletes for both female and male athletes. The experiences with sexual harassment of young athletes and the athletic cultures of schools need to be examined and incorporated into feminist analysis of the gendered power dynamics that promote sexual harassment in all forms. We maintain that like other aspects of the sexual harassment research agenda, these topics need to be re-integrated into the larger feminist discourse that recognizes cyber-harassment, bullying, and sexual orientation as factors of the continuing gender discrimination and sexism against which feminists (women and men) have been fighting for centuries. Further, we maintain that until these forms of harassment are recognized for their part in the overall dynamics of sexism as it is played out in both athletics and education in general, little will be changed to affect the current dynamics.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U. S. Supreme Court have found that sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination prohibited by Title IX. In January 2001, the U.S. Department of Education published “Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties” (NCAA), which addresses teacher and student sexual harassment, student-on-student sexual harassment, and same-sex sexual harassment. In addition to defining sexual harassment and recognizing its existence as an educational impediment, this document also attempts to further illustrate specific examples of harassment.

Significantly, Title IX's prohibition against sexual harassment does not extend to legitimate nonsexual touching or other nonsexual conduct. For example, a high school athletic coach hugging a student who made a goal or a kindergarten teacher's consoling hug for a child with a skinned knee will not be considered sexual harassment. Similarly, one student's demonstration of a sports maneuver or technique requiring contact with another student will not be considered sexual harassment. However, in some circumstances, nonsexual conduct may take on sexual connotations and rise to the level of sexual harassment. For example, a teacher's repeatedly hugging and putting his or her arms around students under inappropriate circumstances could create a hostile environment.

There have been clear violations of harassment involving teacher/coach and student, staff and student, student and student, and same-sex sexual harassment with a number of cases that have been cases that have been examined by the Supreme Court.

In *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools*, a high school student, Franklin, brought a Title IX action against Gwinnett County school district, alleging that Andrew Hill, a sports coach and teacher for the school district, subjected her to persistent regular sexual harassment (Buchwald, 2008). Although the school was made aware of the harassment, it failed to take any action to end the harassment and tried to dissuade Franklin from filing charges. The Supreme Court found that the school district had a duty not to discriminate based on sex and that the sexual harassment of a student by a teacher or coach constituted discrimination on the basis of sex.

Aurelia Davis sued the Monroe County Board of Education, on behalf of her fifth grade daughter, alleging that school officials failed to prevent her daughter Lashonda's suffering sexual harassment at the hands of another student. Davis claimed that the school's complacency created an abusive environment that deprived her daughter of educational benefits promised her under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (OYEZ, n.d.). The Supreme Court held in the case of *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* in Georgia on May 24, 1999, that a county board may be held liable for damages under Title IX if it fails to take action to stop known student to student sexual harassment (Cornell University Law School, 1999).

Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc. set the precedent for analyzing same-sex harassment. Joseph Oncale, a male, filed a complaint against his employer, Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc., alleging that he was sexually harassed by co-workers, in their workplace, in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (OYEZ, n.d.). The Supreme Court held that Title VII's protection against workplace discrimination because of sex applied to harassment in the workplace when the harasser and the harassed employee are of the same sex (Cornell University Law School, 1998).

Literature Review

Sexual harassment guidance clearly establishes harassment based on sexuality as a form of discrimination (US DOE, 2001). The harassment of GLBTQ youth simultaneously highlights the enforcement of traditional gendered roles and expectations, which undergirds all sexual harassment. The dominant gender culture and cultural climate of sport is homo-negative (Brackenridge, Rivers, Gough, and Llewellyn, 2007). The most reported forms of discrimination to GLBQT appear to be verbal harassment, physical violence, and exclusion (Kirby & Demers, 2013).

Ian Rivers (2011) extrapolated data from a three-year longitudinal cohort study of the incidence of bullying in schools in the UK and showed that 50% of these youths' experiences of homophobic bullying took place in the context of sport; 51% of those reported that they perpetrated homophobic bullying did so in the context of sport; 70% of those witnessing homophobic bullying did so in the context of sport. Recent research publications on sexual harassment stemming from (presumed) sexual orientation and Rivers (2011) make it clear that sexism and heterosexism contribute significantly to peer sexual harassment.

A study by Joseph Harry (Yiannakis & Melnick, 2001) examined the associations of sports ideology with sexist and anti-homosexual attitudes in a sample of 304 college students. The data showed that for men, sports may help to define and validate prejudices against women, gays, and lesbians whereas for women, sports ideology was largely devoid of gender roles. While many women reported belief that sports participation is good for one, that belief does not carry with it a traditional view of female subordination. Based on the female athletes' responses, sports ideology seems largely devoid of implications for gender roles. Similarly, a study by Blinde, Taub, and Han (in Yiannakis & Melnick, 2001) examined sport participation and women's personal empowerment with the conduction of telephone interviews with 24 women athletes in three Division I intercollegiate sport programs in the United States. While responses suggest that sport participation related to the development of empowering qualities of bodily competence, perceptions of a competent self, and a proactive approach to life, there was evidence that disempowering forces coexist in college sports including homophobia and sexism.

Pappas, McKenry, and Catlett (2004) interviewed five male former college/professional ice hockey players to determine their perspectives on the nature of aggression and violence in sports competition and social relationships. The findings indicate the interpersonal aggression is common in the lives of these hockey players with aggressive behaviors seen as manifestations of existent tendencies as well as products of sport socialization. Relevant to this study, the subjects identified male athletes' tendency to objectify women as a factor that contributes to the exportation of violence off the ice. The men spoke of a culture that had a lesser regard for women and defined sexual abuse of women to include verbal aggression and general disrespectful behaviors such as treatment of women as sexual objects (Pappas, McKenry, & Catlett, 2004).

As well, the respondents differentiated between general physical violence and sexual aggression or violence, seeing the latter as less serious and more understandable than general physical violence.

The study previously discussed focused on male ice hockey players. Ice hockey is a full contact sport, both for males and females, and is noted for aggression and violence during the games. As noted in the study, as more women enter full contact sports, it will be interesting to see if a similar sport culture to that of the male athletes is created with female athletes becoming more aggressive both in and outside the sport. Do athlete behaviors of aggression differ between types of sports? As cited in Gage (2008), Messner's 2002 study *Taking the field: Women, men, and sports* contends that a sport's history with the university culture affects its economic and social position in the collegiate setting. As a result, sports with relatively high status on campus and the capacity to attract economic resources are more likely to preserve hegemonic masculinity. Because of this, Messner distinguishes between prominent center sports such as football, basketball, and hockey, and sports that hold positions that are more marginal within universities such as track and field, tennis, and crew (Gage, 2008).

In order to better understand the relationship between athletic involvement and collegiate men's gender identity, attitudes toward women, sexual behavior, and sexual aggression across different sports teams, Gage (2008) surveyed athletes in "center" sports which included football and "marginal" sports which included tennis and track and field. Results showed "center" athletes scored significantly higher on all three Hyper-Masculinity scales (violence, danger, callous sexual attitudes) as well on the Spence and Helmreich's Attitudes Toward Women Scale when compared to marginal athletes. The study (in Gage, 2008) showed that "center" athletes were also significantly more likely to display sexual aggression and have more kissing, oral sex, and intercourse partners than the "marginal" athletes.

Further adding to harassment in sports is the potentially harmful consequences of abusive relationships between players and coaches. The Women's Sports Foundation (2014) reports that romantic and/or sexual relationships between coaches and athletes are regarded as an abuse of professional ethics, status, and power and compromise the professional integrity of the coach and educational mission of athletics. While this position statement is well-regarded, a number of allegations/cases are brought forward by athletes involving harassment by a coach. In alignment with the focus of our study, recent allegations from female athletes reviewed include:

- Seven women on the Mt. San Antonio College track and field team filed suit in September 2012 with allegations of sexual harassment, sexual battery, retaliation, false imprisonment, and discrimination against assistant track and field coach ("Coaches Accused of Sexual Harassment, Misconduct," 2012).

- Ohio State University cheerleaders reported assistant cheerleading coaches created a hostile environment with sexual harassment in April 2013 (Hope, 2013).

- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill settled a former female soccer player's lawsuit alleging that the women's soccer coach harassed and sexually discriminated against her and that North Carolina officials failed to stop the behavior (Lederman, 2008).

- University of South Carolina soccer player filed a federal sexual harassment lawsuit in August, 2011, against the male head soccer coach ("Former USC Women's Soccer Player Sues School for Coach's Alleged Sexual Harassment," 2011).

Marks, Mountjoy, and Marcus (2011) identify early signs in a relationship between the coach and athlete of the potential for abuse to occur. These early grooming signs are: targeting the victim, finding a potentially vulnerable athlete and befriend this athlete; building trust and friendship by making the athlete feel special with rewards or gifts; developing control and loyalty, often through refusing the athlete access to significant others, friends, supports; building and securing secrecy by ensuring the consequences of the sexual boundaries. Fasting and Brackenridge (2009) examined data from interviews with 19 female elite athletes who were sexually harassed by their coaches produced a sport typology that consists of three main types: (1) The Flirting-Charming Coach; (2) The Seductive Coach; and (3) The Authoritarian Coach and the data suggest that, rather than being one-type only, sexually harassing coaches select from a repertoire that may include several different harassment scripts. Fasting & Brackenridge (2009) discuss the typology further and recommend that curricula for coaches include information on the importance, pervasiveness, and avoidance of sexual harassment in athletics. The authors suggest that coaching education include focused attention on potential sexually harassing behaviors as well as elements of communication styles, postures, gestures, and group management techniques.

While some studies have investigated the prevalence of harassment and association with types of sport, Fasting, Brackenridge, and Walseth (2007) conducted a study of 25 elite female athletes' personal responses to their experience of sexual harassment in sport. Emotionally, the respondents reacted with disgust, fear, irritation, and anger when the harassing incidents occurred. As well, many of the athletes reported "doing nothing" to stop the harassers, but behaviorally responded with passivity, avoidance, direct confrontation, and to a lesser degree based on subject report confrontation with humor (Fasting, Brackenridge, & Walseth, 2007).

A major concern in addressing sexual harassment is the underreporting of incidents. However, some sport organizations have records of being negligent in controlling sexual harassment and responding to complaints from women in the structure and culture of sport programs (Coakley, 2009). As defined in Kirby and Demers (2013), walking away from or doing nothing about suspected sexual exploitation makes one complicit in that abuse. Paul Melia (in Kirby and Demers, 2013) contends that when sexual exploitation is reported and not acted on, it is tragic for the athletes and for sport. It is imperative that sport organizations take the issue of harassment seriously in order to eradicate harassment from sport, but until explicit connections are made between the sexist attitudes and beliefs of sports cultures and the harassing behaviors, little progress can be made to address these abuses.

Despite such prevalence of sexual harassment in sport, researchers such as Fasting and Brackenridge (2009) noted that discussions of sexual harassment are nearly non-existent in educational and training programs for coaches. Sexual harassment needs to be understood in context with gendered sexual harassment. The interconnections between traditional gendered roles, heterosexism, and sexual harassment must be underlined, and the culture that promotes hetero-masculinity at the expense of young women and GBLQT must be exposed and reconstructed for a healthier school culture for athletes and non-athletes alike. As we will discuss further in this paper, we recommend reconstructing the sexuality curriculum and training programs to support anti-harassment education.

Methodology

In order to examine current climates in schools regarding the experiences of high school and university athletes, we interviewed twenty-seven former high school athletes/active university athletes located in the Southeastern U.S to discuss their understanding of/experience with sexual harassment. Following IRB protocol, the researchers announced the opportunity to participate in this research study to the university student-athlete advisory committee that is comprised of student athletes from each sport represented on campus. The student-athlete advisory committee members then announced the opportunity to volunteer for the study to the athletes in their respective sports. Participants interviewed volunteered to participate in the study. The interviews were semi-structured which allowed us to design specific guiding interview questions, but also allowed the participant to voice themselves freely, in their own terms throughout the interview process and the interviewer to follow topical trajectories in the conversation when appropriate as recommended by Cohen, and Crabtree (2006). Each subject interview was recorded and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Verbatim transcriptions of the recorded interviews were prepared. The researchers independently performed a content analysis of the transcriptions.

The qualitative nature of this study is important for allowing the voices of the participants to be heard, given this is a topic that is often silenced. The study has sought to understand sexual harassment from the perspectives of student athletes themselves. The primary question that we hoped to address in this study was: How do university female and male athletes perceive sexual harassment; what behaviors do student athletes believe constitute sexual harassment? Supporting questions included: How do female and male collegiate athletes define homophobic bullying? In what ways do schools help mediate any experiences with sexual harassment/homophobic bullying? How do student athletes perceive that school staff/students respond to sexually charged situations in classes and other areas of the school? Where do student athletes report that instances of sexual harassment/homophobic bullying take place? How prevalent is cyber sexual harassment? To what extent have student athletes experienced harassment in their previous years of schooling?

To provide a bit more context on the participants: twenty-seven Division II University student athletes participated in the interview process. Subject volunteers (n=17 females and 10 males) represented 10 teams. Teams represented included basketball (men n =2; women n = 3), baseball (n = 3), golf (men n = 2; women n = 3), soccer (women n = 3), softball (n = 3), tennis (men n = 3; women n = 3), and volleyball (women n = 3). Nineteen of the twenty-seven students attended high school in the United States, two attended in the United Kingdom, one in Brazil, one in Bosnia, one in Czech Republic, one in Slovakia, one in Spain, and one in Sweden. It is interesting to note that the international perspective from the participants provided some insight into the global nature of sexual harassment.

Eighteen of the subjects reported attending public high school, six attended private high school, and three did not answer this question. Subject race: one Asian, two African American, eighteen Caucasian, one Hispanic, five multi-racial. Regarding religious background, sixteen reported they practiced Christianity, eight practiced Catholicism, and three reported no religious practice.

The source of data for this study comes from analysis of data retrieved from the live interviews (recorded and transcribed precisely) that were analyzed regarding theme and their relationship to the reviewed literature.

Findings

Several findings emerged from the study that highlight the degree to which sexual harassment and other forms of gendered harassment continue to plague the lives of young women and young men on school campuses. Findings indicate that the athletic culture poses particular issues pertaining to the vulnerabilities and persistence of sexual bullying and harassment.

Many of our participants noted with regard to both the peer athletes and the student-coach relationship that there is often a degree of physical contact between coaches and players and the nature of these relationships can lend themselves to placing athletes in particularly vulnerable positions. Our participants noted,

- *“I would say as an athlete you are at a higher risk to be sexually harassed playing other fellow student athletes, just because you come in contact with them more and usually know them better.”*

- *“...both coaches and players need to understand the separation of it. I think sometimes it is not really clear. I mean sometimes we socialize outside of the court. That’s where it can be difficult.”*

- *“Our coaches are still authority for us; they are the ones we go to when we need help and since they are in that authority, **they can do basically whatever they want.**”*

Sexism exists to a large degree within the culture of athletics, despite the efforts to alleviate discriminatory practices through Title IX. Some of the young women cited disparity and unequal treatment such as

- *“...male players get more clothes [uniforms] and get the preferable practice times.”*

- *“There are a lot more male trainers than female trainers. Many male athletes don’t want to be trained by a woman, but we [female athletes] are used to working with male coaches.”*

- *“We [girl teammates] have to share hotel beds when we travel.”*

Additionally, many of the participants in our study seemed to suggest that little has been done to counter sexual harassment. Student athletes in general reported difficulty defining non-explicit harassment and reported these instances as “joking,” stating there is a line that is crossed that constitutes “harassment.” This line can be different for different people; athletes reported there is a lot of “gray area” regarding what defines harassment, and they are unsure of what is “reportable.” It was said that reporting an incident is “a lot of hassle to get involved with...NCAA.” As well, one student athlete reported, “If I was sexually harassed, I wouldn’t know where to go.”

The existence of such sexist and potentially harmful behaviors directed specifically at young women and GBLQT youth underscores the notion that sexual harassment needs further examination in contemporary contexts. Student athletes dismissed many instances of harassment by other players, although heterosexual student athletes reported experiencing a number of “issues” of harassment by homosexual players on the same team, which resulted in *intervention* by the coach and administration.

“...some girls started having not good relationships with each other on the team...and started forming cliques. A lot of girls felt like you had to be gay in order to feel like you were a part of the team...”

“...a lot of issues with gay players being bullied due to sexual orientation...many don’t see it as harassment.”

Significantly, in some contexts it seems being gay is expected, in our particular study we found this to be the case on the softball team while in most other contexts it is ferreted out and eliminated. Perhaps further study can help differentiate how patterns of gendered expectations change depending upon the sports.

When athletes on the tennis team were experiencing harassment from an assistant coach, some of the players from the male team attempted to discourage the young women from reporting the incident. In this case, both the men’s and women’s teams shared coaches. According to a participant, the young men feared they wouldn’t be able to go to the championship game. They told the girls it was “no big deal.” The girls felt pressure to *not* report the harassment.

Even when coaches are accused (and found guilty) of harassment, many continue to keep their coaching jobs (Willmsen & O'Hagan, 2003). Regarding an assistant coach that was found guilty of harassing players on an athletic team in a small school in the southeast...

- "...he didn't get fired but he was **given the chance to resign**..."

- "... he can work anywhere else. He can basically continue, he didn't have to go to rehab or anything. So, maybe that's four people who were like personally involved in that, that might be a problem for them..."

Many of the young women and men in our study cited specific instances involving gendered harassment, which primarily went unreported and/or for which school personnel did little to intervene. Student athletes acknowledged knowing athletes who experienced harassment due to their sexual orientation, resulting in them "walking away" from the sport. Student athletes reported that they are fearful that they may lose their athletic scholarship if they report the instances; therefore many instances go unreported.

- "People are scared to talk about it. Especially at college, so maybe we don't even know they have a different sexual view or whatever, so they don't talk about it that way they are not harassed."

- "I think people are scared because of authority. Scared that the university or school might take their employees' side over the student's side."

Student athletes reported minimal to no educational information on sexual harassment during the high school athletic experience or university orientation to athletics. Many reported that they "initialed a paper with something about harassment," but that there was no formal informational session on the topic. Student athletes reported that an educational session on what defines harassment and the appropriate recourse would be beneficial in decreasing the likelihood of occurrence and tolerance for harassment in sports.

- "I guess they mentioned it, but it wasn't like we had a huge discussion or something."

- "In high school I had one course that mentioned harassment, but since I have been here at college, I don't think any classes have addressed it at all."

- "There might have been something I signed or initialed (about sexual harassment), a piece of paper was given to me that said something about it, but I can't remember it, so obviously it didn't make an impact and serve a purpose."

- "I haven't really heard much about it here."

Interestingly, with regards to relationships in general, student athlete views of gender roles varied.

- "...the male is always the dominant..."

- "...the guy has always been like the one who makes the final decision...like the head role."

- "...males have the upper hand...males usually have that dominance."

- "Women are taking on roles they used to not and men are also doing the same thing." (Implying that gender "expectations are shifting")

- "They [men and women] should be equal."

- "I feel like women can be just as independent as men can be."

Conclusion

Sexual harassment is often misunderstood by students and staff (Rahimi & Liston, 2012). Research on the subject is helping to not only identify occurrence of harassment, but is essential in identifying academic needs, gaps in policy, inadequacies in procedures, and effective efforts in prevention and rehabilitation.

Student athletes in this study reported minimal to no educational information on sexual harassment during the high school athletic experience or university orientation to athletics. Many reported that they "initialed a paper with something about harassment," but that there was no formal informational session on the topic. Student athletes reported that an educational session on what defines, constitutes harassment would teach them to identify harassment behaviors. Student athlete responses also indicate that the session should identify appropriate recourse with clear procedures for addressing the harassment. The student athletes reported that a greater emphasis on the educational aspect of harassment may ultimately decrease the likelihood of occurrence and tolerance.

The White House Task Force recently recommended that colleges provide better assurance of confidentiality to those who report such crimes; conduct standardized, anonymous surveys on campus assaults; and offer programs that train bystanders in how to intervene (Steinhauer & Joachim, 2014).

Given this, athletic departments should formulate clear guidelines and conduct annual training for administrators, staff, and student athletes on sexual harassment. The training should allow for examination of authentic allegations and cases in athletics, examination of the process for making and addressing complaints, and implement intervention programs.

Recommendations

The researchers in this study strongly believe that educators, coaches, and administration can and should play a vital role in helping reconstruct a positive discourse of emergent sexuality for all students. We must revisit the conversation concerning sexual harassment and make certain that educators, coaches, and administration have an understanding of gendered harassment, work to establish educational precedent and policies to decrease the likelihood of occurrence and acceptance of harassing behaviors, and provide resources for dealing with discrimination and hostility on university campuses.

We assert that athletes not only be educated about harassment, but that they must have more opportunities to openly discuss issues surrounding sexual/gendered harassments. We also firmly believe that it is imperative that all not only acknowledge, but also actively seek to eliminate sexual harassment by intervening in instances of harassment. Inaction in response to sexual harassment only further solidifies the grounds under girding sexual harassment and contributes to open hostility and violence on school campuses (Rahimi & Liston, 2013). We hope to continue to examine the prevalence of sexual harassment in schools and seek ways in which faculty, administrators, and staff can help to alleviate violence against all students.

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