

Sports Culture as an Opportunity to Prevent Sexual Violence

Developed by the Center for Gender Equity and Health at the University of California, San Diego for Raliance

Background

Sexual Violence is pervasive in the United States

- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 59 men in the United States have been raped.¹
- 1 in 8 women and more than 1 in 4 men who report a history of rape, were victimized prior to age 10 years.¹

Most Victims are known to their Perpetrators

- >85% of sexual violence perpetrators were male and known to the victim.¹

Sports Culture and Sexual Violence

Does Sports Culture Increase Risk for Sexual Violence?

- Studies suggest that student-athletes are more likely to perpetrate rape and be more accepting of attitudes justifying rape.²
- Research has also found that sports culture can promote or perpetuate beliefs related to male entitlement, value in dominance, and lack of empathy, factors which support rape culture.²
- Media indicates heightened risk for both sexual violence victimization and perpetration among student athletes.^{e.g., 3,4}

Can Sports Culture Decrease Risk for Sexual Violence?

- Documented benefits of sports culture for youth development include; psychological well-being and higher academic and occupational achievement, into adulthood.⁵
- Sports involvement is associated with pro-social values and skills among youth, including accountability, social cohesion, and self-control,³ all rape prevention factors.
- Given the >8million athletes in US high school sports alone,⁶ sport can reach and engage youth on SV prevention at an incomparable scale!

How is Sports Culture Contributing to Sexual Violence Prevention?

We sought to answer this question via two objectives:

- 1) UCSD GEH led a sports-centered sexual violence prevention programs evaluation review.
- 2) Raliance conducted key informant interviews within the sports systems and sexual violence advocates working with sports.

Review of Evaluated Sport-Centered Sexual Violence Prevention

A review of the scientific literature documents that coaches trained on gender equity principles can affect student athletes beliefs and behaviors including:⁷

- Lower likelihood of male-perpetrated dating violence
- Less acceptance of violence against women
- Increase in “bystander effect”- speaking out against violence against women when observed

Key Informant Interviews

41 phone or in person interviews were conducted (Figure 1)

- 18 with sports stakeholders (e.g., coaches, administrators, parents, athletes at local to national levels)
- 23 sexual violence advocates working in or with sports systems

Figure 1. Key Informant Interviews (n=41)



■ Sports Stakeholders
■ Sexual Violence Advocates

Interviews were recorded via detailed notes and quotes taken by the interviewer. Detailed notes were reviewed by RALIANCE team members to identify major themes, and quotes reflecting key themes were compiled for report generation.

Major Themes from Key Informant Interviews

Sports culture and systems transmit values, and thus can prevent sexual violence

- *“Sport is place where you practice and form habits, both ‘on the field’ habits, and ‘off the field’ habits. They are learning what habits need to be formed to become the best athlete and at the same time they are learning how to build habits to be the best person ‘off the field’ as well - Local coach*

Engaging the sports system early and continuously throughout the ‘sports pipeline’ can create a culture that prevents sexual violence

- *“Professional leagues can do some things, but they are inheriting adults. We (in sports) need to be talking to kids in middle school about our expectations (about SV)... and then be reinforced throughout the pipeline.” – National sports administrator*

The sport system has the capacity and structure to engage in a multi-level approach (ex. engaging players, coaches, administrators) to prevent sexual violence and change cultural norms

- *“You need to get buy in from the administrators and speak to them about implementing this work. They need to see how it will make their team and their league more successful.” – Local sports coach*
- *“By focusing of primary prevention of sexual assault with the entire athletics department, we create a common language for talking about sexual assault and we set a standard for behavior, not just within the athletics department, but for the entire campus.” – College sexual violence prevention advocate*

Conclusion

Sports systems are uniquely positioned to reach youth and transmit values and behaviors to prevent sexual violence in America.

- Sport is an avenue for change: The complex and comprehensive sports can play an essential role in teaching and reinforcing norms to prevent sexual violence, in and outside sport.
- Sport is a platform for change: Coaches, athletes and teams have incredible social capital and influence over cultural norms. Individuals within sport and the sports systems can serve as role models and establish a climate unaccepting of sexual violence, in and outside sport.

What are our next steps?

Step 1: We are developing a Theory of Change, to guide multilevel approaches to prevent sexual violence through sports cultures and systems. Raliance and GEH are actively developing this theory, to be released Spring 2017.

Step 2: We are building the evidence base around how sports culture and systems can prevent sexual violence. Grant proposals have been released for the purpose of supporting the pilot testing of novel SV interventions (including those using sports systems).

Step 3: We are elevating ‘what’s working’ in the sport system to prevent sexual violence. Raliance is creating an asset map that will highlight current sexual violence prevention resources and efforts, as well as identify opportunities to advance this work.

Step 4: We are connecting with champions within sports to lead these changes. Raliance will continue to connect with key stakeholders - join our team and be a partner for change, email [Lindsay McDaniel Mapp](mailto:Lindsay.McDaniel@raliance.org).

Step 5: We are continuing to learn, through ongoing key informant interviews and upcoming research in the field. Keep up to date on our work by visiting Raliance.org.

REFERENCES

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ABOUT RALIANCE

Raliance is a collaborative initiative dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation. As the go-to resource for policymakers, advocates, service providers, prevention practitioners and the media, Raliance boldly and innovatively advances the field nationally. Raliance is comprised of three national sexual violence prevention organizations – the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center \(NSVRC\)](#), the [California Coalition Against Sexual Assault \(CALCASA\)-PreventConnect](#) and the [National Alliance to End Sexual Violence \(NAESV\)](#) - with over 70 years of anti sexual violence activism. Raliance – be the generation that ends sexual violence.



ABOUT THE CENTER ON GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTH

The mission of the [Center on Gender Equity and Health](#) is to improve population health and development by improving the status, opportunities and safety of women and girls, globally. The Center focuses on conducting innovative global public health research, medical and academic training, and development and evaluation of evidence-based policies and practices related to:

- *gender inequities (girl child marriage, son preference and daughter aversion)*
- *gender-based violence (partner violence, sexual assault & exploitation, sex trafficking)*

The overarching goal of the Center is reducing gender inequities and gender-based violence, as such reductions are key to improving sexual, reproductive, and maternal and child health. To achieve this mission of creating sustainable and large-scale change, the Center seeks and maintains partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies around the globe. A social justice framework is utilized by the Center across these efforts, and innovative technologies are employed to facilitate and accelerate change at individual, community and national levels.

