



Student-Athlete Barriers to Bystander Intervention: Assessing Gender Role Conflict and Intentions to Respond Post-Sexual Assault

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Student-athlete barriers to bystander intervention have generally not been explored in the literature. This research examined how gender role conflict (GRC) inhibits student-athlete intentions to intervene post-sexual assault due to the masculine norms of the sport culture. Using a non-probability cross-sectional design, 300 student-athletes from five National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions completed an anonymous web-based survey. Independent samples t-tests revealed that male student-athletes exhibited greater GRC than female student-athletes. Next, an ordinary least square multiple regression assessed GRC and intentions to respond post-sexual assault. Of all GRC subscales, conflicts between work and leisure-family relations was associated with intentions to respond post-sexual assault and was significantly moderated by gender. Results indicate that student-athletes are not only prone to GRC, but also exhibit barriers to bystander intentions as a result. These findings underscore the importance of engaging student-athletes in bystander intervention training to prevent campus sexual assault. Implications to field of social work will also be discussed.

Keywords: sexual assault, gender role conflict, bystander intervention, prevention, student-athletes, sport social work

Sexual assault is a pervasive issue on college campuses. Approximately 26% of females and 6% of males experienced sexual assault (i.e., penetration or sexual touching as a result of physical force or incapacitation) during college (Cantor et al., 2017). Sexual assault victimizations are largely underreported to police, and only one in five student survivors seek assistance from a victim services agency (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Bystanders play a crucial role in supporting survivors' post-sexual assault (Foubert et al., 2010). Active bystanders can support survivors after an incident occurs by helping peers access campus resources or reporting a known offender to authorities (McMahon & Banyard, 2012). Bystander intervention prevention is fundamental to educating potential bystanders on prosocial helping behaviors and instilling a greater sense of responsibility to respond to sexual assault (Banyard et al., 2004; McMahon &

Banyard, 2012). Despite the growing popularity of bystander intervention programs to reduce campus sexual assault, college students perceive numerous barriers to intervening as a bystander (Bennett et al., 2014; Yule & Grych, 2017). These barriers are even more salient among student-athletes (Exner-Cortens & Cummings, 2017; McMahan & Farmer, 2009).

Student-athletes are an important population of focus for promoting bystander intervention. Data from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) found that male and female students who participated in sports demonstrated a greater risk of experiencing sexual assault than students who did not (Milner & Baker, 2017). Meanwhile, a study that analyzed reports of sexual assault near schools with top ranked football and basketball programs, male student-athletes made up 3.3% of the total male student population but accounted for 19% of reported sexual assaults over a 3-year period (Crosset et al., 1995). Participation in contact sport versus non-contact sport has also been identified as a predictor of sexual assault (Sønderlund et al., 2014). Rates of sexual violence vary across National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions, as there are higher reports at Division I schools compared to Division II or III (Wiersma-Mosley & Jozkowski, 2019). Given that student-athletes spend more time together and have stronger relationships with their teammates than non-athletes (Clopton, 2010), student-athletes may be potential bystanders to sexual assault. However, student-athletes have a lower willingness to intervene than non-athletes (McGovern & Murray, 2016; McMahan, 2015; McMahan et al., 2011). Therefore, it is essential to identify barriers to bystander intervention among student-athletes, particularly supporting survivors after sexual assault occurs.

Gender role conflict (GRC) may be a potential target for intervention for student-athlete bystander intentions. GRC is a theoretical construct that considers how psychological or behavioral issues stem from socialized gender norms in masculine contexts (O'Neil et al., 1986). GRC has been seldom studied with student-athletes (Daltry, 2013; Desertrain & Weiss, 1988; Steinfeldt et al., 2009; Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt, 2010). However, evidence from quantitative and qualitative studies suggests that student-athletes may experience GRC at higher rates than non-athletes as a result of the hypermasculine sports culture (Fallon & Jome, 2007; Steinfeldt et al., 2009; Steinfeldt et al., 2010; Ramaeker & Petrie, 2019). GRC may be further exacerbated for student-athletes aware of sexual assault allegations involving peer survivors or offenders. With a heightened sense of masculinity, student-athletes may be more reluctant to come forward about known sexual victimizations for fear of weakness or disloyalty to their team members (Corboz et al.; McGovern & Murray, 2016; McMahan, 2007; McMahan & Farmer, 2009). To address gaps in the literature, more research is needed to explicitly measure GRC with male and female student-athletes to assess the impact of masculine norms within the sports culture. Moreover, investigating how GRC may hinder student-athlete intentions to respond post-sexual assault will be useful to improving bystander intervention programs. Thus, the goal of this study is to describe the extent of GRC among student-athletes and examine whether GRC may inhibit intentions to respond post-sexual assault.

Bystander Intentions to Respond Post-Sexual Assault

Researchers have found that most survivors of sexual assault disclose to one of their peers instead campus police or campus authorities (Banyard et al., 2005; Banyard et al., 2010; Dworkin et al., 2016). In a large national study with college females who experienced sexual victimization, 2% of participants reported the incident to police, 4% reported to campus

authorities, and 70% reported to someone else, most often a friend (Fisher et al., 2000). As an active bystander, students can offer support to survivors who disclose to them, direct survivors on where to go for help, raise suspicion about a friend who may be an offender, provide information to campus authorities or resident assistants, and corroborate information during an investigation with police or university officials (McMahon & Banyard, 2012). Active bystanders can also encourage survivors to report the incident to campus authorities or law enforcement for further investigation and help survivors seek professional assistance when dealing with potential trauma. In interviews with 2,000 females from 4-year colleges, nearly half of the participants received a rape disclosure from a peer. Of those, more than two thirds encouraged survivors to report the incident to the police or other authorities (Paul et al., 2013). Positive responses to disclosures, such as providing emotional support and tangible resources for coping, are important to a survivor's well-being, as perceived negative responses have been linked to worse psychopathological outcomes (Dworkin et al., 2019). In addition to supporting survivors who disclose, a bystander may be aware of suspected sexual offenses by one of their peers. Active bystanders can provide valuable information by talking with a residence life or a staff member about these suspicions, reporting a friend to campus authorities, or cooperating during investigations (McMahon & Banyard, 2012).

Student-athletes may be potential bystanders to peer survivors of sexual assault due to evidence of strong relationships with their teammates (Clopton, 2010). In focus groups with student-athletes at a school in the Northeast, both males and females expressed that close team bonds were an important predictor for one's willingness to intervene before or after a sexual assault occurs (McMahon & Farmer, 2009). Since there are differential levels of social interactions student-athletes who participate in different types of sport (Clopton, 2012), more research is critical to understand sport participation and willingness to respond to post-sexual assault. Studies with student-athletes document greater intentions to intervene after participating in bystander intervention trainings (Jaime et al., 2015; McCauley et al., 2013; Moynihan et al., 2010). However, studies illustrate that student-athletes have a lower willingness to engage in bystander behaviors than non-athletes (McGovern & Murray, 2016; McMahon, 2015; McMahon et al., 2011), which may be attributed to context-specific barriers in the sports culture such as fear of displaying weakness or betraying one's commitment to the team (Corboz et al., 2016; McGovern & Murray, 2016; McMahon, 2007; McMahon & Farmer, 2009).

Barriers to intervening in situations involving sexual assault are prevalent among college students (Bennett et al., 2014; Burn, 2009; Yule & Grych, 2017). The situational model for bystander intervention developed by Latane and Darley (1970) propose that barriers to intervening as a bystander include failure to notice, failure to identify the situation as high-risk, failure to take responsibility for the intervention, failure to intervene due to skills deficit, and failure to intervene due to audience inhibition. Student-athletes expressed similar obstacles including lack of knowledge about how to intervene, fears about making false accusations, and impacting the reputation of a teammate (McMahon & Farmer, 2009). In a pilot study with 80 male student-athletes, those randomly assigned to participate in a bystander intervention program described a handful of notable barriers: opinions of others, relationships with people involved, and power differentials between teammates (Exner-Cortens & Cummings, 2017).

Descriptive information such as gender, race, or ethnicity may be fundamental to understanding student-athlete intentions to respond post-sexual assault. In general, female college students are more likely to report incidents of sexual assault to university affiliates and law enforcement than male college students (Cantor et al., 2017). Some studies suggest that

female student-athletes have greater intentions to intervene as a bystander than male student-athletes (McGovern & Murray 2016; McMahon 2015; Moynihan & Banyard, 2008), whereas other studies find no significant differences (McMahon & Farmer, 2009). When compared to males, females of all races and ethnicities may be more in tune to the issue of campus sexual assault since they are at a greater risk (Krebs et al., 2016) and have a higher likelihood of knowing a survivor of sexual assault (Weitzman et al., 2017). Bystander behaviors also vary across racial and ethnic groups (Weitzman et al., 2017). In a recent study, 750 college students participated in an online bystander intervention program and found that Black and Latinx females had higher scores on their ability and intent to intervene than White females, but White males had higher scores than Black and Latinx males (Burns et al., 2019). These demographic factors have not yet been explored among student-athlete bystander intentions.

Gender Role Conflict

Some of the barriers faced by student-athletes may be framed using gender role conflict theory. O'Neil (2008) defines gender role conflict theory as "a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others" (pp. 362). GRC causes devaluations of self or others, restrictions or limitations in one's behavior, or violations from harming oneself or others due to the norms of masculine ideology (O'Neil, 2008). This theory posits that GRC occurs when one perceives contrasting expectations for their gendered behavior, which is particularly true in the context of sport where sport promotes behaviors that are traditionally masculine (Daltry, 2013). Just as male student-athletes are instilled with a fear of femininity and expected to adhere to traditional male roles (O'Neil, 2015), female student-athletes are often expected to balance their athleticism and femininity (Allison, 1991). Studies with college-aged males demonstrate that athletes report significantly higher GRC scores than non-athletes (Ramaecker & Petrie, 2019) and greater stigma toward help-seeking (Steinfeldt et al., 2009). While less studied, females may be affected by patriarchal norms that cause GRC (O'Neil, 2015). Female student-athletes may ascribe to male gender norms in the sports culture. Among females, higher athletic identity is correlated with greater GRC compared to those with lower athletic identity (Daltry, 2013). Female athletes also reported higher rates of masculinity than non-athletes (Miller & Levy, 1996). Despite a body of literature supporting GRC with males in various domains, more research is needed to describe the complexity of men's and women's GRC (O'Neil, 2015), specifically in the context of sport.

GRC is made up of four main subconstructs: (1) *success, power, and competition*; (2) *restrictive emotionality*; (3) *restrictive affectionate behavior*; and (4) *conflicts between work and leisure-family relations* (O'Neil, 2008). Each of the subconstructs that make up GRC manifest within the context of sports. According to O'Neil (2008), *success, power, and competition* describes attitudes about one's personal success that are achieved through competition and power. The college sports culture encourages student-athletes to place a greater emphasis and priority on succeeding in athletics over their other responsibilities (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). Second, *restrictive emotionality* depicts one's fears and restrictions in regard to expressing personal feelings and emotions. Student-athletes must demonstrate mental toughness which romanticizes an elite athlete who is unable to display weakness (Caddick & Ryall, 2012). *Restrictive affectionate behavior* is defined as one's restrictions in expressing feelings or thoughts with others of the same gender and also involves one's difficulty touching others of the same gender. With masculinity deeply entrenched in the sport culture, any display of femininity

by an athlete is considered the antithesis of sport. For example, Griffin explains that we often see feminization of male athletes who fail and the masculinization of female athletes who succeed (as cited in Ferez, 2012). Lastly, *conflicts between work and leisure-family relations* captures one's restrictions in their ability to balance work, school, and family relationships, which may lead to health problems, overwork, stress, and a lack of leisure and relaxation (O'Neil, 2008). Student-athletes must fulfill their dual role as a college student and an athlete which sometimes creates conflicts in their identity and performance (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; Harrison et al., 2009; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005) and results in role conflict (Adler & Adler, 1991; Desertrain & Weiss, 1988; Lance, 2004; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016).

Through this theoretical lens, student-athletes may fail to respond post-sexual assault in fear of overstepping boundaries or being perceived as weak or disloyal to their peers. Focus groups with teams and individual interviews at a Division I school in the Northeast revealed that a victim-blaming culture exists among student-athletes as a result of GRC (McMahon, 2007). Participants expressed how their physical strength and confidence would prevent them from being victimized; yet also acknowledged how these expectations could create barriers in reporting (McMahon, 2007). In another study, male student-athletes emphasized GRC in focus groups because taking action to intervene would affect the entire team dynamic (McGovern & Murray, 2016). GRC may be an important factor to consider since studies underscore how perceptions of others can be a barrier to bystander intervention, especially teammates (Exner-Cortens & Cummings, 2017; McMahon & Farmer, 2009).

Although these studies underline key insights into patterns of GRC, more research is needed to measure GRC and the athletic experience (O'Neil, 2015). While student-athletes may experience GRC due to the hypermasculinity of the sports culture, there is a scarcity of research on GRC in male and female athletes. To date, the rates of GRC among student-athletes are unknown. Moreover, initial findings from qualitative studies with student-athletes raise GRC as a potential barrier for bystanders to intervene in situations involving sexual assault (McGovern & Murray, 2016; McMahon, 2007) and therefore warrants further exploration. By looking at the different ways in which the sport culture promotes certain expectations for both male and female student-athletes through GRC, it is possible to gain a better understanding of student-athlete intentions to respond to sexual assault after an incident occurs.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the extent of GRC among male and female student-athletes and to examine how different dimensions of GRC are related to intentions to respond post-sexual assault. This study aims to fill a key gap by identifying barriers that may be associated with intervening as a bystander to sexual assault among student-athletes who are often overlooked as a vulnerable group of college students. Pinpointing what obstacles may exist for student-athlete intentions to respond post-sexual assault will be useful for social workers providing direct support to student-athletes, designing effective sexual assault prevention, and advocating for the safety and well-being of student-athletes. In this study, it is hypothesized that 1) male student-athletes will exhibit higher GRC scores than female student-athletes, 2) student-athletes with higher GRC scores will exhibit lower intentions to respond to post-sexual assault, and 3) the relation between GRC and intentions to respond post-sexual assault will be moderated by gender such that males will experience a weaker association compared to females.

Method

Participants

College students 18 years or older who were members of an NCAA team sport were eligible to participate in this study. Using convenience sampling, the researcher identified contacts at five NCAA member schools in the United States across each division level (three Division I, one Division II, and one Division III). Quota sampling was also used to attain an equal number of males and female student-athletes. Recipients were given a \$10 Amazon e-gift card for their participation. The primary contact at each school were designated as gatekeepers. These gatekeepers were responsible for emailing the survey link to their respective student-athlete listserv to maintain researcher anonymity. The survey was sent to 1151 student-athletes and 461 agreed to participate. Of those, 82 participants were screened out due to eligibility criteria or quota conditions. An additional 79 participants were removed for insufficient data. The total sample included 300 student-athletes for a response rate of 26%. Missing data ranged from 1% to 4% per entry but did not exceed 5%. As seen in Table 1, there were 139 male (46.3%) and 161 (53.7%) female student-athletes. The majority of participants were White (72.6%), followed by Black or African American (14.0%), Other (8.0%), Asian or Pacific Islander (4.0%), and Native American or American Indian (1.3%). In terms of ethnicity, 86.9% of participants were Non-Hispanic and 13.1% were Hispanic. Most student-athletes participated in non-contact sport (63.2%) versus contact sport (36.8%). There were 169 (56.3%) student-athletes who played in Division I, 49 (16.3%) in Division II, and another 82 (27.3%) in Division III.

Table 1

Student-Athlete Demographics

Characteristic	Frequency	% (n)
Gender (<i>n</i> = 300)		
Males	139	46.3%
Females	161	53.7%
Race (<i>n</i> = 299)		
White	217	72.3%
Black or African American	42	14.0%
Other	24	8.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	12	4.0%
Native American or American Indian	4	1.3%
Ethnicity (<i>n</i> = 298)		
Hispanic	39	13.1%
Non-Hispanic	259	86.9%
Type of Sport (<i>n</i> = 299)		
Contact Sport	110	36.7%
Non-Contact Sport	189	63.0%
Division (<i>n</i> = 300)		
I	169	56.3%
II	49	16.3%
III	82	27.3%

Procedures

This study utilized a non-probability cross-sectional survey design to distribute a self-administered questionnaire through an anonymous web-based survey powered by Qualtrics. The questionnaire was pretested with a group of 5-10 doctoral students at the host research institution to reduce measurement bias. A unique link was created for participating schools and sent to the designated gatekeeper at each school's athletic department. The gatekeeper distributed the survey link to their student-athlete listserv weekly until the sample size was reached. Athletic staff were also invited to verbally remind their student-athletes about the opportunity to take the survey during regularly scheduled meetings. Approval from the Institutional Review Board was received from the host institution and each participating institution.

Measures

Gender Role Conflict

The independent variables in the study were measured using the Gender Role Conflict Scale – Male and Female Versions (O'Neil et al., 1986). Using the original scale, the female version was modified by changing the pronouns in each of the questions that yielded similar factor structures to the male version (Borthick et al., 1997). Although women's GRC is currently undefined and there is no theoretical measure of women's conflicts with their gender roles (O'Neil, 2015), this scale measures the ways in which athletes are expected to perform according to male gendered norms. The subscales that make up GRC include *success, power, and competition*; *restrictive emotionality*; *restrictive affectionate behavior*; and *conflicts between work and leisure-family relations*. *Success, power, and competition* is a 13-item subscale which focus on the individual's perceptions of succeeding in one's career and ability to perform masculinity. Questions include "Being smarter or physically stronger than other men/women is important to me." *Restrictive emotionality* is a 10-item subscale that measures fears about expressing one's feelings and difficulty finding words to express basic emotions. For example, "I have difficulty telling others I care about them." *Restrictive affectionate behavior* included 8-items that measures limitations in expressing one's feelings and thoughts with other men/women as well as difficulty touching other men/women such as "Affection with other men/women makes me tense." The last subscale for GRC included 6-items for *conflicts between work and leisure-family relations* (e.g. "I feel torn between my hectic work schedule and caring for my health"). Answer choices were on a Likert scale that ranged from 6 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree with a higher score indicating a higher endorsement of GRC. Each subscale was recoded into one continuous variable that summed the total score. The internal consistency of subscales ranged from .85 to .92 for the male version and .87 to .91 for the female version.

Intentions to Respond Post-Sexual Assault

A subscale from the Bystander Intention to Help Scale, formerly known as the Bystander Attitudes Scale (Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard, 2008) measured intentions to respond post-sexual assault ($\alpha = .94$; Banyard et al., 2014). The 8-items listed strategies to support survivors or report suspected offenders. Questions include "I would accompany a friend to a local crisis center" or "If I heard that a friend was accused of sexual abuse or intimate abuse, I would come

forward with what I knew rather than keeping silent.” The questions were slightly modified to measure bystander intentions rather than behaviors. Participants indicated how likely they think they would engage in each type of bystander behavior on a five-point scale (1 = not at all likely to 5 = extremely likely). This scale was recoded into one continuous variable that summed the total score. A higher score indicated higher intentions to respond post-sexual assault.

Moderating Variables

Gender binary was used as a moderator to differentiate outcomes between those who experience negative effects of GRC from those who do not (O’Neil, 2008). Survey participants were asked to indicate whether they participated on a men’s or women’s team.

Control Variables

The control variables included race, ethnicity, type of sport, and division. Participants were asked to specify their race (White, Black or African American, Native American or American Indian, Asian / Pacific Islander, or Other). The majority of participants were White (72.6%), with small percentages of other races. Therefore, race was recoded as binary variable (White = 1, Non-White = 0). Participants were also asked to indicate their ethnicity as Hispanic or Non-Hispanic. This variable was also coded into a binary variable (Hispanic = 1, Non-Hispanic = 0). In an open-ended question, participants wrote in the name of their primary sport which was recoded into a binary variable for contact (1) and non-contact (0). For division, participants selected whether they played for Division I, II, or III. Division was dummy coded into dichotomous variables to compare each division to the reference category (Division I).

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 25.0). After data cleaning, variables were recoded as described above. Since participants were prompted to answer separate questions based on their gender identity for GRC, a new variable for each GRC subscale was created that combined the data for males and females. The GRC subscales were recoded into continuous variables that summed the total score. Independent samples t-tests analyzed the average GRC scores between male and female student-athletes using the full GRC scale and subscales. Preliminary analyses assessed whether there were significant gender differences with the outcome variable. Results determined no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. To reduce structural multicollinearity, the predictor variables were mean centered which involved calculating the mean for each continuous independent variable and then subtracting the mean from the original values. Next, an ordinary least squares multiple regression model was used to determine whether GRC differentiates between intentions to respond to post-sexual assault, controlling for race, ethnicity, type of sport, and division. Gender was examined as a moderator between GRC and intentions to respond to post-sexual assault. To account for missing data, analyses were run using pairwise deletion to include available data.

Results

Independent Samples T-Tests

Independent samples t-tests were used to determine overall GRC scores as well as GRC subscales between male and female student-athletes (Table 2). For the overall GRC scores, the relationship approached significance between male student-athletes ($M = 135.86, SD = 29.50$) and female student-athletes ($M = 129.48, SD = 29.43; t(298) = 1.870, p = .062$). Male student-athletes exhibited higher GRC scores than females. The next set of independent samples t-tests analyzed the subscales for GRC between male and female student-athletes. Restrictive affectionate behavior was the only statistically significant subscale as male student-athletes ($M = 24.28, SD = 8.25$) had significantly higher scores than female student-athletes ($M = 19.79, SD = 8.38; t(296) = 4.654, p = .001$). There were no significant findings for success, power, and competition; restrictive emotionality; or conflicts between work and leisure-family relations.

For success, power, and competition, male student-athletes endorsed higher mean scores ($M = 55.52, SD = 10.72$) than female student-athletes ($M = 53.68, SD = 11.17$). Male student-athletes also endorsed higher mean scores for restrictive emotionality ($M = 33.09, SD = 10.91$) compared to female student-athletes ($M = 31.79, SD = 11.11$). Meanwhile, female student-athletes endorsed higher mean scores for conflicts between work and leisure-family relations ($M = 24.22, SD = 6.61$) than male student-athletes ($M = 22.98, SD = 6.97$).

Table 2

Mean Differences Between Gender and Gender Role Conflict Subscales (n = 300)

Variable	Males		Females		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Gender Role Conflict (Full Scale)	135.86	29.50	129.48	29.43	1.870	.062+
Success, Power, & Competition	55.52	10.72	53.68	11.17	1.451	.148
Restrictive Emotionality	33.09	10.91	31.79	11.11	1.012	.312
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior	24.28	8.25	19.79	8.38	4.654	.001**
Work-Leisure Conflict	22.98	6.97	24.22	6.61	-1.578	.116

Note. M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation.

+p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .001

Ordinary Least Squares Multiple Regression

The ordinary least squares multiple regression examined the association between GRC subscales (success, power, and competition; restrictive emotionality, restrictive affectionate behavior, and conflicts between work and leisure-family relations) and intentions to respond post-sexual assault, while controlling for race, ethnicity, type of sport, and division. The moderating effect of gender on the outcome variable was also assessed. Preliminary analyses revealed significant differences between gender and intentions to respond post-sexual assault as male student-athletes displayed lower intentions to respond post-sexual assault ($M = 30.08, SD = 8.29$) than female student-athletes ($M = 33.00, SD = 7.10; t(298) = -3.279, p = .001$).

The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 11%, $F(14, 282) = 2.49, p = .002$. The main effect of gender was significant with intentions to respond to post-sexual assault ($B = 2.52, p = .012$). Female student-athletes had higher intentions to respond post-sexual assault than male student-athletes.

Table 3

Gender Role Conflict Subscales and Intentions to Respond to Post-Sexual Assault

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Race (Non-White=0)	.80	1.14	.05	.482
Ethnicity (Non-Hispanic=0)	-2.69	1.45	-.12	.065+
Type of Sport (Contact=0)	-1.06	1.00	-.07	.291
Division 2 (Division 1=0)	-.70	1.40	-.03	.617
Division 3 (Division 1=0)	-1.89	1.05	-.11	.073+
Gender (Male=0)	2.52	1.00	.16	.012*
Success, Power, & Competition	-.04	.08	-.05	.612
Restrictive Emotionality	.05	.09	-.06	.623
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior	-.16	.11	-.17	.157
Work-Leisure Conflict	.35	.13	.30	.006**
Success, Power, & Competition*Gender	.12	.11	.13	.258
Restrictive Emotionality*Gender	-.05	.12	-.05	.700
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior*Gender	.19	.14	.15	.194
Conflict between Work, Leisure, Family Relations*Gender	-.48	.18	-.30	.007**

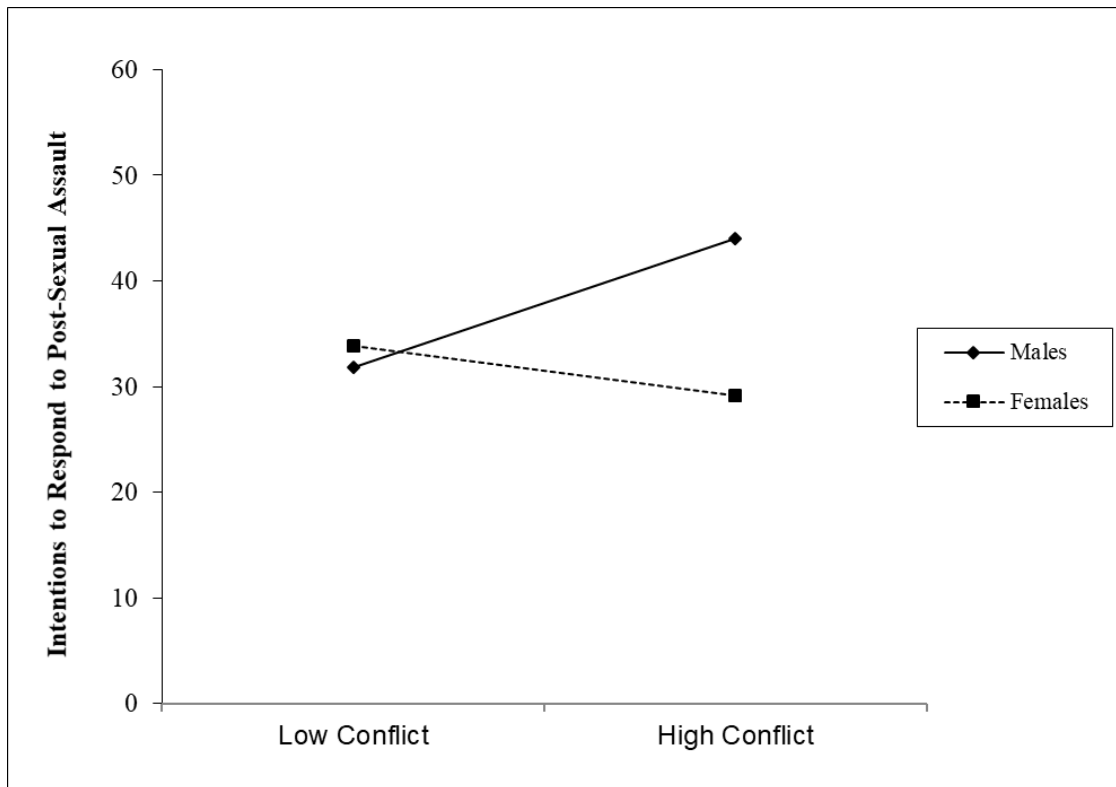
Note. Reference categories are in parentheses

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Out of the GRC subscales, only conflicts between work and leisure-family relations was statistically significant with intentions to respond post-sexual assault ($B = .35, p = .006$). Student-athletes who scored higher on the conflicts between work and leisure-family relations subscale had higher intentions to respond post-sexual assault than those who scored lower on the conflict between work and leisure-family relations subscale. The other GRC subscales were not significant. When moderated by gender, conflicts between work and leisure-family relations ($B = -.48, p = .007$) was significant with intentions to respond post-sexual assault. Among female student-athletes, but not male student-athletes, higher conflicts between work and leisure-family relations was associated with lower intentions to respond post-sexual assault as a bystander (see Figure 1). The other GRC subscales were not significantly moderated by gender.

Figure 1

Moderating Effect of Gender on Conflicts between Work and Leisure-Family Relations



Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which student-athletes experience GRC and how GRC may be associated with bystander intentions to respond post-sexual assault. This study also sought to explore gender differences between male and female student-athletes bystander intentions to respond post-sexual assault. Results supported the first hypothesis, as male student-athletes experienced higher GRC scores than female student-athletes. These results are consistent with past literature, as male student-athletes are more susceptible to GRC (Ramaeker & Petrie, 2019; Steinfeldt et al., 2009; Steinfeldt et al., 2010). Not surprisingly, males are expected to uphold masculinity more than females as per ascribed gendered norms. While acknowledging that gender role expectations are changing, future research should develop more appropriate ways to measure GRC for female student-athletes that distinguishes male gendered ideals within the context of sport and female gendered expectations in social situations.

In addition, male student-athletes experienced higher restrictive affectionate behavior than female student-athletes. Studies have found that restrictive affectionate behavior subscale has been significantly correlated to homophobia (Kassing et al., 2005; McDermott et al., 2014). According to O'Neil (2008), "Men struggle with intimacy and self-disclosure with women and other men because of their gender role socialization" (p. 391). These homophobic attitudes permeate the sports culture to maintain hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2002). Homosexuality is commonly used as a label for athletes who are deemed weak or cowardly

(Ferez, 2012), which could lead to social marginalization among male student-athletes (Pascoe, 2007). Thus, male student-athletes may have difficulty showing affection with their peers in fear of any negative connotations. Although there were no significant differences between gender and the other GRC subscales, these findings suggest that student-athletes as a whole have been socialized into the sports culture where they must prioritize winning, balance multiple demands (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016), and practice mental toughness (Caddick & Ryall, 2012).

Contrary to the second hypothesis, student-athlete intentions to respond post-sexual assault increased as conflicts between work and leisure-family relations increased. These findings suggest that student-athletes may be proactive bystanders post-sexual assault despite conflicts between work and leisure-family relations. Participating in athletics has been found to be more beneficial than harmful to student-athletes, as student-athletes learn important time management and organizational skills that allow them how to be more responsible, more productive, and more engaged in school activities (Rothschild-Checroune et al., 2012). Thus, student-athletes may be better prepared to handle difficult situations and feel a greater sense of responsibility to support peer survivors of sexual assault on their campus. Literature on bystander intervention shows that college students have a greater willingness to intervene if they feel a greater sense of responsibility (Burn, 2009; Latane & Darley, 1970; Yule & Grych, 2017). Researchers should continue to investigate how to instill a greater sense of responsibility to increase student-athlete bystander intentions to respond post-sexual assault.

Regression analyses revealed that female student-athletes had higher intentions to respond post-sexual assault than male student-athletes. Mounting evidence supports a greater willingness to intervene by female student-athletes compared to male student-athletes (McGovern & Murray 2016; McMahan 2015; Moynihan & Banyard, 2008). These findings mirror the overall gender differences among the general student population, as females are more likely to intervene in situations involving sexual assault than males (Burn, 2009). These gender differences may be attributed to greater rape myth acceptances by college-aged men (McDaniel & Rodriguez, 2017). Rape myth acceptances are widely held attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate male violence against women and have been found to be higher among student-athletes compared to other college students (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017; Young et al., 2016).

The results of the moderated effects of gender between GRC and intentions to respond post-sexual assault were supported in Hypothesis 3 only for conflicts between work and leisure-family relations subscale. These findings reflect the overall institutionalization of sport as a masculine domain which influences masculine traits regardless of gender (Chalabaev et al., 2012). However, higher conflicts between work and leisure-family relations was associated with lower intentions to respond to post-sexual assault for females but not for males. Findings suggest that there may be greater pressures for female student-athletes to succeed within the masculine sports culture, which may further prevent them from intervening as a bystander to sexual assault. Female student-athletes perceive more role conflict between academic and athletic expectations than male student-athletes (Lance, 2004). Furthermore, female student-athletes exhibit greater GRC if they have a lower ability to cope with and endure negative emotions (Daltry, 2013). Due to collective beliefs in the sports culture that sexual assault happens to weaker women who put themselves in precarious situations (McMahan, 2009), it may be perceived as an additional burden for female student-athletes to get involved as an active bystander. Future studies should delve into these complexities perceived by female-student athletes that hinder their bystander intentions to respond post-sexual assault.

Implications

This study has important implications for the field of social work. Findings confirm that student-athletes are indeed a vulnerable population at-risk of GRC. High rates of GRC have been linked to maladaptive behaviors (i.e. violence and abuse), mental illness (i.e. depression and anxiety), and lower help-seeking (O'Neil, 2015). Social workers can strive to better address the health and wellness of student-athletes struggling with GRC. Using a more holistic perspective, social workers can address some of the attitudes that may lead to problematic behaviors. More specifically, social workers can encourage positive identity development, including healthy masculinity and healthy sexuality. Encouraging healthy masculinity is imperative to move away from attitudes and behaviors that reflect GRC (O'Neil, 2008). Social workers can facilitate conversations to reduce the stigma of homosexuality and encourage help seeking. Furthermore, social workers can teach effective coping strategies and time management skills for student-athletes. Since time management has been recognized as an important tool for academic and athletic success (Rothschild-Checroune et al., 2012), student-athletes can be encouraged to utilize these skills to better manage their stress and effectively communicate their needs (Gomez et al., 2018). This is especially important for females who may be experiencing higher conflicts between work and leisure-family relations, as female student-athletes may experience greater pressure to succeed in a male-dominated environment. Therefore, this research establishes the need for increased services and resources in athletics to support student-athlete wellness and normalize help-seeking behaviors, which has often been stigmatized among student-athletes (Moore, 2017; Ramaeker & Petrie, 2019).

By identifying specific barriers to respond post-sexual assault in intercollegiate athletics, such as GRC, social workers could create customized prevention programs for the student-athlete population. Designing more relatable training curricula for student-athletes will promote a more conducive learning environment to learn prosocial bystander behaviors. By creating safe spaces for intimate dialogue, student-athletes can practice how they would intervene as an active bystander and respond to incidents of sexual assault involving their peers. In addition, curriculum on bystander intervention tailored to student-athletes could adopt a more culturally relevant model for diverse populations, which has shown positive increases in attitudes toward bystander intentions (Lawson et al., 2012).

Taken together, social workers can advise athletics departments as they implement policies and best practices for mental health and sexual assault prevention. The NCAA formed the Mental Health Task Force in 2013 and published the *Inter-Association Consensus Document: Best Practices for Understanding and Supporting Student-Athlete Mental Wellness to promote the health and well-being of student-athletes* (NCAA Sport Science Institute, 2016). According to this document, athletic departments should seek licensed counselors to provide mental health services, develop policies and procedures in the event that a student-athlete experiences a mental health challenge, develop and apply mental health screening tools and referral plans prior to student-athlete's participation in athletics, and promote a culture in the athletics department that encourages mental well-being and resilience (NCAA Sport Science Institute, 2016). Social workers can assist athletic departments through the process of assessing and connecting student-athletes to mental health services. Due to their knowledge in clinical practice, social workers would be a valuable resource to shape institutional policies and practices to address crises and improve internal supports.

Similarly, social workers can help athletic departments maintain compliance with policies around sexual assault and prevention. The three main principles of the NCAA Policy to Combat Campus Sexual Violence (2020) stipulate that athletic departments should be aware of institutional policies and processes to address sexual assault; refer to the latest *Sexual Violence Prevention Toolkit* (2019) to provide ongoing sexual assault prevention education for student-athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators; and actively participate in campus activities organized to combat sexual and interpersonal violence. Social workers can support NCAA member institutions as they annually attest their compliance that they are actively engaging in steps to respond to, address, and prevent sexual violence in their respective programs. Social workers can also enforce Title IX (1972) regulations, which prohibits sex discrimination at institutions receiving federal financial assistance, when responding to allegations of sexual assault involving student-athletes. Additionally, social workers can offer insight on how to improve protocols that better protect student-athletes if an incident occurs and encourage policy reform to expand services. For the reasons listed above, social workers play an instrumental role in supporting and shaping policies that prioritize the health and wellness of student-athletes.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. First, this study only assessed a small number of bystander situations by measuring intentions to respond to post-sexual assault. Other studies should investigate a wider range of bystander opportunities—including attitudes and behaviors—for student-athletes before, during, and after a sexual assault occurs. The survey also did not allow for more inclusive gender identities (e.g. nonbinary, trans individuals). Moreover, many participants did not fully complete the web-based survey, which may be due to participant fatigue. It is possible that participants felt uncomfortable answering some of the sensitive questions around their emotions or sexual assault. To address dropout rates, it may be useful to distribute a paper survey during regularly scheduled meetings versus a web-based survey. Researchers should consider employing random sampling for similar studies moving forward. Finally, cross-sectional studies do not allow for causal inference and results cannot infer that GRC directly impacts intentions to respond to post-sexual assault. Future studies need to better assess predictability of GRC on responding to sexual assault and strengthen the research design to increase generalizability to the student-athlete population.

Conclusion

The results of this study shed light on both GRC and bystander intentions among the student-athlete population. This research is the first to explicitly measure gender differences in GRC between male and female student-athletes, revealing that males experience greater GRC than females. Furthermore, these results highlight GRC as a potential barrier to respond post-sexual assault as an active bystander, particularly for females who experience conflicts with work and leisure-family relations. Social workers are well-positioned to build context-specific support and sexual assault prevention for student-athletes.

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