"I learned that sports teaches rape culture": Assessing Sexual Violence Prevention Education for Intercollegiate Athletes

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In fall 2018, 81 intercollegiate athletes participated in *Fair Play: Sexual Violence Prevention for Athletes*. This study aimed to assess the efficacy of the *Fair Play* curriculum and facilitation, specifically learning if athletes' attitudes toward women and/or rape myth acceptance changed as a result of their participation in *Fair Play*. Athletes completed pre- and post-test surveys to measure perceptions of sexual assault/rape myth acceptance and gender. In addition, 20 athletes participated in semi-structured qualitative interviews to further explain their knowledge of sexual violence after completing *Fair Play*. Survey results showed significant differences for pre- and post-test scores on rape myth acceptance, but not for attitudes toward women. Interview results showed that *Fair Play* participants could articulate a raised awareness of sexual violence, appropriately define sexual violence and consent, and reject rape myths. Implications include further understanding of effective rape prevention education.

Keywords: sexual violence, intercollegiate athletics, rape prevention education

Introduction

Sexual violence on college campuses is an issue of concern due to steady incidence rates despite increased public attention on the matter. In 2000, it was estimated that between one-fifth and one-quarter of college women had experienced attempted or completed rape (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000); in 2007, the Campus Sexual Assault Study found similar results, reporting that one in five female undergraduate students were victims of attempted or completed rape (Krebs et al., 2007). In 2015, the numbers remained consistent at 20% to 25% of women experiencing sexual violence on campus (Anderson & Clement, 2015; Cantor et al., 2017). In response to these numbers, the Office for Civil Rights updated the agency's interpretation of Title IX to include mandated sexual assault response and prevention efforts by universities (Ali, 2011). One such way universities meet these requirements is through prevention education programs, whether online courses or in-person information sessions (Howard, 2015; Zimmerman, 2016).

It is critical to define a phenomenon in order to study it. Sexual violence may be difficult to define as it is a non-legal umbrella term that encompasses rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. The Department of Justice defines rape as "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (Department of Justice, 2012). In addition, the Department of Justice (n.d.) defines sexual assault as any type of sexual conduct or behavior that occurs without explicit consent. Forcible sodomy, fondling, and attempted rape all fall under this definition of sexual assault (Department of Justice, n.d.). In the present study, the focus is on rape and sexual assault, as well as the prevention of these forms of sexual violence.

One area of focus for sexual violence prevention education efforts has been intercollegiate athletics. Intercollegiate athletic departments are uniquely positioned to impact the sexual culture of college campuses, for better or worse. Further complicating the definition of sexual violence, the literature on sexual violence and sport includes more than simply examining the link between participation in athletics and perpetrating sexual violence, but also includes the relationship between sports participation and sexually aggressive attitudes or rape-normative beliefs, which are risk factors for sexual violence perpetration. Studies have found male collegiate athletes to be more prone to rape myth acceptance and sexually aggressive attitudes than their non-athlete peers (Boeringer 1996, 1999; Koss & Gaines, 1993; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; Sawyer et al., 2002; Young et al., 2017), and some studies have found athletes more likely to be perpetrators of sexual assault (Crosset et al., 1996; Fritner & Rubinson, 1993; Sawyer et al., 2002).

As a whole, this body of research suggests that those participating in sport may be more sexually violent, but one should be cautioned that these studies do not definitively prove that athletes rape at a higher rate than non-athletes. Still, data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) indicated male athletes want more education and discussion on "how to speak up when you see things around you aren't right" (i.e., bystander intervention) and both male and female athletes wanted to learn more about how to conduct themselves "appropriately" on campus and in the community (e.g., interpersonal communication, healthy relationships; Bell & Wilfert, 2014). As such, more effective sexual violence prevention education is needed specifically targeting intercollegiate athletics. NCAA policy does require that coaches, student-athletes, and athletic administrators complete sexual violence prevention training each year (NCAA, 2020). Further, athletic departments must confirm they are "informed on and compliant with school policies regarding sexual violence prevention and proper adjudication and resolution of acts of sexual violence to be eligible to host NCAA championships" (NCAA, 2020, para. 6). However, the governing body does not provide additional details for athletic departments and allows for a variety of educational programs to satisfy this requirement.

Given the limited guidance provided by the NCAA, as well as the critical need to address sexual violence, the primary researcher of this study developed an athlete-centered, 10-hour curriculum, *Fair Play: Sexual Violence Prevention for Athletes,* which blends research targeted at athletes with the best practices of a public

health approach to sexual violence prevention, providing an expanded curriculum employing active learning methodologies (McCray, 2015). Distributing 10 hours of training over multiple sessions, *Fair Play* provides students with an expanded sexual violence prevention curriculum featuring active learning methodologies that are more effective in educating athletes specifically (Banyard et al., 2007). The program emphasizes four curricular components: (1) awareness and understanding of sexual assault, consent, and rape culture in sports; (2) healthy sex education, (3) gender and sexuality; and (4) bystander intervention (including risk reduction for potential victims). Basic awareness, risk reduction, and bystander intervention are typical topics in sexual violence education. Healthy sexuality, however, is both less common and critical to programmatic success because, according to Herman (1984), "as long as sex in our society is construed as a dirty, low, and violent act involving domination of a male over a female, rape will remain a common occurrence" (p. 52). Further, the inclusion of gender and sexuality is key, because helping athletes reimagine gender roles may contribute to lowering negative attitudes towards women and reducing rape myth acceptance.

Fair Play offers separate sessions for male and female athletes as research indicates sex-segregated training is more effective (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Berkowitz, 2002; Breitenbecher, 2000; Jackson & Davis, 2000), in part because men often become defensive in the presence of women (Brecklin & Forde, 2001; Rozee & Koss, 2001). Thus, educating with same-sex instructors will ensure receptive audiences for what may be difficult material. *Fair Play* sessions are solely focused on sexual violence prevention, rather than offered in combination with other subjects (e.g., alcohol abuse, nutrition, compliance), as Anderson and Whiston (2005) demonstrated that "programs that included more than one topic appeared to be less effective than more focused programs" (p. 383). This model achieves an intense "saturation" effect, which is more effective with sexual violence prevention and bystander intervention techniques (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Flores & Hartlaub, 1998). *Fair Play* is a step-by-step 10-hour curriculum that offers athletes a unique opportunity to engage in a program designed specifically for them.

In fall 2018, four athletic teams from a private university participated in *Fair Play: Sexual Violence Prevention for Athletes*. The university received local grant funding to pilot *Fair Play* and assess the program's outcomes related to athlete understanding of sexual violence. Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of the *Fair Play* curriculum and facilitation. More specifically, we sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Did athletes' attitudes toward women change as a result of participation in *Fair Play*?

RQ2: Did athletes' rape myth acceptance change as a result of participation in *Fair Play*?

RQ3: How was *Fair Play* effective in changing athletes' understanding of sexual violence?

RQ1 and RQ2 were influence by the extant literature on rape culture, rape myths, and how they may be utilized to reduce incidences of sexual violence. The next section will outline these issues, particularly as they relate to athletic participation.

Theoretical Framework

Sanday (1981) first coined the term "rape culture" in her anthropological work, positing rape is a not a biological need, but something that occurs as a result of socialization. Herman (1984) expanded on this term while discussing rape in America: "To end rape, people must be able to envision a relationship between the sexes that involves sharing, warmth, and equality, and to bring about a social system in which those values are fostered" (p. 52). Rape cultures are characterized by high levels of tolerance for violence, and strict sex segregation and gender roles, which foster lack of respect for women. Critical to fostering a rape culture are rape myths. According to Burt (1980), these are "stereotypes and myths – defined as prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists – in creating a climate hostile to rape victims" (p. 217). Examples of rape myths are "look at how she was dressed, she was asking for it" or "he couldn't help himself, he's a guy just following his sexual urges, what do you expect?" Rape myths include stereotypes about both victims and perpetrators but hold only the victim accountable for the sexual assault (Burt, 1980). Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) noted that rape myths are "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (p. 134).

Rape myths often uphold traditional views on sex, gender and masculinity (e.g., women are to be pure and chaste, men are celebrated for sexual conquest). Burt's (1980) findings indicated rape myth acceptance is "strongly connected to other deeply held and pervasive attitudes such as sex role stereotyping, distrust of the opposite sex (adversarial sexual beliefs), and acceptance of interpersonal violence" (p. 229). In sum, rape myths and their acceptance contribute to a culture that is supportive of rape (i.e., a rape culture).

Thus, rape cultures (1) "display a high level of tolerance for violence, male dominance, and sexual segregation" and (2) "lack the social constraints that discourage sexual aggression or contain social arrangements that encourage it" (Crosset, 1999, p. 245). Further, some facets of American higher education, such as intercollegiate athletics, are often considered to be rape cultures or display elements of rape culture (McCray et al., 2018; Sanday, 1990). Curry (2002) further exposed rape culture in intercollegiate athletics through an examination of locker room talk. He found that locker room talk about women "promotes harmful attitudes and creates an environment supportive of sexual assault and rape" (p. 183). Messner and Sabo (1994) connected locker room talk to peer support of violence:

> And when verbal sparring and bragging about sexual conquests led to actual behavior, peer group values encouraged these young men to treat females as objects of conquest. This sort of masculine peer group dynamic is at the heart of what feminists have called "the rape culture." (p. 50)

Peer support of violence is cited as one of the main reasons for acting in a sexually aggressive way. According to Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997), "North America is a 'rape-supportive culture,' where values and beliefs that support and encourage the sexual victimization of women are widely available to all men" (p. 52). However, simply because someone supports rape myths does not necessarily mean they will act upon those beliefs. Schwartz and DeKeseredy proposed perpetrators of sexual assault do so based on perceived peer support for violence against women.

Further, as sport is a patriarchal, sex segregated system it provides male athletes with power and privilege over women (Hattery, 2010) and has "historically been characterized through male hegemony" (Mordecai, 2017, p. 37). Male athletes are socialized through a culture that encourages them to take on a hypermasculine identity with a heightened sense of aggression and sexuality (Mordecai, 2017). It is also one where winning a sport competition is done through the "use of violence to achieve domination over others" (Messner et al., 2015, p. 11) in a manner that parallels men's violence against women (Mordecai, 2017). Further exacerbating these issues is the fact that male athletes may experience entitlement (e.g., the assumption of "celebrity status") through their sport participation, which can contribute to an inflated ego and sense of invincibility that may impact their decision making (Coakley, 2015).

As mentioned, some literature suggests that male college athletes are more prone to rape myth acceptance and sexually aggressive attitudes than their non-athlete peers (Boeringer 1996, 1999; Koss & Gaines, 1993; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; Sawyer et al., 2002; Young et al., 2016), therefore, one goal of *Fair Play: Sexual Violence Prevention for Athletes* was to lower participants' rape myth acceptance (RQ2). Further, as rape culture and rape myths are based on negative and harmful gendered stereotypes about women, a second goal of *Fair Play* was to change participants' attitudes towards women in more positive, less stereotypical gendered ways (RQ1). Lastly, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is important that prevention programs "promote social norms that protect against violence" and "teach skills to prevent sexual violence" (Basile et al., 2016, p. 11). This includes treating men and boys as allies, teaching empowerment-based skills to women and girls, and educating all young people on healthy sexuality and dating/relationship skills, such as consent. *Fair Play* encompassed these components, which we attempt to demonstrate through RQ3.

Methods

IRB approval was secured from the primary researcher's institution. A mixed-methods approach was utilized to understand whether or not and how/why attitudes regarding sexual assault/rape myth acceptance and gender roles changed as a result of *Fair Play*. It is important to understand the effectiveness of this sexual violence prevention programming specific for intercollegiate athletes as athletic departments have struggled to comply with recommendations from the OCR regarding

action taken against sexual assault on college campuses (Kelderman, 2012; Krakauer, 2015; Luther, 2016). Researchers were interested in understanding not only if changes occurred but how and why they occurred, which is why a mixed-methods approach was utilized. Paper and pencil surveys were utilized for data collection of pre- and post-program perceptions of athletes' attitudes regarding sexual assault/ rape myth acceptance and gender roles. The utilization of pre- and post-program data collection allowed researchers to measure change in attitudes (Foubert & Marriott, 1997; Weisz & Black, 2001). Quantitative data (i.e., survey responses) was entered into SPSS version 25 by the primary researcher. Following the completion of *Fair Play*, athletes were invited to voluntarily participate in qualitative interviews with the primary researcher.

Participants

Four athletic teams (i.e., football, softball, women's golf, women's tennis) participated in *Fair Play*, as selected by the institution's athletic director based on team schedule and availability during the time of the pilot study. Athletes were instructed that the *Fair Play* programming was mandatory, though not all students were able to participate (e.g., they had class at the same time as *Fair Play*), and though attendance was taken, there were no penalties for missing a session (e.g., coach did not make them run). A grant paid for trained sexual violence prevention educators from a local nonprofit to facilitate the programming, so the primary researcher was only involved in distributing and collecting the surveys, as well as facilitating follow-up interviews. The separation of facilitators and researchers was done in an attempt to reduce the possibility of social desirability bias in participants.

Frequencies for the quantitative survey data indicated a relatively equal split between first (27.2%), second (27.2), and third year (29.6%) students, while 14.8% self-reported as fourth year students and 1.2% self-reported as fifth year or graduate students. Just over half the participants identified as men (55.6%). All 81 participants identified as heterosexual. The majority of the participants (85.2%) self-reported identifying as White, while 4.9% identified as Black or African American, 1.2% identified as Asian, 6.2% identified as Biracial or Mixed Race, and 2.5% identified as other. A little more than half (55.6%) of the participants indicated they participated in football, while 7.4% participated in women's golf, 12.3% participated in women's tennis, and 24.7% participated in softball. The participant demographics are representative of the overall athlete population at the institution. Twenty of the 81 student-athletes participated in follow-up interviews with the primary researcher. Of the 20 participants who completed interviews, 11 were football players, and the remaining nine were from the women's teams. Researchers aimed to interview a variety of student representation, including from all teams, all grade levels, and those who attended every session, as well as those who missed a few sessions. Please see Table 1 for a breakdown of interview participants.

Table 1

Interview Participants

	Sport	Year in School	Sessions Attended
Participant A	W Golf	1st/2nd	9 of 10
Participant B	Softball	1st/2nd	9 of 10
Participant C	W Golf	1st/2nd	10 of 10
Participant D	Football	1st/2nd	10 of 10
Participant E	Softball	1st/2nd	10 of 10
Participant F	W Tennis	3rd/4th	9 of 10
Participant G	W Golf	3rd/4th	9 of 10
Participant H	Football	3rd/4th	10 of 10
Participant I	Football	3rd/4th	10 of 10
Participant J	Softball	3rd/4th	8 of 10
Participant K	Football	3rd/4th	10 of 10
Participant L	Football	1st/2nd	8 of 10
Participant M	W Tennis	3rd/4th	9 of 10
Participant N	Football	1st/2nd	8 of 10
Participant O	Football	1st/2nd	8 of 10
Participant P	Football	1st/2nd	10 of 10
Participant Q	Football	3rd/4th	10 of 10
Participant R	Football	3rd/4th	7 of 10
Participant S	Softball	3rd/4th	10 of 10
Participant T	Football	3rd/4th	10 of 10

Measures

To measure athletes' perceptions of sexual assault/rape myth acceptance, the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression scale (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007) was utilized. The AMMSA was created in response to problems associated with classic rape myth acceptance scales (e.g., the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale) and research conducted using college students. Gerger and colleagues (2007) found that when conducting research on college students utilizing rape myth acceptance scales a floor effect (i.e., skewed distributions and means distorted to the low endpoint of the scale) is often produced. The AMMSA is a 30-item scale that measures endorsement of common myths about rape and sexual aggression. The inventory utilizes a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "Completely disagree" to "Completely agree." Items include, "Once a man and women have started 'making out', a woman's misgivings against sex will automatically disappear," "Interpreting harmless gestures as 'sexual harassment' is a popular weapon in the battle of the sexes," and "After a rape, women nowadays receive ample support.' Alterations were made to question wording of several survey questions to ensure participants fully understood questions. For example, the question reading: "When a single woman invites a single man to her *flat* she signals that she is not averse to having sex," was

altered to: "When a single woman invites a single man to her *place* she signals that she is not averse to having sex." The intent was not to change the meaning of questions, but rather ensure language matched with common language utilized by intercollegiate athletes. Higher scores indicate a greater acceptance or endorsement of the rape myth. A Cronbach's alpha of .76 for the English version was found (Gerger et al., 2007). Adequate reliability and validity have been established in studies by the scale's authors (Gerger et al., 2007).

To measure athletes' perceptions of gender roles the shortened version of the Attitudes Toward Women scale (ATW; Spence et al., 1973) was used. The ATW scale was created to measure perceptions about "the rights and roles of women in such areas as vocational, educational, and intellectual activities; dating behavior and etiquette; sexual behavior; and marital relationships" (Spence et al., 1973, p. 219). The original ATW scale contains 55 items, while the shortened version utilized in this study contains 25. In creating the shortened version authors attempted to include statements that describe roles and behaviors from all major activity areas "in which normative expectations could be, in principle, the same for men and women" (Spence et al., 1973, p. 219). The traditional four-point Likert scale was altered to a seven-point scale to create uniformity between the ATW scale and AMMSA. Response options ranged from 1 "completely disagree" (i.e., traditional) to 7 "complete agree" (i.e., pro-feminist). Increasing the number of response options has been found to be better for reliability, validity, discriminating power, and respondent preferences (Preston & Colman, 2000). Sample items include, "Women should take increasing responsibility for leadership in solving the intellectual and social problems of the day," "Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry," and "Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers." Wording for select questions was altered to ensure participants understood questions as common language and phrases have changed during the past 45 years. For example, the question reading: "Women should be given equal opportunity with men for *apprenticeship* in the various trades," was changed to: "Women should be given equal opportunity with men for *internships* in the various trades." Authors were careful to not alter the meaning of questions with the alterations. Correlations between the 55-item version and shorted version were .95 and above (Spence et al., 1973). Additional demographic information was also collected at the end of the survey. Post-test surveys also included three optional, open-ended questions: "What was the most impactful or meaningful part of *Fair Play*?"; "What improvements and/or suggestions do have for *Fair Play*?"; and "Is there anything else you'd like to share related to *Fair Play*?".

Semi-structured qualitative interview questions included two broad categories of questions: the curricular format and content delivery and knowledge of sexual violence and bystander intervention. Questions assessing the curricular format and content delivery included: "How interested and/or engaged did you feel during the 10-week program?"; "How did the program's structure help your learning?"; "How did the program's structure hinder your learning?"; "How did the program's

facilitator(s) help your learning?”; and “How did the program’s facilitator(s) hinder your learning?” Questions assessing participant knowledge of sexual violence and bystander intervention included: “What did you learn during the program?”; “How would you define sexual violence? Sexual assault? Consent?”; “Please describe by-stander intervention?”; “To what extent did the 10-week curriculum change your knowledge of sexual violence? Please describe the change.”; and “To what extent did the 10-week curriculum change your knowledge of bystander invention? Please describe the change.”

Analysis

In order to analyze the quantitative data collected, SPSS Statistics version 25 was utilized for data analysis. Only completed surveys were utilized in analysis. Of the 81 participants who completed the intervention, 80 completed the pre-test for a re-sponse rate of 98%. Additionally, 74 participants completed the post-test providing a response rate of 91%. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze mean scores of the AMMSA and ATW scale. Further, paired samples t-tests were conducted to test for changes between pre-and post-tests scores on the AMMSA and ATW scale. A series of t-tests and analysis of variances were utilized to examine the relationship between the AMMSA and ATW scale and demographic variables such as sex/gender, academ-ic classification, and sport played.

Semi-structured, in-person interviews were conducted by the primary researcher with a purposive sample of athletes who participated in *Fair Play* (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were selected as the method of data collection to elicit the inner thoughts and experiences of those who participated in *Fair Play* (Seidman, 2013). Unlike quantitative data collection (e.g., surveys), qualitative interviews allow for a more personal interaction with participants, which empowers the participant to share addi-tional details (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Additionally, researchers are able to use direct quotations from interviews conducted, which allows for a deeper understanding of the data and enable the athletes’ voiced to be heard (Veal & Darcy, 2014). Specifical-ly, researchers were interested in hearing participant voices to gain narrative insight to the effectiveness of *Fair Play*. For instance, participants may be able to tell the interviewer precisely how they defined consent or engaged in bystander intervention, and the interviewer can ask follow-up questions to gain further awareness of how *Fair Play* was effective in changing attitudes and behaviors.

Of the 81 athletes who participated in *Fair Play*, 20 completed interviews. The average interview length was 27 minutes (range 19-45 minutes). Length of inter-views varied based on a number of factors, including pre- and post-test changes in participant perceptions, comfort level and openness of the participant, and content area knowledge. In addition, interviews were crafted to supplement quantitative sur-vey data, which allows for a more concise interview guide. Post-test open ended survey questions were included in data analysis with interview data.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by Rev.com (Zhou et al., 2013) and for-matted for analysis by the primary researcher. Researchers individually coded each interview transcript and then came together as a research team to discuss codes

(Saldana, 2015). Constant comparative data analysis was utilized to code the data. During this analysis codes, or instances, from individual interviews were continuously compared to the rest of the data in an attempt to find patterns (Merriam, 2009). Through the reading and rereading of the coded data, themes were identified (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). "Meaningful and manageable themes" were created through grouping of quotes of related career progressions, experiences, or ideas (Patton, 1987, p. 150). Whenever possible, researchers utilized exact wording in attempts to retain and reflect the meaning (Creswell, 2013). Previous research has demonstrated the need for qualitative data to deliver context and expand upon quantitative assessment data for violence prevention programs (Edwards et al., 2005; Jaime et al., 2015; Piccigallo et al., 2012). The data analysis style used by the researchers in the current study (i.e., constant comparative analysis) is a commonly used method for analyzing qualitative interview data (Patton, 1987).

Results and Discussion

Pre- and post-test surveys answered RQ1 and RQ2. Specifically, the Attitudes Toward Women (ATW) scale addressed RQ1, and the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Assault (AMMSA) scaled addressed RQ2. Paired samples t-test indicated significant differences for pre- (M = 3.19, SD = .84) and post-test (M = 2.87, SD = .86) scores on the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Assault (AMMSA) scale, t (61) = 4.195, p < .001, d = .54. No significant differences were found between pre and post-test scores on the Attitudes Toward Women (ATW) scale. Independent samples t-tests indicated significant differences were found between male (M = 3.48, SD = .80) and female (M = 2.96, SD = .73) participants on the pre-test for the AMMSA scale, t (74) = 2.911, p = .005, d = .68. No additional gender differences were found on the post-test of the AMMSA scale or the pre- or post-test of the ATW scale.

No significant differences were found on the pre- or post-test for either scale based on academic year, race/ethnicity, or number of sessions attended. A one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences were found based on sport participation on the pre-test of the AMMSA scale, (F(3, 72) = 5.016, p = .003, η_p^2 = .17). A Tukey post hoc test revealed differences were present between football (M = 3.49, SD = .83) and women's golfers (M = 2.29, SD = .76), with football players scoring significantly higher. No additional differences based on sport participation were found on the post-test of the AMMSA scale or the pre- or post-test of the ATW scale.

As there were no significant differences between pre- and post-test scores on the ATW scale, it is difficult to say that participants' attitudes toward women changed as a result of the program. However, changing gender norms is a difficult, lengthy process of socialization and culture change that is unlikely to happen in 10 hours, despite best efforts of the program (Coakley, 2015). Analysis of the AMMSA scale showed participants' rape myth acceptance lowered after participating in *Fair Play*. This is also illustrated through the qualitative findings. We will further highlight

these changes by discussing each qualitative theme in detail. RQ3 aimed to understanding how *Fair Play* was effective in educating participants on sexual violence prevention. The program helped participants raise awareness of sexual violence, define sexual violence and consent, and reject rape myths.

Interview results yielded four major themes indicating how *Fair Play* was effective in changing athletes' perceptions of sexual violence (RQ3). Qualitative data analysis found that athletes, after participating in *Fair Play*, were able to (1) articulate how *Fair Play* raised their awareness of sexual violence; (2) define sexual violence appropriately and accurately; (3) define consent as affirmative and mutual; and (4) reject rape myths. These themes will be further explained, particularly in relation to the quantitative data, in the next section. Participants' gender is denoted as (m) for man and (w) for woman to give greater richness to the participant voices in the findings below.

Theme 1: Articulate How *Fair Play* Raised Their Awareness of Sexual Violence

Athletes who participated in interviews could identify that *Fair Play* raised their awareness and impacted their understanding of sexual violence, particularly regarding the prevalence of the topic. "Opened my eyes" was the most commonly used phrase by participants. For example, Participant D (m) said, "It was just really eye-opening to me," and Participant E (w) noted, "I think it opened my eyes to what really can be considered sexual violence." Participant P (m) said, "It definitely opened up my eyes more…I came out of there better than when I came in, uh, knowing about sexual violence." Participant G (w) was able to tie together the need to be aware of sexual violence with the need for prevention. She said, "It just opened my eyes, I think, to how, how very extensive and prominent it is in our culture, and how much of a problem it is, how many people are affected by it, and how desperately we need people to try and, you know, be the force that helps it end." Participant B (w) said, "Sexual violence is so much more common than I thought." Participant N (m) commented, "Obviously I know that stuff happened and I know it was more common than uncommon, but I didn't know that it was nearly the range or consistency as what it really is." In raising awareness, *Fair Play* helped participants understand how often sexual violence occurs.

For many participants, when asked "To what extent did the 10-week program change your knowledge of sexual violence?", they answered that it didn't "change" their knowledge per se, but students said it "broadened," "extended," "supplemented," "expanded," or "further shaped" their knowledge. Other participants said the program gave them a "better understanding" of sexual violence or could articulate a clear and obvious change in their learning. For example, Participant D (m) said, "I learned so much I can't even think of it all." Participant L (m) said the program changed "pretty much like the whole range" of his knowledge of sexual violence. And Participants N (m) and R (m) both used "tremendous" to describe their learning of sexual violence through *Fair Play*.

Theme 2: Define Sexual Violence Appropriately and Accurately

In addition to articulating how *Fair Play* raised their awareness of sexual violence, most participants were also able to define sexual violence in appropriate and accurate ways, reflecting what they learned through the program. During the first two hours of *Fair Play*, facilitators showed athletes a slide defining sexual violence as sexual, nonconsensual, and encompassing actions that are both physical (i.e., sexual assault) and verbal (i.e., sexual harassment). Participant C (w) reflected that back during the interview by stating, "Sexual violence was like, the broad umbrella term that included, like, assault, harassment, rape. So any kind of unwanted, nonconsensual [act]." When asked, "How would you define sexual violence?", all participants could identify nonconsensual action as critical. For example, Participant A (w) said, "Um, probably without consent, definitely. Um, just like rape and physical abuse when there's no consent." Participant T (m) answered this way: "Just anything that she does not want you to do, basically. Without consent." Participant D (m) explained, "Sexual assault, it's like someone is either physically or mentally abused without consent, without them wanting it. it's just something happening to someone that they don't want to happen without them even having a say in it." Even if participants did not use the word "consent" in their explanation, they would still describe the lack of consent as critical to sexual violence. Participant I (m) said,

> Sexual violence, how would I define it, oof, it's uh…there's so much to it, it's hard to put a definition on it! Because it could be from sexual harassment, or like rubbing on a woman's shoulders at work, that's sexual violence. That's not something that they ask for or wanted.

Similarly, Participant M (w) explained,

> [Sexual violence is] more like unwanted…anything that's really physical that could lead to rape…and then, um, sexual harassment was like, worded, verbal. Like, it's very, it's still uncomfortable, but it's still verbal and it's still hitting you, um, to where you just don't want to be wherever you are at that moment.

The idea that sexual violence is rooted in power and control was perfectly articulated by Participant O (m) when he said, "It's the manipulation and/or intention to hurt someone, um, sexually." A common rape myth is that sexual violence happens when a perpetrator just cannot control their lust in a weak moment. *Fair Play* gave athletes tools to understand the power and control dynamics behind the act of sexual violence.

Theme 3: Define Consent as Affirmative and Mutual

As consent is the definitive line between sex and sexual violence, it is important that *Fair Play* participants can understand and define consent. In the program, consent is defined as mutually understood by all parties involved and affirmative (i.e., getting a

"yes" and not the absence of a "no"). Athletes received a short lecture, watched videos, completed worksheets, and engaged in discussions on the differences between consent and nonconsent, as well as how consent is interpreted differently between men and women. For example, research shows that college-aged men are more likely to "get" consent through body language, but women are more likely to say they "give" consent verbally with their words (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). One learning objective of *Fair Play* was for all students to understand consent as affirmative and mutually understood, and most participants described consent as such during the interviews. One outlier, Participant K (m), struggled a bit on the verbal affirmative nature of consent. He said,

> Um, so obviously like a yes or something like that but it kind of goes back to body language. Um, I guess I don't really know how to describe consent but like it's just kind of something you have to know when you see it, I guess. But like, even if you're a little unsure, you better make sure.

However, despite this outlier, other participants were clear about consent as a verbal yes, not relying on body language or other cues to assume consent. For example, Participant N (m) said, "Consent is saying yes. That's really the bottom line. Not 'maybe', not 'I don't know'… or 'we can' or 'we should'. It's just yes, honestly." Additionally, Participant H (m) said one has to get consent "outright" further explaining,

> It can't just be assumed. It has to be, you know, you have to get either a yes or um, you have to just get a yes, actually, not like either. You have to get a yes outright. And it can't be that silence is a yes. It has to be an outright yes, or um, your partner saying, "I want this to happen."

Participant J (w) explained consent as, "Saying like 'yes' or 'no'…or like, 'yes, you can do this' or like 'no, like don't do that.'" This demonstrates the need to get an affirmative, verbal consent. Similarly, Participant D (m) said, "You have to ask them." Participant S was most concise, explaining, "Saying yes. No is not yes. Not saying anything is not yes."

This education on consent affirmative and mutual proved critical to some participants in changing their previous knowledge on sexual violence. When asked, "What did you learn during the program?", Participant Q (m) responded,

> I learned that no means no. Which I mean, I – I – I knew before going in. But uh, maybe like some borderline phrases to know is maybe, uh, "Maybe we can do this later" or…like if there's any reflection of negativity, to just not even do anything.

Participant I (m) was particularly enthusiastic about what he learned, tying it back to future curriculum options. He said,

I have to verbally hear the word yes…anything else is not consent. And if they say yes, and then they say no, that's still not consent. It's yes or it's nothing! … That's a slogan we could do for this class: "It's yes or it's nothing!" That's what it is. They don't say yes, then it's nothing. You're going home.

Comments such as this reflected the nature of consent as something is enthusiastic in its affirmative nature, not something that should be coerced or pressured out of a partner.

Theme 4: Reject Rape Myths

The notion of coercing a partner – that "no" just means "try harder" is one of many pervasive rape myths that exist in rape culture. For example, one Yale fraternity served a five-year suspension after members chanted, "No means yes, yes means anal" during a pledge activity in 2010 (Jackson, 2018). Interview participants demonstrated a rejection of rape myths, demonstrating additional validity of quantitative results on the AMMSA scale. One common rejection of rape myths is that sexual violence is only perpetrated by men and only women are victims. For example, Participant A (w) said, "Males aren't the only ones who rape," and Participant K (m) said, "Some people think that the guys don't get sexually harassed, but obviously it's definitely more common with females." Participant H (m) explained, "Sexual violence…can go also both ways. You know, whether that's a woman to a man, a man to a woman, um, or you know, man to a man, woman to a woman." And Participant O (m) noted, "A lot of times we hear about it with women, but it can happen to males. It can happen to children. It can happen to anybody. Um, that was kinda the biggest thing, it can happen to anybody."

Another common rape myth is that sexual violence is rare and uncommon, or that stories of sexual violence are sensationalized or exaggerated. After participating in *Fair Play*, participants seemed to understand how pervasive sexual violence is in American society. For example, Participant B (w) said, "Sexual violence is much more common than I thought" and Participant H (m) noted, "I think the biggest thing [I learned] is that it happens more frequently than you really think." Participant J (w) connected how society minimizes the severity of sexual violence. She said,

It [*Fair Play*] kind of like helped to reaffirm just how much people um, like, downplay sexual violence. And kind of like, "Are you sure this happened?" or like, "What do you mean, like, she was into it" and how people tend to believe not…like, not the victims.

This comment from Participant J (w) transitions into another very common rape myth that victims – particularly girls and women – are liars and they are not to be believed about sexual violence. Participant A (w) shared, "No one asks to be raped or sexually abused. And I do not like the way that the news will be like, 'Yeah, she lied.' And I'm like, 'Well, were you there?'" Rape culture also perpetuates the myth that the victim is somehow responsible for the assault (e.g., "She was asking for

it"). During interviews, some participants rejected this rape myth. Participant R (m) discussed how it the program taught him about rape myths, saying, "You know, it doesn't matter what the women wear, you know? …They still get their respect and their boundaries."

One of the most impactful ways that students rejected rape myths was through an understanding of how victims are impacted by sexual violence. One curricular component of *Fair Play* was trying to create empathy for victims through understanding of the impact of sexual violence. Most simply, Participant D (m) noted, "A person's never going to be the same after that again." Participant O (m) connected the self-blame and guilt felt by victims when he said,

> There's a lot of times where they never speak out about it. And in my mind, I'm like, "Why not?" You know? But it's the fact that the embarrassment…a lot of the times you believe it yourself. So it's very hard to talk about that if, in your mind, you're like, "All right, maybe I did deserve this."

Participant O (m) was also astute in connecting the way victims may be treated to sport culture. He said,

> The victim's getting bullied or harassed on, um, Instagram, twitter, whatever. Because a lot of times it happens at these large universities or these high schools that have won a bunch of state championships in football. So now you have ignorant people who are going after the victim, saying, "You're just trying to disrupt what we have" when that's definitely not what their intention is whatsoever.

Participant T (m) made a similar connection between sport culture and victim impact. He said,

> Learning why women don't come out, you know, and talk about the sexual assaults that have happened. I know they brought up, uh, the Missouri running back. And how the girl never spoke out, just because, uh, I think she did, and he kept playing for two more years. There was more girls after that, you know, and nobody wanted to speak up because nothing was being done. Um, so kind of learning those things, kind of just shows you how severe those actions are.

Linking societal adoration of sports to negative impacts on victims was not necessarily a common theme, but one that was found in some participants. However, the overall connection between sports and rape culture was more common. For example, Participant F (w) explained, "That was my biggest takeaway, is that I never realized how much sports like subconsciously kind of ingrains those messages into both men and women."

Through interviews, participants answered RQ3 (How was *Fair Play* effective in changing athletes' understanding of sexual violence?) by demonstrating a raised awareness of sexual violence, the ability to appropriately define sexual violence and

consent, and a rejection of rape myths. These qualitative themes further support the quantitative results that answer RQ2 (Did athletes' rape myth acceptance change as a result of participation in *Fair Play*?), highlighting how participants' rape myth acceptance lowered after participating in *Fair Play*.

Conclusion

Intercollegiate athletes who participated in *Fair Play* demonstrated lower rape myth acceptance, but no significant differences in their attitudes toward women. Because gender norms and socialization processes are difficult to change (Coakley, 2015), there is need for further study and curricular developments on programming and education to reduce negative and harmful attitudes toward women. Participants were able to demonstrate a rejection of rape myths through interviews and the AMM-SA scale, pointing to the efficacy of *Fair Play* in lowering rape myth acceptance, a critical component to ending sexual violence. Interestingly, there were significant differences between male and female participants on rape myth acceptance during the pre-test survey but not on the post-test survey. This demonstrates that *Fair Play* was particularly effective for male athletes, who may be catching up to their female peers on rejecting elements of rape culture after such high levels of intervention (i.e., 10-hour curriculum).

Though response rates for both quantitative and qualitative measures were high, the overall number of participants in *Fair Play* was small (n = 81). In addition, though there was a fairly even distribution of men and women, participants were overwhelming white and exclusively identified as heterosexual. Although this generally reflects the nature of this university's athletic population, it may not be reflective of all athletes at all universities. Thus, generalizability was not feasible with the responses from this sample, nor was it the goal. However, this study did provide pertinent insight on how sexual violence prevention programming may be effective in similar samples. Further research may be necessary to consider the efficacy of *Fair Play* with athletes of color and those who identify as LGBTQ.

Other limitations may include the memory and/or recall of participants. Though the post-test survey was completed immediately after the last hour of programming in fall term, the interviews did not take place until spring, between three and five months after completing *Fair Play*. Thus, some interview participants may have experienced issues with remembering details about the program. However, this not necessarily bad. The fact that some participants can recall some very specific details about sexual violence and the *Fair Play* program is telling in and of itself. This points to elements of the program that were important and memorable for participants, perhaps suggesting efficacy of the curricular and facilitation methods of *Fair Play*.

Future research should address the assessment of successful educational efforts at changing gender norms and roles at both the individual and societal level. Despite the 10 hours of education received in *Fair Play*, participants did not display any significant changes on the ATW scale. More study is needed on how these changes can be made effectively to reduce negative attitudes toward women, which may lead to a reduction in sexual violence. More research is also needed on efficacy of sexual

violence prevention programs such as *Fair Play* in increasing participants' understanding and willingness to engage in bystander intervention.

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