

**Sport-related domestic violence:
Exploring the complex relationship between sporting events and domestic violence**

*Damien J. Williams
&
Fergus G. Neville

University of St Andrews

**Corresponding Author:*

Dr Damien J. Williams
Lecturer in Public Health Sciences
School of Medicine
University of St Andrews
North Haugh
St Andrews
Scotland
KY16 9TF
Tel: +44 (0)1334 463481
Email: djw11@st-andrews.ac.uk

Biographical information

Dr. Damien J. Williams is a Lecturer in Public Health Sciences in the School of Medicine at the University of St Andrews. His research interests include violence and aggression, violence prevention, health promotion, and health inequalities. He was the co-recipient of the inaugural 2011 Elizabeth Russell Award from the Faculty of Public Health for his work on gang violence prevention. More recently, he has worked on gender violence and domestic violence intervention strategies, and was lead author of a paper exploring the association between specific sporting events and domestic violence, which received considerable media coverage.

Dr. Fergus G. Neville is a Research Fellow in Public Health at the University of St Andrews. He is interested in the roles that social identities and norms play in shaping human behaviour, including violence. He was awarded his PhD in 2012 for his research on the social psychology of crowd experience and behaviour. His recent work has included research on domestic violence intervention strategies, and an exploration of the association between specific sporting events and domestic violence.

Abstract

The link between sport and violence is widely acknowledged. While the focus has been on “player violence” and “crowd violence” it is recognised that a variety of other incidents of sports-related violence exist, including domestic violence. Empirical and anecdotal evidence point toward increased rates of domestic violence among male athletes. Moreover, there is evidence that domestic violence also increases around sporting events in wider society; however, the evidence is at times contradictory. It is not argued that sport causes domestic violence, but that it can provide the conditions that enable forms of domestic violence. It is acknowledged that the evidence is at most correlational, and that further work is needed to understand this complex association. In particular, the “holy trinity” of sports, alcohol, and hegemonic masculinity is offered to explain this association. The wide appeal of sport can, however, be exploited to engage with males and support them in confronting the issues that underpin domestic violence, in conjunction with female empowerment and the pursuit of gender equality.

Running header: Sport-related domestic violence

Total number of words: 7,979

Keywords: Sport, domestic violence, hegemony, alcohol

Introduction

Sport plays a paradoxical role within society. On the one hand it is associated with many direct and indirect benefits to individuals, communities, and societies. On the other hand, it is associated with a powerful set of ideological values that can serve to perpetuate some of society's problems, including domestic violence. The chapter begins by exploring this paradoxical relationship, followed by a review of the literature concerning the link between sport and domestic violence; looking first at the link between athletes and domestic violence before considering the research linking sporting events and domestic violence in wider society. These findings are then contextualised through a consideration of the "holy trinity" of sport, hegemonic masculinity, and alcohol, and the limitations are discussed. The chapter concludes by identifying directions for future research, and highlighting ways in which the popularity of athletes and sports in general can be utilised as one strategy in addressing domestic violence.

Societal benefits of sport

It is well-known that sport participation confers many health benefits (e.g., DeBeliso et al., 2014; Ommundsen, Løndal, & Loland, 2014) as well as a number of social and economic benefits of sport spectatorship. Furthermore, the supporting of a sports team can be a valuable source of identity and community in a modern deindustrialised, secular society (Edge, 1997). Such identification with a social group can itself convey health benefits through the provision of structure and meaning, and the preconditions for positive social interactions (Sani, Herrera, Wakefield, Borocho, & Gulyas, 2012).

The act of collectively watching a sporting event with strangers can shift social relations from mistrust and uncertainty towards intimacy and comradeship, through a sharing of team or national identity (Neville & Reicher, 2011). This is because co-present people come to be seen as fellow members of one's social group, rather than as 'other'. As London Mayor Boris Johnson noted at the post-Olympics parade in 2012, "For the first time in living memory you [the athletes] caused tube train passengers to break into spontaneous conversation with their neighbours" (BBC, 2012).

Recognition of shared group membership can be accompanied by a shared understanding of the social norms associated with the group. This means that strangers can comfortably act and interact within the confines of a group's normative parameters without fear of behaving in an inappropriate manner. In this way, collective behaviour at sporting events is determined by commonly understood societal rules of how to act. However, while society shapes audience behaviour, sport spectatorship can in turn shape and challenge societal rules. Dunning (1999, p.221) states that "sport is one of the most successful means of collective mobilization humans have so far devised". Indeed, sports crowds can be a vehicle for collective action, such as the use of Barcelona's Nou Camp as a site for resistance against Franco's dictatorship (Shobe, 2008), or the Hillsborough Family Support Group's campaign for police accountability following the Hillsborough disaster (see <http://hfsg.co.uk/>).

The hosting of major sporting events can also facilitate debate and re-construction of the meaning of national identities towards inclusive definitions (e.g., Germany during the 2006 World Cup; Kersting, 2007), and can be used to 'sell' countries to an international audience resulting in national social and economic benefits. Sport spectatorship can also deliver significant economic benefits at local levels. Paid attendance to sporting events can help fund community sporting assets, sustain employment, and supporters can provide a valuable income source to bars, restaurants and hotels near sporting arenas.

In addition to the positive aspects of sport participation and spectatorship, the remnants of the historical roots of the often violent, “celebrations of class and patriarchal power” (Kidd, 2013, p.554) that excluded females or made them play by male rules (Christesen & Kyle, 2014) highlights the fundamental role sport played, and still does play in society. Indeed, Jackson (1993) states that sport provides “an important site for examining important social problems”, including “a critical look at violence” (p.9).

The culture of sport

A reinvigoration of the importance of sport emerged during the late 19th and early 20th century in the British Empire (Mangan, 1986) and spread across the globe (Kidd, 2013). This was largely attributed to fears that changes in working conditions and emerging social structures would result in the feminization of the middle and upper-middle classes (Wenner & Jackson, 2009) referred to as the “crisis of masculinity” (Messner, 1995). Thus, existing sports were adopted and shaped in such a way that the structure, rules, values, and meanings socialized young males in a particular kind of masculinity (Mangan, 1986) what Burgess, Edwards, and Skinner (2003) referred to as “controlled masculinity”. These sports involved displays of strength, power and/or endurance (usually involving physical violence) thereby reinforcing notions of male physical prowess (Dunning, 1999).

Sport-related violence is not restricted to males, but to understand such violence requires an understanding of gender identity is necessary (Coakley & Pike, 2009). It is stated that modern sport has evolved into a male institution for the performance of ideological values and power relations that characterise masculinity (see Kidd, 2013). Such behaviour is most evident in team sports (i.e., soccer, American football, rugby and ice hockey). For example, Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal (1995) noted that in hockey, fighting and intimidation are essential elements of the tradition and culture of the game, and found that teammates and coaches viewed violence (especially fights) as indicating greater competence than playing or skating skill. Moreover, Burgess et al. (2003) note that even in sports where there is limited opportunity for overt displays of violence (e.g., baseball, cricket etc.) participants can signify their masculinity through movement (i.e., “strutting”) talking (i.e., swearing) and actions (i.e., spitting) combined with off-field performances to reinforce their masculinity.

Sport serves to construct and prioritise a range of masculine selves whereby toughness and aggression (either manifest or implied) are rendered normative (Burgess et al., 2003). Females who participate in “violent sports” serve to disrupt “existing gender norms, causing social instability” (Gill, 2007, p.416). Gill argues that by engaging in a violent and masculine sport female players compromise their femininity, and in so doing are able to assert an alternate form of femininity - “resistant femininity” - which does not assume the role of women as victims and men as aggressors.

Sport in the civilising process

Sport is not the only way in which to exhibit traditional masculine qualities (i.e., power, strength and violence) and overtly reject traditional feminine values (i.e., expression and beauty) (Burgess et al., 2003), but it does offer the primary means of masculinity-validating experience, and has become part of the civilising process (Elias & Dunning, 1986). Moreover, given the extent to which young males vigorously pursue the formation of a masculine identity (Weinstein et al., 1995) the important function of sport for younger males must not be overlooked as they may not be able to demonstrate masculinity in other ways (i.e., “wage-earning, heterosexual relationships, or fatherhood”; Burgess et al., 2003, p.202).

Developing masculinity

The widespread availability of televised sport can sanction masculine behaviours within its rules. This can promote violence and danger as normative, desirable, and rewarding, and can be easily accessed, learned, and reinforced (Cowan, 2001). For instance, a large proportion of young children and adolescents reported regularly witnessing violence in televised sport, and perceived such acts as rewarding and exciting (Messner et al., 1999). Indeed, Leonard (1993) stated that:

Would you recognise (let alone enjoy) boxing without punching; football without tackling; full-contact karate without kicking? Modern sport ... is the controlled, rule-bound, limited violence called 'aggro.' (p. 158)

Power, symbolic violence, and status are embedded in many aspects of sport (Dunning, 1999) from team names and emblems, to the language used to describe games, and the nature of the performance. Thus, violence in sport can become normalised (Weinstein et al., 1995) thereby entrenching the 'gender order' (Cowan, 2001). However, Burgess et al. (2003) argue that while immersion within sport makes an "oppressive presentation of self a realisable and accessible option" (p.199) involvement in sport does not inevitably lead to the presentation of a tough and aggressive self. The concern is that the lessons learned through sport (participation or spectatorship) may be realised in other aspects of life, such as domestic settings (Wenner & Jackson, 2009) in the form of domestic violence.

Sports-related violence

There is acknowledgement of the link between sport and violence (e.g., Jamieson, 2009; Young, 2012) but this differs considerably in type and extent according to the type of sport (Guilbert, 2004). Each sport adopts a formal set of rules to ensure the safety of participants, and punishments for the transgression of those rules often carrying severe penalties (e.g., a period of suspension from the game/event for athletes; see McFee, 2004). Moreover, some sports have evolved to outlaw the most violent/dangerous practices (e.g., "butt-blocking", "face tackling", and "spearing" in American football; see National Federation of State High School [NFSH], 2013). While the majority of players refrain from violent acts, there can be an expectation of aggression within the rules of the sporting code, which can at times result in tragic outcomes (e.g., Baxter, 2005).

In addition, to violence among athletes on or off "the field of play" Young (2012) notes that the focus has been on violence involving fans traditionally referring to collective forms of violence against persons and property. Moreover, Jamieson (2009) identifies a host of "problems" in which a violent event is related to the sporting activity, venue, or "spill-over" associated with, amongst others, various sport participants, including: players, their coaches and family; supporters and officials. However, Young (2000, p.391) asserts that a variety of other sports-related violence "cannot easily be separated from the sports process and that only begin to make sense when the socially, culturally and historically embedded character of sport is closely scrutinized". He further indicates that this is most apparent in the case of domestic violence. While much of the literature on sport and domestic violence has focused on partner abuse by male athletes (Young, 2012) there is also evidence of a link between professional competitive sport and increased levels of domestic violence in wider society (e.g., Williams, Neville, House, & Donnelly, 2013) .

Domestic violence and male athletes

It is claimed that violence against women, and domestic violence more specifically, is an “integral and accepted part of competitive sports” and that sport “has become a “breeding ground for domestic violence and sexual assault scandals” (Moser, 2004, p.70). Indeed, Crosset (1999) notes that violence against women by male athletes represents an important social issue in sort, which has received more media attention than any other. Critical analysis has tended to focus on the major US college and professional sports (i.e., football, baseball, hockey, and basketball; see Benedict, 1999) Such incidents are often referred to as “high profile” due to the considerable media coverage they garner. However, Enck-Wanzer (2009) argues that the way in which the media covers incidents of domestic violence by professional athletes can in fact serve to perpetuate the problem. In particular she is critical of the decontextualized way in which the media portray black athletes, which serves to scrutinize black masculinity and “pathologize black men as naturally aggressive” (p.1) while downplaying hegemonic white masculinity.

The question of whether male athletes are more inclined to perpetrate domestic violence has often been discussed from a US perspective, but concerns have also been raised in Australia and the UK. For instance, Flood and Dyson (2007, p.44) highlight a spate of incidents of “violent, coercive, and harassing behaviour” against women (including domestic violence) perpetrated by Rugby League and Australian Football League players during 2004 and 2005. In the UK, Radford and Hudson (2005) discuss the handling of the signing of domestic violence perpetrator, Paul “Gazza” Gascoigne, to Middlesbrough Football Club and the inadequate public relations campaign including an invitation for him to sign the Zero Tolerance pledge, which was never taken-up.

Webb (2012) points to a number of anecdotal sources (i.e., domestic violence experts, sports sociologists, and former athletes) that support the idea that athletes may be more likely to commit acts of domestic violence than non-athletes, but notes that there is inconclusive evidence to support such assertions. However, the impact of such behaviour can extend into wider society, wherein amateur participants or spectators *may* emulate the behaviour of professional athletes.

Sports events and domestic violence in society

There has been concern over the association between sporting events and domestic violence. Brimicombe and Cafe (2012) note that on days leading up to the biggest sporting events, considerable attention is given to the potential rise in domestic violence. The concern and interest in the link between sporting events and domestic violence were raised largely following a controversial press release in 1993 in which domestic violence was reported to be greatest on Super Bowl Sunday compared to any other time in the year.

National Football League. The first empirical study of the association between NFL games (involving the Washington Redskins) and traumatic injuries in females (operationalised as the frequency of admissions to hospital emergency rooms) occurred in northern Virginia (see White, Katz, & Scarborough, 1992). Controlling for day of the week, month, year and special holidays during the 1988-1989 season, time series analysis indicated that the frequency of admissions (including assaults, falls, gun shots, lacerations, stabbings, and being hit by objects) increased when the Redskins won but not at any other time. However, rather than having data specifically related to domestic violence, the authors could only speculate that a number of the admissions resulted from domestic violence.

Sachs and Chu (2000) explored Los Angeles Sheriff Department (at the time home to the Los Angeles Raiders and Los Angeles Rams) domestic violence dispatches between January 1993 and December 1995 (including two full NFL seasons). They examined differences in dispatches from Wednesday (when football is not played) to Sunday (when football games are played) for the non-football season, football season, playoff weeks, and Super Bowl week. The study found no statistically significant increases in domestic violence during NFL games across the study period. Moreover, they found that Super Bowl Sunday did not represent the biggest day for domestic violence dispatches.

However, Gantz, Bradley, and Wang (2006) analysed domestic violence police dispatches by day in 15 NFL cities, and found a small but significant increase in domestic violence dispatches on or after Super Bowl Sunday. They also noted a large rise in dispatches around major holidays (e.g., Christmas). However, Grohol (2010) cautions against the study findings on the grounds that the publication was not published in a peer-reviewed journal, and presumably did not receive a rigorous review process.

Using a different dataset relating to crisis line calls and safe house admission, Oths and Robertson (2007) found no evidence of an increase on what they refer to as “drinking events/holidays” including Super Bowl (also Labour Day, Halloween, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and New Years Eve) relative to non-drinking holiday and major non-drinking events (i.e., Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas). They conclude that the patterning of calls and admissions contradicts that based on hospital and police data.

One of the major limitations of previous studies exploring the association between American football and domestic violence is that they were largely based on small data sets. To remedy this, Card and Dahl (2011) recently examined police reports of family violence for 8664 regular season Sunday fixtures across 12 full years (1995-2006) involving: Carolina Panthers, Denver Broncos, Detroit Lions, Kansas City Chiefs, New England Patriots, and Tennessee Titans. The authors accounted for match outcomes emotional valence of outcome (i.e., unexpected/expected win, loss, or draw) in their analysis. Contrary to previous findings, Card and Dahl found that only unexpected losses led to an increase in domestic violence reports (by 10%); games where losses were expected had small, insignificant effects.

Thus, evidence regarding a link between NFL and domestic violence is rather contradictory; however, the largest, most methodologically sound study by Card and Dahl (2011) provides the most reliable finding that confirms that match outcome is important.

Soccer World Cup. The soccer World Cup is one of the biggest globally televised sporting events, and has also been the target of research exploring links with domestic violence. Brimicombe and Cafe (2012) studied the association between domestic violence and England fixtures during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa using aggregate English police force data. It was found that when the England national team either won or lost there was a significant increase in reports. What is more, this held when compared to two matched comparator conditions, including: 2010 non-match days, or the 2009 non-tournament year. However, when England drew there was no difference in reporting rates. The authors highlight the importance of match outcome in terms of the resulting levels of domestic violence reports. They also acknowledge the limitation of using aggregated data in terms of making causal claims, but temper this by stating: “We can think of no other event occurring on the Wednesday of England’s win and the Sunday of England’s exit from the World Cup

that would explain these significant increases in the rate of reported domestic violence” (p.35).

Kirby, Francis, and O’Flaherty (in press) examined the influence of viewing England World Cup fixtures across three tournaments 2002 (Korea/Japan) 2006 (Germany) and 2010 (South Africa). Reported incidents of domestic abuse to Lancashire Constabulary, UK rose each time England played in the tournaments. What is more, it was found that incidents increased by 26% when England won or drew, and by 38% when they lost, with an 11% increase the day after England played. The authors acknowledge the limitations inherent in their study, namely its limited size, use of police data, and difficulties of defining “domestic violence”.

Scottish Old Firm derby. The “Old Firm” fixture between Glasgow Rangers and Celtic has been blighted by incidents of collective violence and sectarianism (Carnochan & McCluskey, 2011). Moreover, in response to media reports based on police data, there has been concern about the fixture’s influence on violence against women (see Scottish Parliament, 2011). However, there are a number of limitations in the “analyses” described in these media reports (see Williams et al., 2013). Two independent studies were completed concurrently exploring the association between Old Firm derbies and domestic violence, in the form of domestic incidents reported to the police.

First, Williams et al. (2013) sought to mitigate some of the issues raised in the media reports in two ways: initially, by making comparisons between a greater number of comparable time periods (e.g., the same day of the week and time of day) over four years; and subsequently, by comparing Old Firm matches with Scotland International matches played at Hampden Park in Glasgow to account for the role of high-profile football in the city (and underlying variables that could account for increased levels of domestic abuse; e.g., alcohol misuse). The authors found that reported domestic incidents for the 24-hours after kick-off were significantly greater for Old Firm derbies than all other comparators.

Secondly, Dickson, Jennings, and Koop (2013) adopted a similar approach to Card and Dahl (2011) and found that only Old Firm matches were associated with large increases in reports of domestic incidents largely irrespective of the timing or outcome of the match. However, they found support for Card and Dahl’s idea that unexpected loses (and not other outcomes) result in increased incidents of domestic violence but only when the game is important (i.e., when the title is still undecided).

One critique of studies exploring associations between sporting events and domestic violence is that “domestic violence is a complex on-going event and not simply a one-off incident attributable to sport or alcohol” (see Brimicombe & Cafe, 2012, p.32). However, understanding the conditions that lead to incidents being reported can play a role in identifying appropriate ways to intervene. We agree with Brimicombe and Café’s analysis:

“It is not that [sporting events] cause the violence, but rather that the excitement, disappointment and flow of adrenalin resulting from watching a ... team play may exacerbate existing tensions within a relationship and result in lost tempers and violence or abuse. Such behaviour may be made worse or more likely when alcohol has been consumed” (p.33)

The importance of time. Much of the research exploring the association between sporting events and reported domestic violence has not taken account of *time*, including

seasonality, time of day and day of week, which can give rise to a host of other confounding factors. While Dickson et al. (2013) found no monthly effect on reported domestic violence when controlling for the Christmas period a number of studies have demonstrated that summer months and higher temperatures correlate with increases in reports of domestic violence (e.g., Anderson, 2001) and violence-related injury hospital admissions (e.g., Bellis et al., 2012). It is important to note that such a link may not relate to temperature *per se*, but with additional factors such as increased alcohol consumption during periods of warm weather (and decreased consumption during January in the UK; Sheen & Tettenborn, 2011) and increased family contact during holiday periods (Braaf & Gilbert, 2007). In addition to seasonal effects, further studies have identified time patterns associated with domestic violence, such that reported violence increases significantly during evenings (e.g., Cohn, 1993) and weekends (e.g., Shepherd, 1990) specifically Friday and Saturday evenings (Bellis et al., 2012). It is, therefore, imperative that any investigation of the relationship between specific sporting events and reported domestic violence control for season and time effects and account for associated confounders.

Holy trinity: Alcohol, sport, and hegemonic masculinity

It has been suggested that domestic violence operates at the nexus of a social constellation comprising alcohol, sport, and hegemonic masculinity (Palmer, 2011) - the “holy trinity” (Wenner, 1998). Having explored the link between sport and domestic violence, we will now briefly discuss the links with alcohol and hegemonic masculinity.

Alcohol, sport, and, domestic violence

“[I]t remains difficult to have any involvement in sport – as a participant or a fan – without being exposed to a strong message that alcohol and sport are inextricably linked” (Jones, Phillipson, & Lynch, 2006, para. 1). Indeed, in a systematic review by Kwan, Bobko, Faulkner, Donnelly, and Cairney (2014), adolescent sport participation was positively associated with alcohol use in 14 out of 17 studies. This relationship between sport participation and alcohol resonates with the former Rangers footballer Richard Gough’s assertion that “The team that drinks together, wins together” (in Campbell, 2007). While alcohol may play a part in some forms of sport participation, it is also a common feature of the spectator experience, with alcohol regularly consumed before and after major sporting events, if not actually served within arenas (Enock & Jacobs, 2008). Outside of stadia, spectators may only have access to televised sporting events in bars and other licensed premises, thereby ensuring that the presence of alcohol is a part of their spectator experience (Wenner, 1998).

The association between alcohol and domestic violence pervades the research literature and popular understandings of the problem. Alcohol use is a consistent risk factor for intimate partner violence across different social contexts (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012). In a meta-analysis of North American studies, Black Schumacher, Smith and Heyman (1999, cited in Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002) reported that every study which considered alcohol use as a risk factor for domestic violence uncovered a significant relationship. Male alcohol consumption may also increase the severity of intimate partner violence (Finney, 2004) and consequently the extent of physical injuries suffered. This may then increase the likelihood of police and medical service involvement (Brecklin, 2002) which may partly explain the relationship between partner alcohol use and *reported* domestic violence.

Any relationship between alcohol use and violence is likely to be mediated by social variables. For example, there is evidence to suggest that if people believe alcohol is related to

violence, then they behave more violently having consumed alcohol (Collins & Messerschmidt, 1993). In South Africa some men also report using alcohol to provide courage to administer domestic violence which they feel is socially expected of them (see Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). Alcohol use can also form the basis of arguments (e.g., over drunken behaviour, spending time and money in bars instead of at home) and can escalate existing conflict (Quigley & Leonard, 2000). However, while approximately one third of intimate partner violence in the UK, for example, is committed under the influence of alcohol, two thirds is therefore committed without (Humphreys, Regan, & Thiara, 2005). This suggests that although alcohol should be considered a risk factor for domestic violence, it should not be regarded as the underlying cause.

Hegemonic masculinity, sport, and domestic violence

It has been argued that modern sport was socially constructed to instil an idealised form of masculinity, which has become hegemonic through its “acceptance” within society (Connell, 1990). Hegemonic forms of masculinity serve to reinforce the dominance of men in most aspects of life, referred to as patriarchy. Hearn (2004) suggests that “[h]egemony involves both the consent of some men, and, in a very different way, the consent of some women to maintain patriarchal relations of power” (p. 52). The “consent” by females is not a willing approval, but rather a reluctant acceptance of patriarchy. Nonetheless, Burgess et al. (2003) boldly states that “[s]port is now indelibly connected to ‘hegemonic masculinity’” (p.200).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) outline the formulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity:

“[T]he pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue [W]as distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities Certainly normative [E]mbodied the currently most honored way of being a man ... [I]t ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (p.832)

Radford and Stanko (1996) consider men’s use of violence against women fundamental in securing and maintaining “male dominance and female subordination” (p.65). Moreover, they highlight the family as “a central institution in patriarchal society” wherein the “private struggles around patriarchal power relations frequently features as a form of control of the powerless by the powerful” (p.78). Thus, domestic violence could be seen as central to the expression of hegemonic masculinity and the maintenance of patriarchy. Nonetheless, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasises that hegemony can be expressed in numerous ways, including positive practices (e.g., “bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship, and being a father” p. 840) but acknowledge that it can also include “toxic practices” (particularly violence) that serve to stabilize gender power hierarchies.

Future Directions

Further research is needed to unpick the complex relationship between sport and domestic violence, and implement evidence-based strategies to break this relationship. To date, much of the research has been largely observational, but if sport does not ‘cause’ domestic violence then potential mediating factors must be examined. Future studies could include the cross-referencing of alcohol sales during major sporting events with domestic violence reports, and qualitative work looking at how particular hegemonic expressions of masculinity relate to

sport and violence. Qualitative research with survivors of domestic violence who were assaulted during sporting events might also shed light on the relationship.

In order to conduct such research, however, there needs to be greater consistency in the definition of domestic violence, and the pursuit of research methods that reflect this definition. Domestic violence incorporates the relentless pattern of physical violence *and* non-violent tactics to control the domestic relationship (Johnson, 2008) referred to as coercive control (Stark, 2007). The nature and extent of the behaviours that underpin domestic violence, have been likened to those of political terrorists and hostage-takers (Stark, 2007). Yet, research usually takes a myopic focus on physical violence (through the use of health and police data) in relation to sport. An examination of the prevalence of all forms of domestic violence and their associations with sporting events would provide a fuller account of the dynamics of the relationship (Braaf & Gilbert, 2007).

However, obtaining an accurate measure of prevalence is further hindered by chronic underreporting. Small scale in-depth studies frequently uncover larger estimates than national surveys due to the greater detail covered and the sensitive nature of the topic (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002), but this form of research is not conducive to linking patterns of abuse to sporting events. Police reports of domestic incidents provide one form of ‘objective’ measure (see Williams et al., 2013), although this method is potentially confounded by survivor non-reporting, and different police practices around incident recording and categorising, and levels of activity in any given area (Bellis et al., 2012). An alternative method is to examine health data, including presentation to emergency departments, which cover violent incidents which have not been reported to the police (Bellis et al., 2012); however, this clearly has a bias toward physical injury.

Moreover, although the research literature demonstrates statistical relationships between some sporting events and domestic violence, this is not true for all sports, and some events may even provide protective factors (Bellis et al., 2012). Further research is required to elucidate the factors behind these relationships, including the normative use of alcohol and alternative expressions of masculinity, which can then be used to design strategies that effectively tackle the association found between certain sporting events and domestic violence.

It is also worth noting that while the vast majority of the literature concerning sport-related domestic violence considers male-on-female violence, this does not mean that female-on-male or same-sex sport-related domestic violence does not occur. Indeed, some of the studies reviewed in this chapter refer to anonymised police data for which the gender of the victim and perpetrator are unknown (e.g., Williams et al., 2013). An indication of the alternative forms of sport-related domestic violence is alluded to in a study by Carlyle, Scarduzio, and Slater (in press) who found that in a sample of media reports detailing female perpetrators of domestic violence, there was a greater than expected likelihood of the victims being a sports figure. However, this finding is complicated by the likelihood of greater media coverage for incidents involving sport personalities. The sparse literature regarding female-on-male or same-sex sport-related domestic violence is a clear avenue for future research, particularly given exposure to some similar, potential risk factors (e.g., attendance at sporting events and sport-related alcohol consumption).

Finally, it is apparent that much of the research on sport-related domestic violence originates from Western cultures. Given the worldwide popularity of sport participation and

spectatorship, and relevant cultural differences (e.g., the role of sports in society, the nature of masculinity, and norms around alcohol consumption) it is important that this research field extends to diverse contexts.

Sport as a means of addressing violence

While this chapter has outlined the theoretical background and evidence base for sport-related domestic violence, we wish to conclude more optimistically by stressing the positive role that sport can play in helping to address domestic violence. Recent research has suggested that social norm misperceptions contribute to gender violence (e.g., Neighbors et al., 2010). Sport participation and spectatorship can, therefore, function as an opportunity to correct these misperceptions and change behaviour. The creation of occasions for men (both athletes and spectators) to publically express their opposition to gender violence can send a powerful message about a group's social norm. For example, the White Ribbon Campaign (see www.whiteribboncampaign.org) is a global project that encourages high profile athletes and spectators to wear white ribbons to specified sporting events. The meaning of the campaign is then explained to spectators (i.e., to stand against gender violence) who are encouraged to show their support with a round of applause.

Furthermore, some initiatives have used the social status of university and professional athletes to combat gender violence. The Mentors in Violence Prevention campaign encourages prominent sports personalities to speak out against gender violence, and provides training for bystander intervention (Katz, 1995). Norm misperceptions in support of gender violence are therefore not only corrected by high profile group members, but men are given an active role in how to non-violently intervene in situations of gender violence.

Other initiatives use sport with females as a means of tackling gender violence. Women Win (see www.womenwin.org) is an international organisation which encourages sport as a means of providing females with a safe space in which to speak about experiences and problems, learn about legal rights, and gain empowerment. Similarly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (see <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a0d90946.html>) run sport projects which provide education on gender and sexual violence to vulnerable children who often lack alternative educational opportunities. It is worth noting that these strategies move beyond a traditional "cathartic" hypothesis which states that participation or spectatorship of violent sports prevents violent behaviour in non-sporting spheres. Despite perseverance in public consciousness, this hypothesis has received little empirical support (Wann et al., 1999). Indeed, Dunning (1999) notes that modern sport aims to create tension as opposed to relieving/discharging it.

Conclusion

To begin the chapter we discussed the paradoxical role of sport in society, and to end we focused on the paradoxical relationship in the sport-domestic violence nexus. On the one hand, there is an emerging evidence base that points toward a high incidence of domestic violence among professional and amateur male athletes, suggesting an increase in reports of domestic violence around certain sporting events. This has been associated with the prevailing ideological values of hegemonic masculinity that pervade the male-dominated socially constructed institution of sport. Although there is relatively consistent evidence for the link between specific sporting events (e.g., Old Firm soccer fixture) and reported domestic violence, one cannot generalise this association to all sporting events, athletes and spectators. This is due to reported null associations and contradictory results in different spheres of sport, coupled with a relative scarcity of robust analysis of the association

including roles for potential mediating variables (e.g., alcohol consumption, conceptions of masculinity, expectation of result). It is also acknowledged that not all males (athletes, spectators, or neither) express masculinity through violent means, and not all sport-related domestic violence is likely to be perpetrated by males on females. Thus, future research is needed to explore the contexts in which sport-related violence may occur, confirm the risk factors for such violence, and delineate protective factors to combat these risks. Furthermore, sport may have a role to play in helping to address domestic violence through engaging males and supporting them in confronting and tackling the toxic practices that are often associated with hegemonic masculinity, in conjunction with female empowerment and the pursuit of gender equality.

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