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Sexual Violence in Intercollegiate Athletics: A Historical Perspective of Male Athletic Entitlement

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Sexual violence within intercollegiate athletics is an understudied area of research in social work. Feminist theorists suggest that sexual violence reinforces male dominance as a result of living in a patriarchal society. Male college athletes participating in commercialized sports develop a sense of entitlement due to public admiration for their heroic athleticism. The college sports culture at large Division I universities sets the stage for sexual aggression and exploitation of women. This article seeks to identify themes of male athletic entitlement that perpetuates violence against women through a feminist perspective. Using a historical qualitative analysis, articles from major newspapers were collected from 1950 to 2016 that reported on incidents of sexual assault committed by male college athletes. Several themes emerged including multiple perpetrator sexual assaults, recruiting parties, recruitment of athletes with a violent past, racial hierarchies, threats to victims, and organizational culture's mishandling of sexual assault. Even though these trends provide a glimpse into the college sports broadcasted by the media, they highlight the underlining structures that enable gender-based violence. Gaining a better understanding of these trends will allow social workers to address sexual violence perpetration by male college athletes in big-time college sports.

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Social workers have developed extensive knowledge on gender-based violence, specifically as it relates to sexual violence on college campuses. Feminist theorists believe sexual violence is a result of a patriarchal society in which men exert their power and privilege over women (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016; Hattery, 2010; Jasinski, 2001). However, there is a lack of information in the field of social work regarding sexual violence within intercollegiate athletics. Research suggests that male college athletes may commit sexual violence toward females at high rates (United Educators, 2015; Young, Desmarais, Baldwin, & Chandler 2016) and are labeled as a “high risk” group (McMahon, Postmus, & Koenick, 2011). Moreover, athletes’ highly revered position in society may give them an unfair advantage when addressing these issues. College athletes playing for high profile sports such as football and basketball in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I are likely to receive greater recognition in the media which, in turn, may lead to male athletic entitlement. Using a historical qualitative analysis, this article examines newspaper articles between 1950 and 2016 that reported on incidents of sexual assault perpetrated by male college athletes. By looking back at the history of sexual violence in intercollegiate athletics through a feminist lens, social workers can gain better insight of cases involving college athletes and identify trends of male privilege in the college sport culture. Therefore, male college athletes who commit sexual violence demonstrate patterns of athletic entitlement that ultimately perpetuate violence against women in big-time college sports.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is one of the most popular theoretical frameworks in the field of violence against women. Feminists argue that gender-based violence exists because we live in a male-dominated society. According to Jasinski (2001), violence against women “is a result of the subordinate position women occupy in the social structure” (p. 12). Women traditionally take on feminine qualities such as being submissive, quiet, and weak whereas men are expected to be masculine, strong willed, and triumphant. These feminine and masculine norms are transferred to various roles in society that range from being in the household to being in the workforce. By upholding traditional norms, men have the ability to control women and assert their power. Despite making significant strides in women’s rights and equality over the years, men continue to hold more powerful positions in society. Living in a patriarchal society creates an environment in which women are subject to violence. Feminist scholars suggest that “violence is used to maintain social control and male power over women” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 12). Through violence, males validate their physicality as well as their authority. Sexual violence, then, is a method used to reinforce male dominance through involuntary touch or penetration of a sexual organ (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016).

Not only do male athletes have access to the power and privilege granted to them by a patriarchal system (Hattery, 2010), but the sports culture promulgates violence and domination over women. Sport has historically been characterized through male hegemony. Only boys and men were encouraged to participate in an attempt to signify superiority over females (Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner, 2003). Connell (1990) argued that such an idealized form of masculinity becomes hegemonic when it is widely accepted in a culture and when that acceptance reinforces the dominant gender ideology of the culture. Socialization into the male sports culture involves

taking on a hypermasculine identity that heightens aggression and sexuality. Winning competitions in sport corresponds with men's violence against women as an "over-conformity to masculinity that rewarded the successful use of violence to achieve domination over others" (Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015, p. 11). Sport success is often praised as being more mentally and physically powerful over the other team. The sexual conquest of women is another means for male athletes to prove their dominance (Messner, 2007).

Athletic Entitlement

Athletic entitlement develops when college athletes take advantage of the success that comes about for being in the public eye. College athletes often assume a celebrity status as participants in "big-time college sports" programs. Duderstadt (2000) explains that the allure of amateurism in college sports combined with the growing popularity of football and basketball as public entertainment in the 20th century evolved into the big-business of college sports that exists today. Big-time college sports refers to athletic programs grouped into NCAA Division I. The NCAA describes Division I schools as having the biggest student bodies, largest athletics budgets, and highest number of athletic scholarships (NCAA, 2016) as compared to Division II and III programs which are less competitive. Many of these programs receive greater media recognition, build a larger fan base, and generate revenue for their respective schools. The largest and most successful of these college sports programs dominate sports coverage on national television and major media outlets. Approximately 75% of television sports coverage broadcasts male sports such as football, basketball, and baseball at the college and professional levels (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015). Because of major television contracts, male college athletes playing at the Division I level build a reputation beyond their campus communities.

As a result of widespread attention, college athletes may be idealized by members of society and looked up to as role models, especially when they play on a winning team. Adler and Adler (1991) suggest media portrayals help athletes develop a glorified sense of self and sometimes turn away from other aspects of their lives. Through a glorified self, some college athletes develop athletic entitlement in thinking they are deserving of special treatment. Those who exhibit athletic entitlement utilize their status for personal gains. In some cases, being in the spotlight can cause some college athletes to lose sight of their moral or ethical judgment which may lead to athletic entitlement. More specifically, they believe they could engage in negative behaviors without any consequences. Benedict believes "athletes, especially young males participating in power and performance sports, are socialized into believing they are special people whose social transgressions in and around the playing field will be excused by parents, coaches, teachers, and even police" (as cited in Atkinson & Young, 2008, p. 16).

Athletic entitlement is a parallel process between athletes and society as people in society may contribute to their inflated egos. College athletes are often given passes for any wrongdoings because of their celebrity status and may even feel as if they are above the law. Studies show that, if charged, many high-profile athletes are treated with more leniency (Hattery, 2010; Robinson, 1998) and are more likely to avoid conviction (Benedict & Klein, 1997). Benedict (2003) found that "many prosecutors are reluctant to bring cases against athletes to trial" and "their prominence and influence often leads authorities to resolve cases without a public trial" (p. A15). There may also be reluctance by juries to convict well-known athletes (Benedict & Klein, 1997). The same could be said for institutions of higher education as they try to keep many issues in athletics concealed to protect college athletes as well as their reputation.

Building a culture in which athletes are invincible may further contribute to their engagement in gender-based violence.

Methodology

To identify media reports of sexual violence within intercollegiate athletics, research was conducted using ProQuest Historical Newspapers database. The database searched for historical newspaper articles dating back to the early 19th century in *The Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Hartford Courant*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. An advanced search was used to find articles that matched key words “sexual assault” and “college athlete” or “athlete.” Relevant articles were archived by decade starting from the first known case in the 1950s to the present day. Case information was pieced together in paragraph form grouped by year and school. From there, a table was created to organize each case by year, school, type of sport, number of accused athletes, and charges and outcomes if available. Using a historical qualitative approach, thematic analysis was used to identify themes across the newspaper articles. There were approximately 400 articles that reported information on alleged male perpetrators in intercollegiate athletics. Newspaper coverage included a total of 96 cases that involved 59 schools and 195 male college athletes.

Historical Context

Table 1 demonstrates the cases and number of male college athletes reported in newspaper articles between 1950 and 2016. The earliest record of sexual assault committed by a male college athlete was traced back to 1951 when a member of Clemson University’s football team, formerly Clemson College, served jail time for burglary and attempted rape of two women after breaking into their homes (Paull, 1951). Reports of sexual assault by college athletes increased each decade. Moreover, there are likely to be more cases that unravel in the current decade. These changes reflect major historical changes as a result of social movements and legal actions. The feminist movement brought about a radical paradigm shift that called greater attention to gender-based violence in which there were unequal power relations between women and men (Messner, 2016). Social unrest also led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which recognizes equality for racial, gendered, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Suggs, 2005). Less than a decade later, Title IX passed in 1972 that prohibits sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funding (DeMatteo, Galloway, Arnold, & Patel, 2015). Title IX later incorporated the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 stipulating that an educational institution receiving federal funds for any of their departments must comply with the civil rights laws as a whole, including athletic programs (Galles, 2004; Anderson & Osborne, 2008). During the 1990s, the Violence Against Women Act was passed to honor the civil rights of those who fell victim to gender-related crimes (United States Department of Justice, 2009). In fact, the first civil case filed under the Violence Against Women Act involved a former student from Virginia Polytechnic Institute, otherwise known as Virginia Tech, after being raped by two football college athletes (Bernstein, 1996). When the Dear Colleague Letter was released in 2011 by the Office of Civil Rights, Title IX requirements were strongly reinforced for schools to take immediate action if a problem of sex discrimination arises in order to remain in compliance (United States Department of Education, 2011). While these policies are designed to protect

survivors of sexual assault, intercollegiate athletics remains a site of numerous transgressions. See table 1 for reported sexual assault cases involving male college athletes.

Thematic Analysis

Several main themes emerged in this historical research that reported on sexual violence in intercollegiate athletics: multiple perpetrator sexual assaults, recruiting parties, recruitment of athletes with a violent past, racial hierarchies, threats to victims, and organizational culture's mishandling of sexual assault.

Multiple Perpetrator Sexual Assaults

In looking through the sample of articles involving sexual assault by a college athlete, over half ($n = 52$) of the cases involved more than one perpetrator ranging from two to as many as seven athletes. The first known multiple perpetrator sexual assault involved college athletes from Notre Dame Football in 1974. Six members of the team raped an 18-year-old female in a dorm. Due to the victim's romantic relationship with one of the college athletes, she ended up dropping the charges. Nevertheless, the college athletes were suspended for one year for violating school rules (Stevens, 1976). Their behavior contradicted the school's religious beliefs in engaging in sexual relations before marriage (Murray, 1982; Stevens, 1976). Notre Dame's disciplinary actions may have been guided by their mission to uphold Catholic values more so than honoring women's rights.

In 1983, two athletes on the basketball team from Syracuse University were arrested for raping a 19-year-old Villanova cheerleader after a crushing loss in post season tournament play (Cohen, 1983; Howard & Kreig, 1982). The cheerleader explained that two college athletes invited her back to their hotel room where she was forced to have sex with both men. Although charges were eventually dropped ("Charges of Rape are Dismissed," 1983), the accused athletes continued to play for the men's basketball team and went on to graduating from the school (Cohen, 1983). In looking at this isolated incident, their feelings after losing a game could have motivated their aggressive behavior. According to Warsaw, "athletes are most likely to commit sexual assault after a game when they are either out celebrating a win or mourning a loss" (as cited in Trebon, 2007, p. 73). In this case, the college athletes projected their frustration onto an innocent woman through rape. Therefore, intense emotions from winning or losing a game may intensify male athletes' desire to solidify their dominance and oppress women.

Multiple perpetrator assaults also seems to be pardoned by the overall community. Only two out of five football college athletes from the University of Oklahoma received prison sentences after they each took turns raping a woman in an athletic dorm room in the early 1990s. The Cleveland County Assistant District Attorney at the time believed the most memorable part of the trial was how the college athletes "appeared to believe they were above the law" and "even after their convictions, the college athletes were revered by many people in the community, simply because they were star athletes" (Cart, 1992). Similarly, there were mixed reactions from the student population during a pep-rally in 1994 when a group of college athletes from the Army Football team were accused of groping approximately 18 cadets. Disciplinary hearings resulted in severe punishments and demerits for three of the college athletes as well as suspension for the other two athletes involved (Knight, 1994). While the female cadets were generally impressed that women were coming forward about sexual violence and believed there

was growing trust in the military, male cadets seemed to be outraged. When asked to comment on the incident, a male cadet at West Point said “they did what college football college athletes do sometimes. . . it was wrong, but why go crazy over it?” (Russakoff, 1994). The male cadet’s statement suggests that sexually deviant behavior is more socially acceptable for male college athletes and, consequently, is dismissed as a serious crime.

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Findings of multiple perpetrator sexual assaults are consistent with current research. The United Educators (2015) recently analyzed 305 claims of sexual assault reported between 2011 and 2013 from a random sample of 104 colleges and universities. Researchers found that 15% of alleged perpetrators were college athletes and, of those, 40% of reported multiple perpetrator sexual assaults involved athletes from football and basketball teams (United Educators, 2015). Being a part of an overly aggressive and physical team sport can also influence this type of behavior. Gang rape, or group sex, is believed to build camaraderie among a group of men and also reinforce one’s masculinity (Trebon, 2007). Thus college athletes may be more inclined to prove their manhood among their team members at the risk of degrading their female victims. Furthermore, society's acceptance of such behavior enables male athletes to objectify women which may provoke gang rape (Robayo, 1994; Trebon, 2007). These combined factors contribute to a sports culture that perpetuates violence against women.

Recruiting Parties

Another theme that arose from the research was the use of women to lure in prospective recruits ($n = 10$). There have been a number of reported scandals that take place at recruiting parties for visiting high school athletes. Freeman (2002a) explains that campus visits include meeting coaches, touring the campus and its facilities, as well as spending time with current college athletes. Once the official visit is over, college athletes may organize parties at night where there could be alcohol, drugs, and women. In some cases, women are hired to perform sexual acts. For example, a prospective college athlete for Syracuse University was arrested during a recruiting visit in September 1990. After being introduced to a female student by another athlete, the woman claimed she was forced to have intercourse with him. The recruit was expelled from his high school, forced to transfer to another school, and was later indicted by the grand jury. Despite news of his indictment, the athlete was offered a spot on West Virginia University’s basketball team. Just as the alleged recruit was beginning his college career as a West Virginia Mountaineer, the female was ending hers and withdrew from Syracuse (O’Connor, 1991).

There were a number of recruiter party-related incidents recorded between the 1990s and early 2000s. Within 8 years, 9 women reported being assaulted by University of Colorado football college athletes and recruits between 1997 and 2004. The next year, two female trainers claimed to be sexually assaulted by an assistant football coach, one alleged she was forced to perform sexual favors for college athletes and recruits (“Abuses Detailed in Colorado Football,” 2005). The NCAA also took action in response to recruitment parties involving strippers by

placing teams on probation such as University of Alabama Football, Michigan State University Wrestling, and University of Mississippi Football (Freeman, 2002a).

More recently, a book was published by a former escort that exposed recruiting parties by the University of Louisville's men's basketball program. The author revealed that strippers and prostitutes were hired by former assistant coach for recruits and some of their fathers between 2010 and 2014. Louisville self-imposed a one year NCAA tournament ban on their nationally ranked basketball team. The NCAA's investigation also charged the program with level 1 infractions for major violations (Tracy, 2016b). Level 1 infractions are the harshest penalties, as it means severe breach of conduct that threatens the integrity of the NCAA (NCAA, 2013). The current head coach of the team, who is a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame since 2013, claims having no knowledge of these parties (Tracy, 2016b).

Recruiting parties illustrate one way in which male athletes exert their status over women and legitimizes this behavior. These parties are centered around current and prospective athletes which increases their sense of athletic entitlement. More importantly, the next generation of college athletes are being groomed to objectify, subordinate, and commit violent crimes against women. Because these parties are not part of the official visit, there is an ongoing debate as to whether or not the school should take responsibility (Freeman, 2002a). Meanwhile, sports administrators and coaches condone these recruiting parties without setting any rules or policies. In doing so, they permit the sexual exploitation of women.

Recruitment of Athletes with a Violent Past

In addition to enabling recruiting parties, coaching staff are willing to overlook prospective athletes who have a history of violence against women. Findings from this research uncovered approximately 13 cases in which high school recruits were actively sought after despite prior allegations of sexual assault. In the mid-1990s, a top recruit was convicted of sexual abuse of a 15-year-old female student who attended the same high school (Strauss, 1995). Three major athletic programs that initially expressed interest in the college athlete rescinded their offers (Asher, 1995; Burton Nelson, 1995; Fisher, 1995). After putting basketball on hold and attending community college (Fachet, 1995; Frey, 1995), the recruit transferred to Long Island University where he eventually landed a spot on their team ("Fanfare: Parker to Attend Long Island University," 1996). Although some schools decided not to accept the high school athlete following his involvement in a sexual assault case, his past did not prevent him from playing Division I basketball. Similarly, a linebacker at Oklahoma State University during the 2006-2007 season was permitted to play despite being under indictment for an incident that occurred three years earlier (Evans, 2007). The college athlete was arrested with two other men for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl at an after-party following high school prom. He was prohibited from playing his senior year of high school and ultimately sentenced to five years in prison (Evans, 2007). While he was permanently dismissed from the team after his sentence, he was able to keep his scholarship ("Sports Briefing: College Football," 2007).

College athletes who commit sexual violence while in college are also allowed to transfer to other programs. In 1991, one college athlete transferred for the fourth time to the University of Houston. As a redshirt with Arizona State University two years prior, the college athlete was suspended from the team because he was under investigation for rape. During interviews with two college coaches, both portrayed the college athlete in a positive light as he was well liked and described as not being a delinquent person (Norwood, 1991). In a similar case, one of the

most talented high school college athletes who participated on the 2009 McDonald's All-American team signed on to play with the University of Cincinnati despite having a charge for a misdemeanor sexual assault ("Stephenson to Cincinnati," 2009). Cincinnati's coach minimized the incident saying "It's simply a charge. It's a low-level misdemeanor" (Heyman, 2009). Not only do these coaches' perceptions indicate the significance of athletic talent and relationships within the athletic community, but they also dismiss actions of violence against women.

It is important to note that not all big-time college sports programs actively pursue athletes who have a violent past. For example, a New Mexico State athlete was convicted of rape of a minor, which occurred two years prior, and the school revoked his basketball scholarship (Benedict, 1996 ; "Three UCLA Football Reserves Transfer, 1991). Seton Hall University also rejected a high school basketball star after he pleaded guilty to first-degree sexual assault in a Manhattan Supreme Court trial. While the coaching staff assured the recruit that the charge would not affect his eligibility, the school president and chancellor met with administration and ultimately decided they did not want to send the wrong message (Curry, 1995). More recently, Rutgers University dismissed a football recruit after he was found guilty of two accounts of sexual aggravated assault ("Staff And Wire Reports," 2007). In each of these illustrations, the coaches expressed interest in the college athletes knowing they had pending charges but reconsidered once they were convicted. Because intercollegiate athletics operate as a big business, there is more risk-taking involved in recruitment (Freeman, 2002b). With the win-at-all-costs mentality, coaches are willing to take a chance on college athletes with a record in order to improve their team success. Accepting these athletes supports the notion of male privilege and domination in sport over violence against women. Just as male college athletes are given an opportunity to start over and forget about their past, survivors of sexual assault live with the traumatic memory for the rest of their lives.

Racial Hierarchies

A handful of cases from the research highlighted differences in outcomes of sexual assault allegations based on race ($n = 8$). The forced media image of sexual violence perpetrators over the years has overrepresented male athletes of color. As mentioned by Luther (2016), "Because the majority of high-profile athletes are Black and we tend to pay attention when athletes are involved, the issue of campus sexual assault repeatedly has a Black face on it" (p. 81). In this way, athletes of color are often stereotyped as being rapists and inherently violent. When discussing criminality in intercollegiate athletics back in the late 1980s, *Sports Illustrated* blamed the problems on "inner-city Black athletes suddenly being transported to almost lily-white environments and the culture shock that ensues" (Markus, 1989, p. 52). These expectations highlight racism within the sports culture that is dominated by White men. Prejudice is immediately cast onto Black and Brown athletes purely based on the color of the skin which influences reporting and outcomes of cases.

When three basketball college athletes at the University of Minnesota were charged with second-degree assault, it was the first time race was acknowledged in the courtroom. The accused athletes allegedly assaulted an 18-year-old female in a hotel where the team was staying ("Minnesota Coach Quits After Arrests," 1986). During the trial, the Dane County Circuit Judge at the time asked jurors to ignore race when deciding the outcome of the case, as there were three Black male defendants and a White female plaintiff ("Race Issue Raised in Trial," 1986). The jury was made up of all White residents (O'Donnell, 1986). The college athletes were found to

be innocent on 12 separate charges of first-degree sexual assault. Another high school football college athlete with a promising future in college athletics was significantly impacted when he was sentenced to 15 months in prison for statutory rape, a misdemeanor, and aggravated child molestation. While he believed he had consensual sex with a 15-year-old classmate, he was accused by the young woman of rape. The Georgia Supreme Court later admitted that the college athlete should have only been prosecuted for statutory rape and served one year. The case gained national attention not only because the accused college athlete received a harsher sentence than deserved, but also because he was a Black man defending against a White female. Although the high school athlete lost scholarships to two major college teams, he was given a second chance to play football for Hampton University, a historically Black college (Rhoden, 2004).

On the other hand, White male athletes display more power and privilege than those of color. In 2006, Duke University's nationally ranked men's lacrosse team raised issues of White male privilege after an alleged incident that occurred at an off-campus party (Gill, 2007). A female stripper at their party claimed to be sexually assaulted by three White men in a bathroom. As she was leaving, there were allegations of racial slurs shouted at the woman because of the color of her skin. The event caused Duke's president to suspend the entire season and resulted in the resignation of the men's lacrosse coach (Bernstein, 2006; Duff & Bernstein, 2006). According to Duff and Bernstein (2006), "this incident stirred race and class tensions because the accuser is black and the accused are white and attend an elite university" (p. D1). Many people were skeptical of the college athletes. Not only were they cited as skipping class more often, but almost one-third of the college athletes were arrested in previous incidents (Gurganus, 2006). Yet others were convinced they were good kids who came from good backgrounds, which pointed directly to their White privilege. The results of the woman's rape kit showed that her injuries were not consistent with being sexually assaulted and none of the DNA samples from the athletes proved to be a match (Duff & Macur, 2006). Almost one year after the incident, the three college athletes who were eventually indicted based on a photo lineup were found to be innocent (Duff & Barstow, 2007). To add to the complexity of the case, it was believed that the lead prosecutor manipulated evidence in defense of the victim to gain support for re-election and was disbarred for false accusation of sexual assault (Duff, 2007; Duff & Barstow, 2007; Yardley, 2006). Although the college athletes at Duke were found to be wrongfully accused, race and privilege influenced societal perceptions of the college athletes during the trial as they were essentially not seen as perpetrators. The fact that the females were hired to dance at their party and later degraded by racial insults also exhibited the team's oppression of women.

Perhaps the most controversial case as of late involved a Stanford University swimmer. The athlete was found raping an unconscious woman behind a dumpster before he was stopped by two bystanders. He faced up to 14 years in prison (Bazelon, 2016). Though the athlete only served three months in jail, he was sentenced to six months as well as three years' probation. During the trial, the swimmer's father pleaded that his son should not be punished for "20 minutes of action." The California judge also believed he would not be a danger to others since he did not have a criminal background (Stack, 2016). The Stanford swimmer case proved to be an example of White male privilege as the judge's perceptions of his White clean image influenced his decision for a lighter sentence. Turner, who came from a wealthy White family, was a successful college athlete at one of the most prestigious schools in the country. The results may have been different if the college athlete was not White and demonstrates one significant trend in the overall literature.

Race is a significant factor to the advantages or shortfalls of athletic entitlement in connection with sexual violence. “The unequal distribution of power between men is often manifested through hierarchies and tensions between racial and ethnic groups” (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016, p. 677). Even though there is a high percentage of college athletes who are of color, sport administration is dominated by White men. Fraiman believes rape is a tool for White men to maintain their dominance when rape myths about Black men’s violations of White women are perpetuated (as cited in Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016). These racial hierarchies promote stereotypes of alleged perpetrators which also comes into play when prosecuting cases of sexual violence. According to Hattery (2010), “though African American men are oppressed by a system of racial domination, they are privileged by patriarchy and often by heteronormativity” (p. 117). Although there are racial disparities in athletic entitlement, male college athletes continue to benefit from a patriarchal system where violence against women is largely tolerated.

Threats to Victims

In 15 of the cases, athletes and administrators utilized their power and privilege to frighten victims of sexual assault. One of the earliest cases involved a 22-year-old woman who was raped by five or six lacrosse college athletes at St. John’s University in March of 1989 (Hevesi, 1990; Powell, 1991). The woman received threats from the college athletes before testifying in court telling her that no one would believe her (Quindlen, 1991). Despite pushing through her high anxiety to testify, the college athletes were eventually acquitted. As a Black woman up against three White men, the Committee to Eliminate Media Offense to African People (CEMOTAP) illustrated that “racist white media has again proved its power to control and dictate justice” (Powell, 1991). Once more, race tapped into athletic entitlement of the college athletes which may have aided in intimidating the victim.

In 2010, an athlete from Notre Dame Football was accused of sexual battery. The alleged female victim was a freshman at St. Mary’s College, across the street from Notre Dame (Henneberger, 2012; Thamel, 2011a). To this day, the identity of the perpetrator is unknown because no investigation had taken place. The female shared text messages she received from friends of the athlete saying, “don’t do anything you would regret,” and “messing with Notre Dame football is a bad idea” (Henneberger, 2012). The overwhelming pressure from the athletes caused the female to commit suicide ten days after the accusation (Cacciola, 2013). Around the same time, a resident assistant at Notre Dame shared a similar story where one of their residents was raped by a football college athlete at an off-campus party. After going to the hospital and getting a rape exam, the resident received endless texts from other college athletes warning her not to report what happened (Henneberger, 2012).

In roughly half of the cases involving threats to victims, threats were used by coaches or administrators. A report by the Florida State Board of Regents committee in the late 1980s uncovered that the University of South Florida mishandled complaints filed by a number of women about a male athlete on the basketball team. The report revealed that the women who reported the incident were “continually harassed into withdrawing their complaints” by school authorities (Cart, 1992). When sexual misconduct charges were made against a college athlete at the University of Maryland, their former basketball coach relentlessly tried to persuade the woman to drop the charges. Contrary to most cases, the victim continued to move forward and also pressed charges against the coach for harassment. The coach had to make a public apology while the college athlete was suspended for four games (Cart, 1992). Furthermore, a number of

football college athletes at the University of Montana were under investigation for sexual violence after an investigation found a total of 11 cases of sexual assault reported on campus between 2010 and 2011. During the investigation, emails surfaced from the vice president of the University of Montana scheming to retaliate against a female student for going public about her alleged sexual assault by four college athletes (Robbins, 2012).

Threats are a form of emotional abuse which are frequently used as scare tactic to prevent victims from reporting. Emotional abuse, also referred to as psychological abuse, is used by perpetrators to instill fear through intimidation (United States Department of Justice, 2016). Threats are just as terrorizing when it comes from an executive from the school or staff within the athletic department. Having even greater authority, administrators utilize their power to prevent a scandal from being reported. Issuing these types of threats silences women who were at the mercy of their assailants and allows the overall sports culture to maintain their dominance.

The examples above highlight the challenges for victims as it further exacerbates their reluctance to report in fear of being ostracized and retaliated against (White, Koss, Abbey, Thompson, Cook, & Swartout, 2015). Sexual violence as a whole is greatly underreported. According to the United States Department of Justice (2014), 80% of all the rape and sexual assault victimizations against female college students go unreported. These rates may be even higher for incidents that involve college athletes simply due to their status in the community. While athletes may be falsely accused, studies show that false reporting of sexual assault is between two and ten percent (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2012). Gross and Shaffer (2012) examined approximately 900 exonerations from 1989 to 2012 and discovered that rape has the lowest rate of lies that lead to false convictions compared to most other crimes. Although there is a lack of research that measures false reports of athletes, false reporting is generally low and shows that victims do not have an alternative motive. Victims are often scrutinized when they come forward with allegations of sexual assault as a result of a victim blaming culture. In this way, victims are judged by others and held responsible for their own actions (Grubb & Turner, 2012). The use of threats is another way to shift power away from female victims and reduce them to an inferior position in society.

Organizational Culture's Mishandling of Sexual Assault

Mishandling of sexual assault was another major theme gathered from the researched articles ($n = 29$). In 2007, Syracuse University initially attempted to hold an informal process to address a sexual assault that involved three college athletes on the basketball team. Former associate dean pushed for a school hearing as per Title IX regulations. While the college athletes were ultimately cleared of sexual assault charges in the hearing, they were found responsible for harming the female's mental health and placed on disciplinary probation. The dean questioned the school's underhanded process and left the university shortly thereafter (Nocera, 2011; Thamel, 2011b). At LaSalle University, both men's and women's basketball coaches were placed on administrative leave with pay for mishandling an alleged rape one year prior after they discouraged a former women's college athlete from telling the police, which ultimately resulted in their resignation ("Gordon Wins Pole with Record Lap," 2004; "Sports Briefing: Ingram is Leaving St. John's," 2004; "2 Coaches at La Salle Resign in Scandal," 2004). Similarly, when a peer counselor was sexually assaulted by a University of Southern California (USC) first-year athlete (Almond, 1990; Almond, 1991a), administrators were believed to influence the decision that led to the athletes' acquittal. The director of College Athlete Academic Services' testimony

described the female counselor as “bossy” and “making the students’ lives miserable” (Almond, 1991a), which demonstrated a form of victim blaming for deviating from traditional gender norms (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Evidence was later discovered that school officials tried to sabotage the case. Just as the assistant dean of student affairs asked the police to pull the file to prevent the case from being publicized, prosecutors found evidence that a USC security report was rewritten in an attempt to remove information that would harm the college athletes (Almond, 1991b). As seen in each of these cases, school officials conspired with athletic departments to protect the male perpetrators over the female victims.

There are two recent major college football scandals that shed light on organizational culture at institutions with renowned athletic programs. First, Florida State University (FSU) deliberately undermined one victim’s case in favor of safeguarding their starting quarterback on the football team. In 2012, a female student accused one of her male peers of rape, not knowing his identity at the time. Once the victim recognized her offender in class, she reported him to school officials (Nocera, 2016). The athletic administrators later met privately with the college athlete’s lawyer and decided it was in the best interest of the school not to pursue the female student’s complaint despite federal regulations. In doing so, administrators did not remain in compliance with Title IX policies by not immediately addressing the complaint and postponing the school hearing in exchange for athletic prestige. The male college athlete went on to receive the 2013 Heisman Trophy, led FSU to the 2014 national championship, and was selected as a first round pick in the 2015 NFL draft (Tracy, 2016a). FSU Athletics also has a past of creating a culture of silence for victims of sexual violence. Former director of FSU’S Victim Advocate Office testified that approximately 40 football college athletes were accused of either sexual assault or intimate partner violence during her time there; most of the women chose not to move forward “based on fear” (Bogdanich, 2015, p. B13). While details about these other cases are unknown, FSU violated Title IX by creating a hostile environment on campus for victims of sexual assault.

Second, Baylor University shocked the country as they turned a blind eye to known reports of sexual assault committed by a number of their athletes on the football team. An investigation uncovered 17 women who reported attacks that involved 19 football college athletes. Of those, four were alleged gang rapes (Reagan, 2016). One of the victims was a female college athlete who told her coach that she was sexually assaulted by five college athletes on the football team. The information was believed to be shared with three other staff within the athletic department, including the football coach (Bieler, 2016). Even though staff were considered to be mandated reporters under Title IX, no action was taken. After the report surfaced, the president of the university was demoted, athletic director resigned, and head football coach was fired (Tracy, 2016c). These staffing changes point to the severity of years of noncompliance and an attempt by the school to rectify their public image. To date, Baylor is undergoing a Title IX investigation while the NCAA has yet to determine the fate of the football team.

After looking at the series of events at FSU and Baylor, it is clear that these schools leveraged their power to control incidents of sexual violence that occurred on their turf. Not only were they protecting the perpetrators, but they were also protecting their public image. In consequence, they overlooked gender-based violence and the harm that was done to female students. Time and time again sexual violence is strategically covered up as a result of the organizational culture of big-time athletic programs. In fact, 20% of colleges and universities give the athletic department oversight of sexual violence cases involving college athletes (United States Senate, 2014). The United States Senate report (2014) suggests that many programs are

not properly addressing these complaints. Paradoxically, schools and athletic officials are further damaging their reputation as a result of their lack of integrity. Without repercussions, organizational culture reinforces athletic entitlement in male college athletes as well as the victimization of female students.

Discussion and Conclusion

In analyzing incidents of sexual violence within intercollegiate athletics reported in major newspaper outlets, there were a number of revealing patterns over time that confirm ways in which athletic entitlement perpetuates violence against women. These patterns included multiple perpetrator sexual assaults, recruiting parties, recruitment of athletes with a violent past, racial hierarchies, threats to victims, and organizational culture's mishandling of sexual assault. Each theme supports feminist literature as the sports culture operates as a patriarchy and facilitates male athletic entitlement. As a result, the sports culture creates an environment conducive to sexual violence toward females. The findings from this study demonstrate how hegemonic masculinity is often abused by athletes and sports administrators. The organizational culture of a college or university's sports program is vital in understanding its values and perceived power structures. Athletic administrators and staff should model the expected attitudes and behaviors they wish to see among their college athletes. In doing so, athletic departments would be better positioned to address sexual assault committed by male college athletes, increase cooperation with survivors of sexual assault, and maintain compliance with federal policies.

Findings from this research also highlight media bias. Many of the alleged incidents reported in the newspaper articles focused on big-time college sports programs such as football and basketball. There were only a handful of cases that involved schools outside of Division I or less commercialized sports. Because sports media has been historically dominated by male reporters (Fink, 2015), media sensationalism plays into the feminist framework and influences how daily stories are conveyed. Patriarchal ideas are reflected in media portrayals related to sport and violence against women by honoring male athletic entitlement and subjecting survivors to victim blaming. Reports are also written in a way to maintain White male privilege and endorse racial stereotypes. Although there has been increased diversity and female representation both in terms of athletic participation and staffing (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Lapchick & Baker, 2016), women are still underrepresented as athletes and leaders in college sports (Yiamouyiannis & Osborne, 2012). By changing these power structures, sexual violence will be far less tolerated both in the media and intercollegiate athletics.

There were several limitations in this research. The search was conducted across seven newspapers and consequently did not include all reported cases of sexual assault committed by male college athletes. Because big-time college sports often make top headlines, these themes may not be applicable to smaller program in college sports where athletic entitlement is less championed. If instances of gender-based violence were not captured in these media outlets, they were inadvertently excluded from this study. Furthermore, the study does not take into account the number of Title IX investigations that involved a college athlete over the years, the number of cases that were properly handled by law enforcement and school officials without being publicized, or the number of incidents that were handled behind closed doors. More research needs to be conducted to further examine these themes of sexual violence in intercollegiate athletics. It is imperative for social workers to study these trends to learn how to better address male athletic entitlement in relation to sexual assault. Social workers could advocate for more

clear guidelines set forth by the NCAA and respective athletic departments to effectively respond to complaints of sexual assault committed by student athletes. Moreover, sexual assault prevention trainings tailored to intercollegiate athletes as well as staff could be designed and implemented by social workers. Feminists believe that violence against women is “caused by social, cultural, and political forces requiring action at the policy level” (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni, & Rice, 2007). Therefore, social workers are essential in challenging issues within the male dominated sports culture and ultimately reducing sexual violence on college campuses.

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Table 1

Reported Sexual Assault Cases Involving Male College Athletes

