



Sexual harassment of women in athletics vs academia

Karin Volkwein-caplan , Frauke Schnell , Shannon Devlin , Michele Mitchell & Jennifer Sutura

To cite this article: Karin Volkwein-caplan , Frauke Schnell , Shannon Devlin , Michele Mitchell & Jennifer Sutura (2002) Sexual harassment of women in athletics vs academia, Journal of Sexual Aggression, 8:2, 69-82, DOI: [10.1080/13552600208413340](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600208413340)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600208413340>



Published online: 31 Jan 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 195



Citing articles: 3 View citing articles [↗](#)

Sexual harassment of women in athletics vs academia

Karin Volkwein-Caplan¹, Frauke Schnell², Shannon Devlin³,
Michele Mitchell⁴ and Jennifer Sutura⁵

Summary: Sexual harassment at institutions of higher learning is not a new phenomenon but discussions of this problem in the sporting arena are still scarce. Many studies have focused on student-teacher relationships, few investigations have researched athlete-coach relationships, and hardly any have conducted comparative analyses. This study compares the perceptions and the experiences of sexual harassment of athletes and students. It is not a surprise that most harassing behaviors are extended from men towards women. Thus, this investigation analyses and compares female student/male teacher interactions with female athlete/male coach relations. The findings indicate that sexual harassment is slightly more prevalent in academia than in athletics. However, in order to guarantee a safe learning environment for all participants in both domains, it is necessary to formulate clear guidelines, to set up educational workshops and to implement intervention programs.

Keywords: sexual harassment, harassment, sport, academics, women, gender, guidelines, education

Definitions

Sexual harassment can be defined as:

Unwanted attention on the basis of sex which can be described as lewd comments, pinching, touching, caressing, sexual jokes, or intimidating sexual remarks. (Brackenridge, 2001, p. 29)

Sexual abuse is:

Groomed or coerced collaboration in sexual and or genital acts where the victim has been entrapped by the perpetrator. It may include exchange of privileges for sexual favors, forced sexual activity or physical violence. (Brackenridge, 2001, p. 29)

1. Associate Professor of Philosophy and Sociology of Sport, Department of Kinesiology, West Chester University, USA. 2. Associate Professor of Political Science, West Chester University, USA. 3. Evaluator, Main Line Rehab. 4. Personal Trainer. 5. ACE Certified Personal Trainer and Graduate Student, Dept. of Kinesiology, West Chester University.
Address for Correspondence: Dr Karin A E Volkwein-Caplan, Department of Kinesiology, R Sturzebecker Health Science Center,, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383, USA. e-mail: kvolkwein@wcupa.edu

The Women's Sports Foundation (1994) defines sexual harassment as:

The unwanted sexual advances in the context of a relationship of unequal power. It impairs one's access to educational resources and one's right to enjoy a healthy athletic experience. Sexual harassment is a violation of the law ... The equal employment opportunity commission defines sexual harassment as 'unwanted sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which are made on a quid pro quo basis or create a hostile environment.

An example of *Quid Pro Quo Sexual Harassment* is a situation where a coach may withhold scholarships, a starting position, or playing time as a result of the athlete's refusal to submit to the coach's sexual demands.

Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment is a situation where the coach's crude behavior creates an environment that hinders the athlete's ability to participate in the sport. In these situations, victims feel that no one will believe them or that their scholarship will be in jeopardy.

Introduction

Sexual harassment is extremely widespread and has affected the lives of 40 to 60% of working women (Temple University, 1992). It is estimated that the effects on college athletes and their non-athlete student counterparts are comparable. The highest reported incidents of sexual harassment are between males as the perpetrators and females as the victims. Many victims are unwilling to file a formal complaint against their harasser. This may be due to their vulnerability, lack of assertiveness, or fear. In the context of sport, the athlete may become dependent on the praise and acceptance of a domineering coach, which can make them especially vulnerable.

Sexual harassment has many detrimental effects on the victim, both physical and psychological. Women who have been sexually harassed often change their jobs, or academic majors (subjects), and female athletes often cease playing their sport. Psychological effects can lead to: depression, anxiety, embarrassment, denial, fear, insecurity, feelings of betrayal, low self esteem, self blame, and isolation. Physiological reactions include: headaches, lethargy, fluctuations in weight, nightmares, phobias, and panic reactions. Reactions specific to sport consist of unfavorable performance, decreased satisfaction in sports, absenteeism, and withdrawal from sport (American Psychological Association, 1998).

The relations of power and control that characterise all interpersonal relationships are especially acute in male professor/female student and male coach/female athlete relations. As White et al. (1989) said, 'The power dynamics are accentuated, and a perfect climate for exploitation has been created' (p. 5). The context of such a climate and the implications for individuals of these power dynamics have, however, been the focus of speculative interpretive comment and preliminary empirical work rather

than any sustained investigation.

In a previous study, Volkwein et al. (1997) investigated the perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment of female student-athletes in athletics. The findings indicated that sexual harassment is indeed prevalent in sports on US campuses but that female athletes lack awareness of what constitutes sexual harassment. How do these findings compare with the occurrence of sexual harassment in academia? Various independent studies on sexual harassment on college campuses have been conducted in the past (e.g. Cleary et al., 1994; Bryant, 1993; Garlick, 1994); however, to date, no comparative data for the sport setting are available. Volkwein et al. (1997) suggested that sexual harassment might be more prevalent in athletics than in academia. Up to now, this problem has not been addressed in general sexual harassment policies nor in the implementation and subsequent training on sexual harassment that is currently taking place at institutions of higher learning in the US. However, there is a great need to combat sexual harassment in its various forms in order to improve the campus climate.

The study reported here is designed to verify the assumption that educational programs on sexual harassment policies and prevention need to be established and constantly updated on all college campuses, specifically addressing the situations of female students and student-athletes. Thus, step one of the study focuses on the collection of data needed to demonstrate to university officials and legislators (i.e. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) officials in the USA) that sexual harassment programs should be a mandatory part of the educational experience of college students and student-athletes in particular. Step two of this study focuses on the development and implementation of appropriate sexual harassment educational and training programs at universities across the USA.

Background to the study

It has been pointed out in the literature that women vary in their perceptions of the different types of behavior that might be regarded as sexual harassment (Terpstra and Douglas, 1987). Perceptions may depend not only on the age or gender of the perceiver but also on the type of social situation in which the interactions in question occur (Reilly et al., 1982). Clearly, the expected levels of physical contact will be greater between athletes and coaches than between students and professors. Therefore, it is assumed that female student-athletes may be at greater risk of being exposed to sexual harassment in the athletic setting than female students (whether athlete or non-athlete) are in academia. How severe is the problem and what can be done to improve the campus climate? An attitudinal survey about the perceptions of female college athletes/students was developed with follow-up questions regarding their experiences of sexual harassment in athletics and academia.

Why might female student-athletes be more vulnerable to sexual harassment in sport than female students are in academia? 'It may be argued that the fact that the body is exposed so much in sport is a risk factor which does not exist in other settings'

(Fasting et al., 2000a, p. 3). Furthermore, since the enactment of Title IX in 1972 (the US legislation equivalent to the UK's Sex Discrimination Act) coaching positions in the United States, when vacated by women, have been typically filled by men (Acosta & Carpenter, 1998). Male coaches have long been prone to excessive and exaggerated forms of macho self-assertion that belittle and humiliate their athletes, male and female. Furthermore, the positions of sports administrators, sports journalists and so on are mainly filled by men. Hence, the structural and institutional basis of sport organisations remains dominated by males. (This is not to suggest, of course, that only males are involved in sexual harassment.) In this light, Brackenridge (1994) calls for more accountability within organisations in which unaccountable males have so much potential influence over inexperienced, impressionable, and vulnerable young people, and there is widespread occurrence of a range of examples of 'unwanted attention' that constitute sexual harassment.

Recent studies on college campuses confirm that sexual harassment of students is prevalent and is a serious concern. In a Canadian study, 85-89% of the students reported at least one incident of harassment (Lenskyj, 1992a). Another investigation, which compared findings at a midwestern and a west coast university, indicated that 31% of the women students had experienced 'gender harassment' and that 15% had experienced 'seductive sexual approaches' from faculty members (Cleary et al., 1994). MacGregor (1998) reported on four Canadian studies that revealed that approximately 40-50% of sport participants had experienced a negative and uncomfortable environment, which includes everything from mild sexual harassment to abuse. Only one study so far, conducted in Norway, has looked at the prevalence of sexual harassment in sport compared with a non-sport setting (see Fasting et al., 2000b). The results revealed that female non-athletes over 19 years of age experienced more sexual harassment from males than the athletes; however, the female elite athletes had experienced much more ridicule than had the non-athletes. The researchers suspected that the female athletes, as they get older, may have accepted and tolerated more sexual harassment because it is part of the male culture of sports that 'one has to live with' (Fasting et al., 2000a, p. 7). Since this study did not ask about the perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment in the eyes of athletes or non-athletes, it is difficult to interpret these results. For this reason, the purpose of the study of sexual harassment reported here is two-fold, asking first about the perception of what constitutes sexual harassment in the eyes of the beholder and, secondly, about the actual occurrence of sexual harassment. In general, studies collecting data about sexual harassment cannot be compared, since most of the researchers used different instruments and various definitions of harassment. There can be little doubt, however, that sexual harassment is occurring on many campuses, but exactly how widespread this behavior is in the arena of athletics vs academia is still unknown.

Research design and results

This study examined the initial perceptual dimensions of sexual harassment in athletics and academia among female college student-athletes and female college students. It also examined their perception of how certain behaviors by a coach or professor affected an athlete's or student's ability to compete athletically or perform academically. Additionally, the study analysed which sexually harassing behaviors female college students (athletes vs non-athletes) had actually experienced throughout their sporting/educational career in both high school and college. Finally, any emotional responses the athletes/students might have felt after being sexually harassed were identified.

The survey analysed behaviours which had been identified in previous studies to be examples of sexual harassment (see Bryant, 1993; Cleary, et al., 1994; Garlick, 1994). 27 ambiguous situations were identified and selected in a previous study by Volkwein et al. (1997) to question the perceptions and experiences of female college student-athletes on the issue of sexual harassment in sports. In the study reported here, these questions were slightly altered to fit the academic environment. The results of the study on sexual harassment in academia are compared with the results obtained from the previous study on sexual harassment in athletics (i.e. sport) (Volkwein, et al., 1997) and reported below.

200 female student athletes and 200 non-athletes from three different universities across a range of sporting standards in the North Eastern United States, aged 18-22, completed a 54-item questionnaire. Part 1 included 27 questions covering harmless behaviour (asking about weekend plans) to serious behaviour (kissing on mouth, fondling) which were ranked in seriousness by the athletes/students according to their perceptions of what constituted sexual harassment. The athletes/students were also asked whether this behaviour interfered with their or their team's ability to compete/perform. Part 2 questioned athletes'/students' experiences and emotional responses to the same 27 questions. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

The responses to the 27 questions were grouped into five distinct categories of sexual harassment in athletics/academia (see Table 1): these ranged from interactions that were perceived as non-threatening to explicit verbal or physical advances. It was clear that the respondents in academia perceived behaviours in each category (Categories I-V) to be more potentially threatening and potentially constituting sexual harassment than did the athlete respondents. Thus, the conclusion drawn by Fasting et al. (2000a) in their comparative study of sexual harassment experienced by Norwegian athletes and non-athletes, that athletes may be socialised into a culture that accepts and tolerates more sexual harassment, is supported by the outcome of this study (Part 1 of the survey).

Category I encompassed instruction-related behaviours, such as a coach/teacher standing/sitting close to an athlete/student while talking in the office. Not unexpectedly, the majority of respondents did not feel threatened by these interactions. Indeed, overall the athletes perceived this behaviour as fostering the athletic performance of the individual and the team. However, athletes' and students' perceptions of the severity of the interactions between the coach or teacher and the athlete or student increased as the

Table 1. Perceptions of sexual harassment in sport and academia (n=400)

Category and examples of question	probably or definitely constitutes sexual harassment	% of students agreeing that behaviour :- would interfere with the team's ability to compete successfully	would interfere with the athlete's ability to compete successfully
I Instruction- related Coach touches athlete on shoulder/arm/ hand while giving instructions. Coach stand/sits close to athlete while talking in office	3.18 (7.22)	3.38 (9.55)	4.3 (7.75)
II Non instruction-related/contextually dependent Coach asks athlete about weekend plans. Coach invites athletes to lunch at local restaurant	18.34 (25.42)	19.5 (35.73)	21.76 (26.14)
III Non-instruction-related/potentially threatening Coach invites athlete out to dinner at local restaurant. Coach calls athlete by pet name such as honey	42.52 (61.40)	41.94 (67.75)	47.82 (58.60)
IV Sexist comments Coach makes derogatory remarks about women. Coach makes a sexist joke	63.15 (84.00)	56.65 (84.00)	61.75 (79.90)
V Verbal or physical advances Coach stares at athlete's breast Coach kisses athlete on the mouth Coach proposes sexual encounter and issues threats for rejection	94.56 (95.94)	84.05 (96.33)	92.13 (93.76)

() = academia

Table 2. Experiences of sexual harassment in sport and academia (n=400)

Category and examples of question	the experiences of behaviour	% of students reporting:- negative emotional responses as a result of behaviour ¹	positive emotional responses as a result of behaviour ¹
I Instruction- related Coach touches athlete on should/arm/ hand while giving instructions Coach stand/sits close to athlete while talking in office	61.69 (54.86)	11.50 Uneasy (15.00)	88.50 Fine (85.00)
II Non instruction-related/contextually dependent Coach asks athlete about weekend plans Coach invites athletes to lunch at local restaurant	26.40 (24.32)	15.40 Uneasy (18.00)	84.60 Happy (82.00)
III Non-instruction-related/potentially threatening Coach invites athlete out to dinner at local restaurant Coach calls athlete by pet name such as honey	20.20 (16.26)	8.00 Uneasy (12.50)	92.00 Proud/OK (87.50)
IV Sexist comments Coach makes derogatory remarks about women. Coach makes a sexist joke	18.70 (19.45)	72.70 Angry/Bitter/Disgusted (75.00)	27.30 Happy/OK (25.00)
V Verbal or physical advances Coach stares at athlete's breast. Coach kisses athlete on the mouth. Coach proposes sexual encounter and issues threats for rejection	1.92 (2.70)	100.00 Angry/Afraid/Uneasy (100.00)	0.00 (0.00)

1. most commonly reported emotions. () = academia

categories proceeded from I to V. A minority of the athletes (18%) and students (25%) perceived Category II behaviours (such as, a coach/teacher inviting an athlete for lunch, or asking the athlete about her weekend plans) as constituting sexual harassment. Obviously, these behaviours are non-instrumental and are not part of a functional athlete-coach/student-teacher relationship. They thus leave ample room for interpretation on the part of the athlete/student, which would depend on her previous interactions with the coach/teacher, the coaching/teaching style, as well as the context in which such behaviours occur. Interestingly, students categorised a dinner invitation (Category III) as much more intimidating than a lunch invitation. Whilst only 42% of the athletes perceived behaviours in Category III as potentially threatening, 61% of the students felt these behaviours constituted sexual harassment. Another major difference in perception became obvious in Category IV, where only 63% of the athletes seemed to be bothered by sexist jokes, while 84 % of the students rated such behaviour as sexual harassment. Category V, on the other hand, was very straightforward: most athletes and students felt that kissing on the mouth or fondling or touching one's breast was definitely harassing behaviour.

Table 1 also displays the percentages of athletes/students who felt that these interactions interfered with the team's or class' ability or the athlete's or student's ability to compete/learn adequately. The upward trend in athletes'/students' perceptions of the impact of these behaviours on their performances closely mirrored the patterns described above. Generally, again, the students felt much more disturbed by certain potentially threatening instructor behaviours than the athletes felt intimidated by the coach's behaviours. The athletes seemed to accept and tolerate behaviour that was potentially threatening.

In Part 2 of the survey, whether or not the students had experienced each individual behaviour, or whether they were not sure, was analysed (see Table 2). The frequencies of each behaviour experienced were also calculated. Finally, the emotional responses that the athletes felt after experiencing the behaviours caused by the coach were recorded (Note: Comparable data of the emotional responses of the students are not available at this point.)

The outcome of the study was not as straightforward as was anticipated. It appears that behaviours described in Category I-III (instruction-related, non-instruction related, and potentially threatening behaviours) were experienced by athletes to a greater extent than they were by students. However, behaviours that probably and definitely constituted sexual harassment (Categories IV and V) were experienced to a lesser extent by the athletes. Thus, while the sporting world seems to be 'rough' and certainly intimidating to many female athletes – and much more so than the world of academia (see Categories I –III) – their coaches seemed not to overstep the fine-line to interacting in a harassing way as much as the instructors did (Categories IV and V).

In detail, more than a third of the respondents had experienced potentially intimidating athlete-coach interactions (Categories III, IV and V) while such behaviours were experienced to an even greater extent (almost 50%) in the student-teacher interactions. Most striking was that more students than athletes had experienced sexual harassment behaviours. Specifically, 20% of athletes reported having been subjected to non-instructional potentially threatening interactions (Category III). This compared with 16% of the students. This difference was significant

at the .05 level. Exposure rates to sexist comments (Category IV) were somewhat similar for students and athletes (19% of athletes as against 19.5% of students). A similar pattern held for the experiences of verbal or physical advances (Category V), with 1.9% of athletes and 2.8% of students reporting such experiences.

All of the athletes in Category V reported strong negative emotional reactions to the coach's behaviour ranging from anger, fear, uneasiness and bitterness to disgust and helplessness. In comparison, three quarters of the athletes indicated negative emotional responses, while about one quarter were not bothered by sexist jokes or derogatory remarks towards women or even reported feeling flattered or happy about them. In a similar vein, 92% of the athletes reacted with pride or happiness toward Category III interactions, such as being invited by a coach to a restaurant for dinner. Only 8% expressed nervousness or felt uneasy. The data also revealed that the emotional responses of the students to such situations were similar to those of the athletes.

Summary and discussion

As outlined above, the results of the study reflected that athletes and students were able to distinguish between purely instructional behaviours and advances which overstepped the delicate line in a relationship that was based on mutual trust and respect. The students seemed to be even more sensitive to this than the athletes were. However, it must be pointed out that the data on athletes' perceptions were collected three years before those on student perceptions, and that public education may have potentially increased the awareness of the students of this subject during that time. Alarmingly, about 20 % of the athletes and almost one quarter of the students interviewed had been exposed to sexually harassing behaviours (Categories IV and V) that were likely to affect their self-esteem, performances, and their emotional and physical well-being.

The results of the study were puzzling, particularly in Part 2, since they contradicted expectations. Fasting et al. (2000a) reported that comparatively more non-athletes experienced sexual harassment than did athletes. The data reported here raised several interesting questions. Most obviously, why did coaches seem to be careful about sexually harassing behaviours (Category IV and V), while teachers were not? Is it feasible that the female athletes knew how to build a more effective barrier between them and a potentially harassing coach and, therefore, avoided potentially harassing behaviours more than the students? Such an analysis could be supported by findings in other studies (see Fasting et al., 2000 a, b) where female athletes were shown to be more used to and more tolerant of potentially harassing behaviours than their non-athlete counterparts. Their experiences in the sporting world in general had, perhaps, led to higher self-esteem and better knowledge of how to shelter themselves from sexually harassing behaviors.

If female ... athletes are more ... [able] to defend themselves in potentially harassing situation this may reinforce an already relatively strong self-esteem, and create a

positive circle which again may be ... protection for future harassing situations. (Fasting et al., 2000a, p. 8)

However, the question arises whether self-confident individuals experience more or less sexual harassing behaviours, or whether a causal link between these variables could exist? It is well known that sexual harassment serves as a control mechanism and is based on power. Do teachers, therefore, have a greater need to control or exert power over female students than coaches do over female athletes? Or is it perhaps that the female athletes accept the coach as the higher authority figure more easily than the students accept their teachers? If that is the case, then the findings of this study are not so surprising. However, one might also reason that teachers may have a greater need to exert power over students than the coaches have over athletes since athletes are more used to adhering to rules and following orders.

Another major finding presented above was that the female athletes had experienced much more ridicule than had the students. This was also reported in Fasting et al.'s (2000a) study; they suggested that female athletes might still not be totally accepted in our society, especially in the rather conservative world of sport.

Despite the increased participation of women in sport during the last twenty years, sport organisations are still dominated and run by men. Can this be part of the explanation why female athletes are experiencing so much ridicule? ... It can ... be looked upon as an expression of the male hegemony and male power not only in sport, but also in society at large. (Fasting, 2000a, p. 9)

The results of this study suggested that more information and education on what constitutes sexual harassment is needed in order to prevent conflict and misunderstandings between the coach-athlete and student-instructor and to prevent the escalation of harassment at the earliest stage possible. Educational intervention programmes, specifically tailored for athletes and students, would not only help athletes and students to interpret potentially ambiguous behaviours but would also help the coach/teacher in his/her interactions with the athlete/student because clear boundaries for appropriate interactions would be specified. Further research is needed to understand the specific cultural and sociological variables (e.g. race, class, gender, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation) that determine students' interpretations of ambiguous situations.

Educational strategies and training programmes¹

The best interest of institutions cannot be served until those working within the institution admit that a problem exists. Whilst academia has started to recognise the harmful consequences of exposure to sexual harassment in the learning process, and to establish guidelines and intervention programs, athletic administrators have been reluctant to acknowledge the problem. Thus, administrators need to formulate clear guidelines, set up educational workshops for coaches and athletes, and implement

programmes in order to combat the problem (Katz, 1995).

The research reported above suggests that information and education on what constitutes sexual harassment is needed to prevent conflict and misunderstandings between coaches and athletes. Interventions will not only help athletes to clarify potentially ambiguous behaviours but will also assist coaches by establishing clear boundaries for appropriate interactions. Such interventions can only succeed in an environment in which athletes feel free to report instances of sexual harassment and in which their reports will be taken seriously. Due process must also be given to both athletes and coaches.

The best practice of institutions will be strengthened if policies and procedures address sexual harassment issues and the institutions take proactive approaches to eliminate such practices. With the increase in cross-gender coaching (Acosta and Carpenter, 1992) extra investigations should be undertaken into coaches' backgrounds before they are hired. Furthermore, athletic departments should institute proactive policies that have already been implemented elsewhere for identifying and eliminating sexual harassment and punishing offenders (Baker-Finch, 1995; Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, 1994; Lenskyj, 1992b; Parrot et al., 1994; Wolohan, 1995). For instance, the US Women's Sport Foundation (1994) noted that a strong sexual harassment policy should include the following items:

- a definition of sexual harassment and unethical sexual/romantic relationships between coaches and athletes;
- clear and simple reporting procedures;
- a procedure for investigation which ensures fair and swift resolution of the complaints;
- an appeal process to ensure due process to anyone receiving sanctions stemming from sexual complaints;
- clear sanctions and disciplinary actions to deal with substantial transgressions.

The Women's Sport Foundation (1994) pointed out that

athletic administrators (paid or unpaid) must be proactive in dealing with harassment. The administration must take steps to insure that its own institutional environment does not promote sexual harassment.

The Women's Sport Foundation (1994) and WomenSport International (1997) set out steps to create an environment inhospitable to sexual harassment.

In their leaflet, WomenSport International encouraged all sports organisations to:

1. prepare and implement codes of ethics for coaches, whether they work with adults or children,
2. foster a climate of open discussion about the issues of sexual harassment and abuse so that athletes feel confident enough to speak out,
3. develop athlete autonomy wherever possible including adopting coaching styles which give optimum autonomy and responsibility to athletes,
4. become involved in coach education programmes which inform and advise about

- the ethical and interpersonal issues of sexual harassment and abuse and about the technical aspects of physical touch in coaching the sport,
5. adopt athlete and parent educational programmes which inform and advise athletes on their rights and how to maintain their integrity and autonomy,
 6. introduce and use reporting and mediation systems for both athletes and coaches, ideally with the assistance of trained social work or counselling professionals,
 7. ensure that parents are fully informed of the whereabouts of their children at all times and are involved as fully as possible in supporting the work of coaches,
 8. adopt rigorous screening procedures for the appointment of all personnel, whether coaching staff or volunteers,
 9. be constantly vigilant and avoid complacency and expect and demand the highest standards of accountability at all levels of the sport, and
 10. celebrate the good work of athletes and coaches on a regular basis.

Athletic administrators have yet to demonstrate universal acceptance of the need for special educational programmes for student-athletes and coaches about sexual harassment. For example, although the NCAA has established workshops on drug and alcohol abuse, which are now mandatory, topics such as violence and sexual harassment are barely discussed (Volkwein et al., 1997). Thus, it is essential that athletic departments at educational institutions implement the steps outlined above in order to combat sexual harassment. The Australian Sport Commission (2000a, b, c, d), in its guidelines for administrators, sport organisations, athletes and coaches, provided comprehensive information of what needs to be done to prevent and combat sexual harassment.

Education is the key to helping to combat sexual harassment in sport. It is important that every participant (player or coach or manager or other personnel) know what the 'rules and boundaries' are for his/her chosen sport as well as what are considered the boundaries of appropriate behaviour for that sport. The consequences for overstepping that boundary, where they can obtain help if he/she is subjected to sexual harassment and what his/her options are must be made known to the person. Hence, a targetted approach to ensuring a sexual harassment-free sport environment should include the following actions: meetings to discuss and plan how sexual harassment can be averted and dealt with; developing appropriate policy; implementing procedures for dealing with complaints along with documentation of the process; conducting educational/informative seminars; instituting skills training courses for harassment contact office staff and complaint officers; and developing pro-active prevention strategies.

As research on sexual harassment continues to focus on the sporting world, there is hope that in the near future educational programmes will be developed and implemented world-wide. However, it is of utmost importance that institutions establish a well-publicised anti-harassment policy and grievance procedure that effectively prevent and correct sexually harassing behavior. Everyone in the world of sport should be aware of the policies and an individual should be designated to coordinate compliance in order encourage prompt reporting of incidences. Many educational institutions in the United States have formulated detailed sexual

harassment policies and adopted clear complaints procedures: their work can therefore serve as reference point for other organisations who have yet to establish these important steps in order to prevent and combat sexual harassment.²

Notes

1. This information is presented in more detail in Chapter 7 of Volkwein-Caplan, K. & Sankaran, G. (2002) *Sexual Harassment in Sport: Issues, Impact, and Challenges* Aachen, Germany: Meyer and Meyer, also reviewed in this publication.
2. The Sexual Harassment policies and complaint mechanisms can be easily assessed through the internet; for example, see West Chester University of Pennsylvania's web-site <http://www.wcupa.edu>. Furthermore, our Guide to Resources and Sexual Harassment in Sport in the book cited in Note 1 can provide helpful information for the establishment of sexual harassment policies and complaint mechanisms.

References

- Acosta, R. and Carpenter, L. (1992) *Perceived Causes of the Declining Representation of Women Leaders in Intercollegiate Sports– 1992 Update*. Unpublished monograph Brooklyn College: Brooklyn, NY
- Acosta, R. and Carpenter, L. (1998) *Women in Intercollegiate Sport. A longitudinal study - twentyone year update*. Unpublished monograph Brooklyn College: Brooklyn, NY
- American Psychological Association (1998) *Public Communications – Sexual Harassment: Myths and Realities*. <http://www.apa.com>
- Australian Sports Commission (1998a) *Harassment Free Sport: Guidelines for Sport Administrators*. Belconnen, ACT: Australian Sport Commission
- Australian Sports Commission (1998b) *Harassment Free Sport: Guidelines for Sport Organisations*. Belconnen, ACT: Australian Sport Commission
- Australian Sports Commission (1998c) *Harassment Free Sport: Guidelines for Athletes*. Belconnen, ACT: Australian Sport Commission
- Australian Sports Commission (1998d) *Harassment Free Sport: Guidelines for Coaches*. Belconnen, ACT: Australian Sport Commission
- Baker-Finch, S. (1995) Don't stand for sexual harassment. *AussieSport Action*. 6, 4, 16-17 (available on-line at <http://www.ausport.gov.au>)
- Brackenridge, C.H. (2001) *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport*. London: Routledge
- Brackenridge, C.H. (1994) Fair play or fair game: Child sexual abuse in sport organisations. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 29, 3, 287-299
- Brackenridge, C.H. (1990) Cross-gender coaching relationships: Myth, drama or crisis? *Coaching Focus*. 16, 12-14
- Bryant, A. (1993) Hostile hallways. The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's

- Schools. *Journal of School Health*. 63, 355-359
- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (1994) *Harassment in Sport: A Guide to Policies, Procedures and Resources*. Ottawa: CAAWS
- Cleary, J. C., Parascenzo, L. and Ambrosio, N. (1994) Sexual harassment of college students: Implications for campus health promotion. *Journal of American College Health*. 43,1, 3-10
- Fasting, K., Brackenridge, C.H. and Sundgot-Borgen, J. (2000a) *Sexual Harassment in and outside of Sport. Forms of Sexual Harassment Experienced by Female Athletes and Non-athletes*. Paper presented at the International Congress of Psychology, July, Stockholm, Sweden
- Fasting, K., Brackenridge, C.H. and Sundgot-Borgen, J. (2000b) *Experiences of sexual harassment among Norwegian female elite athletes in relation to type of sports*. Paper presented at the Pre-Olympic Scientific Congress, Brisbane, Australia
- Garlick, R. (1994) Male and female responses to ambiguous instructor behaviors. *Sex Roles*, 30, 135-158
- Katz, J. (1995) Reconstructing masculinity in the locker room: The mentors in violence project. *Harvard Educational Review*. 65, 163-74
- Lenskyj (1992a) 'Unsafe at home base: women's experience of sexual harassment in University sport and physical education.' *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*. 1, 19-33
- Lenskyj, H. (1992b) Sexual harassment: Female athletes' experiences and coaches' responsibilities. *Science Periodical on Research and Technology in Sport*. 12, 6, 1-5
- MacGregor, M. (1998) Harassment and abuse in sport and recreation. *CAHPERD Journal de l'Acsepld*, 64, 2, 4-13
- Parrot, A., Cummings, N., Marchell, T. C. and Hofner, J. (1994) A rape awareness and prevention model for male athletes. *Journal of American College Health*. 42, 179-86
- Reilly, T., Carpenter, S., Dull, V. and Bartlett, K. (1992) The factorial survey technique: An approach to defining sexual harassment on campus. *Journal of Social Issues*. 38, 4, 99-110
- Temple University (1992) *Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault – Resource and Policy Guide*. Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.
- Terpstra, D. and Douglas, D. (1997) A hierarchy of sexual harassment. *Journal of Psychology*. 121, 599-606
- Volkwein, K., Schnell, F., Livezey, A., and Sherwood, D. (1997) Sexual harassment in sports: Perceptions and experiences of female student athletes. *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*. 23, 3, 283-295
- Volkwein-Caplan, K. and Sankaran, G. (2002) *Sexual Harassment in Sport – Issues, Impact, and Challenges*. Aachen, Germany: Meyer & Meyer
- White, A., Mayglothing, R. and Carr, C. (1989) *The Dedicated Few: The Social World of Women Coaches in Britain in the 1980s*. Chichester, UK: West Sussex Institute of Higher Education
- West Chester University (1996) *Sexual Harassment Policy*. Unpublished
- West Chester University - Office of Social Equity (1998) *Final Report Concerning Sexual Harassment Procedures: Assessment and sexual harassment campus survey*. Unpublished
- Wolohan, J. (1995) Title IX and sexual harassment of student athletes. *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*. March, 52-55
- Women's Sport Foundation (1994) *An Educational Resource Kit for Athletic Administrators: Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Athletic Settings*. East Meadow, New York: WSF
- Women Sport International (1997) *Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport*. Brochure. Cheltenham, UK: WSI