



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND SPORT: A  
LITERATURE REVIEW

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## Executive summary

The 2010 World Cup in South Africa drew attention to the connections between major sporting events and violence against women. The 'Show Domestic Violence the Red Card' campaign, supported by football clubs, police and local authorities sought to raise public awareness with regard to intimate partner violence fuelled by increased alcohol consumption, while the World Health Organisation underscored the importance of condom use with women who sell sex in a country where rates of HIV/AIDS are of pandemic proportions. The 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi placed issues of sex trafficking and the sale of sex on the international agenda, with the connections between the economic vulnerability of women and sexual exploitation made apparent. Elsewhere, allegations of sexual assault by players across various codes of football (rugby league, Australian Rules, American gridiron and soccer) paint a picture which suggests that sport facilitates, if not encourages, particular forms of violence against women.

Although these examples provide a compelling backdrop to the argument that sport offers a context in which violence against women may be perpetrated, there remains a need for a systematic review of the literature so as to build an evidence base that can help inform policy and practice. This is particularly timely as the United Kingdom prepares to hold two sporting events of global significance in the next four years - the Olympic Games and Paralympics in 2012 and the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

In December 2010, the Trust for London funded Dr Catherine Palmer from the School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University to conduct a review of literature that could provide an evidence base for the connections between violence against women and sport.

The objectives were to:

- review national and international evidence into the connections between sport and violence against women that can inform policy development and debate, including literature that explores contemporary moves to initiate cultural change within sporting (and other) organisations;
- review and evaluate the success of relevant initiatives adopted by sporting (and other) bodies that have aimed to change or establish environments that promote safety for women and girls in relation to sport and VAW.

These broad objectives distinguish this review from others that have focussed specifically on issues of either human trafficking or prostitution in relation to sporting events (for example, London Councils/GLE, 2011, Toynbee Hall, 2009).

## **Key themes to emerge from the literature review include:**

- there are clear links between expressions and enactments of masculinity and sport-related violence against women;
- sport-related violence against women occurs in a range of settings and contexts, including homes, pubs and clubs, hotel rooms, brothels, the street and other public spaces;
- sport-related violence against women is perpetrated by both male athletes and by male fans or consumers of sport and sporting events, as well as by coaches of female athletes;
- human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains difficult to quantify, with the research evidence frequently being contradictory, but literature suggests that events such as London 2012 may well provide a context in which women and girls could be trafficked;
- the literature suggests that the influx of tourists, site workers and contractors, the media, and indeed the athletes themselves, at major sporting events creates a particular environment that may have an impact on women's safety;
- the literature suggests the increased population in the UK for the Olympic Games and Paralympics and the Commonwealth Games may create a greater demand for on and off street prostitution;
- events such as the 2010 World Cup have highlighted the connections between sports spectatorship and intimate partner violence, and the need for police, authorities and services to be aware of this when planning sporting events;
- excessive alcohol consumption is a contributing factor in the above;
- the literature suggests that there is sufficient evidence for agencies and authorities to be concerned about a potential increase in trafficking, prostitution, sexual exploitation, sexual assault and harassment, and intimate partner violence. There is a need to act now in order to respond to and prepare for London 2012, Glasgow 2014 and other major sporting events.

This review is just a start. As the London Olympic Games and Paralympics and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow draw closer, there is a need for policy makers, agencies and other stakeholders such as the Greater London Authority, the Metropolitan Police Authority, the Mayors of London and Glasgow, and the Olympic and Commonwealth Games Organising Committees, among others, to take seriously the potential for these events to exploit women through sex trafficking, the purchase of sex, intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

## **Background and context**

There is considerable international evidence to suggest a link between sport and violence against women (VAW) of different kinds. The increase in population (and indeed alcohol consumption) that accompanies major sporting events such as football's World Cup or the Olympic Games and Paralympics creates a particular environment in which violence against women is escalated, while allegations of sexual violence and misconduct by male athletes suggest a sexist culture in which 'boys behaving badly' is tacitly endorsed, if not encouraged. Elsewhere, allegations and convictions of sexual assault and the abuse of female athletes by their sports coaches provide further evidence that the events, behaviours and practices associated with sport can pose a threat to women's safety.

This report reviews the literature pertaining to violence against women and sport. It adopts a 'broad sweep' approach, and examines the contexts and settings in which sport-related violence against women occurs. In addition to reviewing the literature that examines exploitative practices and behaviours, the report also reviews the, albeit extremely limited, literature on some of the culture change initiatives adopted by sporting (and other) bodies that may help establish environments which can promote safety for women and girls in relation to sport and VAW. The literature search included peer-reviewed academic journal articles, electronic databases, 'grey' literature such as policy documents and community reports, and other relevant materials.

The literature review was undertaken between December 2010 and March 2011. It was conducted primarily by Liam Roberts, Dr Cath Palmer's research assistant, and the project was overseen by Cath Palmer from the School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University.

## **Definitions and parameters**

The definition of 'violence' most frequently used across the global literature is that adopted by the World Health Organisation, and it is this definition that is used in this report:

the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (WHO, 1996).

Following on from this, the definition of 'violence against women' adopted in this report is that used in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, cited in Nussbaum (2005):

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (p.167).

This review, then, examines the research that has explored the subordination, exploitation, violation and abuse of women in the context of contemporary sport. It focuses on VAW by male athletes, VAW that is facilitated by major sporting events, and VAW by coaches. Where possible, examples from previous sporting events are provided to elaborate the evidence presented in the literature. While the focus of this report is on VAW by men, this is not to suggest that women do not perpetrate violence against other women. The literature, however, suggests that men are more likely to engage in the sport-related behaviours and practices in which women are violated, abused or exploited, and the report reflects this accordingly.

It is worth noting at the outset that the literature on violence against women - in sport and in other contexts – is complex (Goodey, 2008). Incidences of VAW are under-reported, much of it is 'hidden', conviction rates remain low, sample sizes in empirical research are small, making internal validity and reliability and the robustness of methods difficult to ascertain, and competing interests mean that the research evidence can be contradictory. A further difficulty with the research on sport-related VAW, particularly that which relates to Games-related sexual trafficking, is the lack of baseline data that can quantify prevalence *prior* to an event, making quantifiable comparisons difficult (Toynbee Hall, 2009). This is not to detract from the importance of the literature reviewed in this report, rather to suggest that there is a need to build on this report through further systematic reviews and empirical research with women who have been trafficked, involved in the sale of sex or subject to other forms of violence and exploitation. As Brackenridge notes, "there is an obvious need for the collection and analysis of more widespread data before cross-national and cross-sport comparisons can be made" (1997a: p.119).

## Review of the literature

The literature review revealed that sport-related violence against women can take many forms, from violence committed by male athletes through to violence facilitated by sporting events, as well as violence perpetrated by coaches of female athletes. Each is discussed in turn.

### Violence against women by male athletes

An extensive body of research suggests that male athletes are more likely to commit acts of sexual violence against women than other men (Smith & Stewart, 2003; Flood & Dyson, 2007). Incidences of physical assault, rape and sexual assault have been documented, with sportsmen at all levels (from amateur, college through to professional athletes) being identified as perpetrators (Fagan, 1993; Jasinski, 2001; Waterhouse-Watson, 2007; 2009; 2010). A considerable amount has been written in the USA and Canada that indicates that men who participate in contact and team sports are more likely to commit acts of violence against women (Benedict & Klein, 1997; Kirby & Winthrop, 2002; Safai, 2002;). An early American study (Eskenazi, 1990) found that on college campuses, male athletes were over-represented among the men who commit acts of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. The US National Institute of Mental Health reported from a survey in 1990 that athletes participated in approximately one third of 862 sexual assaults on college campuses (Eskenazi, 1990). Another study of 1,050 athletes and more than 10,000 students at a college campus also reported that athletes were 5.5 times more likely to admit to behaviour that could be defined as rape (Melnick, 1992). A more recent study found that male athletes report significantly greater agreement with 'rape-supportive' statements than men in general (Boeringer, 1999).

Most of this literature has come out of the United States (Brown, Sumner & Nocera 2002; Fasting, Brackenridge, Miller & Sabo, 2008), and involves college athletes, although there is an emerging evidence base from Australia that focuses on professional sportsmen (Bryson, 1994; Palmer, 2006; Palmer & Thompson, 2007; Flood & Dyson, 2007). To date, however, there have been no equivalent studies that can allow us to generalise these points to the United Kingdom, thus highlighting the need for further research.

Various features of sporting cultures have been identified that may account for the increased potential for male athletes to commit acts of violence against women.

- **Male bonding:** Sabo et al (2000) suggest that sport provides men with a vehicle to maintain their masculine identity. Flood and Dyson (2007) add to this by pointing to the male bonding that is central to men's participation in sport, arguing that this may contribute to particular, negative attitudes towards women. A body of literature

supports this, highlighting that team sports encourage a form of 'hegemonic masculinity'<sup>1</sup> that includes sexist and misogynistic attitudes toward women (Messner, 1992; Messner & Sabo, 1994; Connell, 1995; Wheaton, 2000; Anderson, 2005; Messner, 2002; Muir & Seitz, 2004, Palmer, 2007, 2009). In this literature, it is argued that such bonding may facilitate sexism and encourage violence against women, when personal integrity is over-ruled by a sense of loyalty to the group or the team. There have been several journalistic accounts of sexual abuse and harassment in "North American male jock culture" (Safai, 2002: 97). Most notably, Lefkowitz's (1997) account in *Our Guys* of the gang rape of an intellectually disabled girl provides a detailed description of the long term abuse of the victim and other women at the collective hands of a group of American college football players.

- **Aggressive sports:** Further to this, the centrality of aggression to some sports (predominantly contact sports) has been viewed as promoting insensitivity to others' pain and a glorification of violence, thus having implications for the development of relationships with women (Flood & Dyson, 2007). Crosset (2002), however, urges caution with the extent to which this argument is pushed, maintaining that sports vary tremendously in terms of violent output, as can the nature of aggression itself (ie. controlled or otherwise). Similarly, Forbes et al. (2006) cite Nelson's (1994) description of football as a "bastion of misogynistic sexism" (p.443) to highlight that other sports such as golf, figure skating, or tennis are not be described in similar terms. Thus, the gendered nature of sport, and the differing requirements of aggression in certain sports needs to be recognised, alongside other contributing factors such as those described here, in the context of VAW by male athletes.
- **Sexualisation and subordination of women:** Some critics point to women's roles in men's sport - as either silent or subordinate - as contributing to the attitudes that encourage and/or endorse violence against women by male athletes. In her 2006 study of sexual violence in Australian football, Palmer (2006) identifies four roles for women that contribute to the discrete politics of subordination whereby sexual violence is normalised as 'boys being boys'. Palmer traces out four typologies of women's relations to sporting men: i) the good wife/mother, ii) the stoic spouse, iii) the decorative, hyper-feminine 'prop' and iv) the 'other woman' who does not conform to these socially acceptable roles that men encounter in their ordinary, domestic relationships, and who is thus perceived as being sexually available. Flood and Dyson (2007) extend this argument, suggesting that women are often regarded as sexualised props for men's performance in sport (as cheerleaders, for example). In both studies, a parallel is made between women's role as decorative supporters or carers of male athletes and the ways

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<sup>1</sup> Hegemonic masculinity is one of the most widely recognised concepts in gender studies, cultural studies, the sociology of sport and other disciplines that examine gender relations. Pioneered by the Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell, 'hegemonic masculinity' refers to the dominant form of masculinity within the gender hierarchy. It describes and explains how some men make it appear normal and necessary that they dominate most women and other men (Connell 1987, 1995).

in which these perceptions of the role of women vis-à-vis men's sport may fuel sexist attitudes and behaviours within male sporting subcultures.

- **Celebrity status and entitlement:** The high profile status and celebrity treatment of professional athletes has been seen potentially to feel a sense of entitlement and lack of accountability for one's actions off the field (Palmer, 2006; Flood & Dyson, 2007). The conclusions reached in *Our Guys*, for example, is that "rape is a consequence of a highly revered, tolerated, misogynist jock culture in an elite, predominantly White and heterosexual community" (Safai, 2002: 99).
- **'Groupie' culture:** Players' sexual involvement with women seen to seek out the sexual company of professional athletes, combined with the celebrity status and entitlement mentioned above, may shape athletes' assumptions about women, sex and consent (Benedict, 1998; Melnick, 1992; Palmer & Thompson, 2007; Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008). Robinson (1998), for example, details the sexual exploitation of women who follow professional and semi-professional athletes in men's ice hockey, where they are referred to as "puck-bunnies", while elsewhere, studies of gender relations in rock climbing refer to women supporters of male climbers as "belay bunnies" (Robinson, 2008).

Having traced out these five contributing factors to sport-related violence against women, it is important to recognise that it is rarely any single factor that escalates the potential for violence against women, but is, instead, a combination of factors that contribute to violence against women by male athletes.

## **Violence against women that is facilitated by sporting events**

Alongside the literature documenting the contexts and factors that may contribute to VAW by male athletes, a growing body of evidence details the relationship between violence against women and men who attend major sporting events, and associated activities. This will clearly be of particular importance for agencies, services and authorities in the context of the approaching Olympic Games and Paralympics in London and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

This section reviews the literature that details violence against women that is facilitated by sporting events. It focuses on four things: trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, prostitution, sexual assault and intimate partner violence. It looks at past major sporting events, including the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, the 2006 German World Cup (where there is an established body of research evidence), and the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (where there is more limited evidence), to paint a picture of the perceived extent of VAW in London 2012 and Glasgow 2014. The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics has been omitted as reports to date have been concerned with theorising potential risks for the Games rather

than research documenting the kind and prevalence of VAW that may have occurred in Vancouver.

### **Human trafficking, prostitution, sexual exploitation and sexual assault**

While human trafficking exists for the purpose of exploitation in the labour market, the majority of the research literature on the trafficking of women is concerned with the use of women for sexual exploitation. Although the data is patchy and inconclusive, it is estimated that 2.45 million people are trafficked for the purpose of forced labour and sexual exploitation (International Labour Organisation, 2005), with the trafficking of women across the world for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labour estimated to be a 12 billion dollar (US) industry (Di Tommaso, Shima, Strøm & Bettio, 2009). It is difficult to say precisely how many girls and women are trafficked into the UK, however, research suggests that between 1,000 and 10,000 women and girls are trafficked into the country each year (Home Office, 2007). The considerable variation in these estimates has prompted several commentators to argue that what we know about trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is still exceptionally limited, due, in part to the criminal and hidden nature of the activity (Doezema, 2000; Kelly, 2002; Laczko & Gramegna, 2003; Agustin, 2005; Kempadoo, 2005; Albanese, 2007; London Councils/GLE, 2011).

While the prevalence of trafficking for sexual exploitation remains difficult to quantify, there is evidence that such forced migration is often driven by demand (Anderson & O'Connell Davidson, 2003; Bales & Soodalter, 2009). It stands to reason then that any geographical location where there is an increase in population would consequently expand consumer markets in that location, with a demand for paid sex being one of these markets. In the case of sporting events like the World Cup or the Olympic Games, the influx of tourists, site workers, contractors, the media, and indeed the athletes themselves, creates an environment where there is a greater market for paid sex. Evidence has already established that major international sporting events promote an increase in demand for paid sex because, in part, of this temporary population growth (Hennig et al. 2006; Toynbee Hall, 2009; The Future Group, 2007). This is likely to escalate with the predicted population growth associated with the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympics, and may create a proportional increase in trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Metropolitan Police Authority, 2009). It remains difficult, however, to ascertain the extent to which this increased demand may be met by cross-border or the internal trafficking of women within the UK.

To examine some of the evidence from recent major sporting events, it is clear that they provide a context in which women may be exploited in ways that pose a threat to their safety.

### **Athens 2004**

Evidence suggests that human trafficking in Athens increased around 2004, as the city prepared to host the Olympic Games (Human Trafficking and London 2012 Network, 2010). The Greek Government were retrospectively criticised for their lack of preventative action in addressing the issue of human trafficking prior to the Athens Olympics (Future Group, 2007; Hennig et al, 2006). A report from the Greek Embassy (Hellenic Republic of Greece, 2004) however, points to a number of initiatives and actions proposed in anticipation of the potential rise in trafficking activity. These plans included doubling the budget for anti-trafficking actions, developing agreements with neighbouring countries and financing the education of police officers, judges and public prosecutors.

The author of the Greek Embassy's report, however, could find no evidence of any assessment or quantification of the success of these measures. Indeed, the International Organization for Migration, cited in Hennig et al, (2006) maintains that no trafficking occurred in relation to the Olympic Games in Athens during 2004. Given the hidden and criminal nature of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, such reports should be read with caution. They do not provide sufficient evidence that *no* sexual trafficking took place during the Athens Games, instead, they highlight the contested nature of the evidence base around issues of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and the need for further empirical research with women who have been trafficked, involved in the sale of sex or subject to other forms of violence during or in relation to the staging of major sporting events.

This is evidenced in the following account, where limited tracking data has been collected by Greece in relation to trafficking (rather than sexual trafficking specifically) since 2001. The Future Group's 2007 report highlighted that the Greek Ministry of Public Safety recorded a 95 percent increase in the number of human trafficking victims in 2004; a figure almost double that of the previous year. While the report notes that trafficking did decline by 24 percent in 2005, following the Olympic Games, the figure was still 47 percent greater than that of 2003. This potentially shows a connection between the Athens Games and human trafficking, although it is difficult to directly link this 'spike' to the Olympic Games or to suggest that this increase in trafficking was for the purpose of sexual exploitation (as opposed to trafficking for labour more generally). As such, the data needs to be interpreted with caution. The report collapses categories of trafficking, and more accurate means of data capture are needed in reporting on incidences of sexual trafficking.

## Germany 2006

The 2006 FIFA World Cup provides another example of a sporting event where there are links to an increase in sexual exploitation. Unlike Athens, who were retrospectively criticised for their lack of preparation in anticipation of an increased number of girls and women being trafficking within and into Greece for the Olympic Games, Germany explicitly planned for an expected increase of women being involved in sexual trafficking and paid sex during the World Cup. It was clear from the outset that a greater number of women selling sex could be expected to be in proximity of the football venues throughout the competition (Germany Report to EU, 2007). To meet the demand for paid sex, Toynbee Hall (2009) point to the building of new structures such 'sex huts', 'love boxes' and a four storey 'mega brothel' in Berlin, as well as the "car-port like structures that offered rudimentary facilities" for the sale of sex in Cologne (Ibid p.3).

Such preparations were in response to the predicted rise in the demand for sex that gained some attention in the lead up to the World Cup. Several months before the start of the World Cup, several organisations released estimates that the event would be likely to accelerate sex trafficking. The figures fluctuated from 30,000 to 60,000 women expected to be trafficked during the competition (Council of Europe, 2006; CARE for Europe, 2006; IOM 2006; Neuwirth, 2006; Sparre, 2006; Hennig et al, 2006). It is unclear how these estimates were established as none of the organisations who quoted these figures stated the source. Nonetheless, it was widely expected that the sale of sex would increase around the games venues in Germany's major cities, and German police and authorities focussed their efforts on preparing for this predicted increase.

Since the event however, such figures have been discredited (Future Group, 2007). The German Government's report to the European Council (Germany Report to EU, 2007) after the World Cup suggests that initial expectations of an increase in sex trafficking did not materialise in practice. Milovejevic (2008) further argues that the predicted figures were a product of how "a wide ranging coalition of interests fuelled a moral panic around sex trafficking in Europe", which was further elaborated by sensationalist media coverage of the issue of sex trafficking (p.224). What Milovejevic's (2008) account misses, however, is a recognition that media fuelled 'moral panics' are common in journalistic writing about women and sex and are not, in themselves, evidence that trafficking did not take place.

Upon reporting that an increase in trafficking failed to eventuate during the World Cup in 2006, the German Government claimed that the measures they had put in place to counter the threat of trafficking has been successful (Germany Report to EU, 2007). Among the measures implemented was the establishment of a multi-agency approach to the prevention of trafficking. The federal and state police forces worked alongside non government organisations (NGOs). NGO's held public events, including large discussions, press conferences and interviews, while posters and leaflets were distributed, and

information was provided through radio and television, telephone hotlines and websites (Future Group 2007) in public awareness campaigns.

This comprehensive network of information and support was supplemented at the ground level by the German police. A simultaneous national and regional approach was adopted (Germany Report to EU, 2007) which saw the formation of new specialist task forces. These forces conducted raids into known areas involving the sale of sex and established contact with known 'informers' in high-risk areas (Future Group, 2007). At a national level, border controls were reinstated for people travelling into Germany for the World Cup and targeted programmes were put in place to increase the awareness of hotel and accommodation staff (Ibid).

Claims that such measures had been effective in reducing trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation during the World Cup were supported by statistics which highlighted that during the event only five cases of trafficking (of 33 reported) were shown to have a direct link to the World Cup (Ibid). Such low numbers of reported incidences of trafficking further underscore the complex, contested and contradictory nature of data on VAW, in this case, sexual trafficking. As was the case with Athens, low numbers of reported cases of trafficking are not, in themselves, proof that trafficking was not more widespread. While the sale of sex in Germany was quite open throughout the World Cup, trafficking remained hidden and illegal.

Some commentators (Henig et al, 2006) point to the legal status of prostitution in Germany as enabling the country to overtly prepare for the predicted increase in women selling sex during the World Cup. The law and policy in Germany regarding prostitution is based on the concept of voluntary and self-determined prostitution. Hence, provided that the act of prostitution is carried out with an individuals' free will, it is a legal profession in Germany. Women selling sex will not face criminal charges nor will clients who buy sex (Hennig et al, 2006).

The legal status of prostitution in Germany, however, does not cushion it from dynamics of exploitation and power. Several feminist (and then Christian) organisations, led by the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW, 2006) and the National Council of German Women's Organizations (German Report to the EU, 2007), became involved in various public awareness campaigns about the exploitative nature of bought sex, such as: *'Buying sex is not a sport'*; *'Final Whistle – Stop Forced Prostitution'*; and *'Red Card for Forced Prostitution'*. Several women's groups across Europe followed suit. In Ireland, for example, the National Women's Council of Ireland launched their version of 'Buying Sex is not a Sport' campaign (Crouse, 2006) to further publicise the issue of sexual exploitation in the World Cup.

## **Towards London 2012**

Many of the factors that contribute to an escalation in selling sex and sex trafficking may well be present in London in 2012, as well as over the coming months, as London prepares to host the Games. The increase in population through tourists, site workers, the media and athletes at the Games may well create an environment which impacts upon women's safety. It is predicted that during the Olympiad (ie. the four years between Beijing, 2008 and London 2012), it is anticipated that there will be up to 100,000 construction workers and contractors involved in building the games infrastructure (Sherman, 2008). With the Games now less than 18 months away, this population is rapidly growing as work on the site take place. From this, to the dramatic swell in a tourist, volunteer, media and athlete population that London will see during the Games themselves - 500,000 extra visitors are expected to be in London during the Games (Culf, 2007) - the commercial sex market is likely to see an increase in demand to respond to this growth in population. While it is yet to be seen whether such predicted increases in the sale of sex and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation will eventuate in London, the literature suggests that there is sufficient evidence for agencies and authorities to be concerned about a potential increase in trafficking, prostitution, sexual exploitation, sexual assault and harassment. The challenge for policy makers, agencies and authorities is to ensure that those involved in selling sex are neither coerced nor exploited in the process.

Of course, the Olympic Games will not just be staged in London. The football will be held in Manchester, Cardiff, Newcastle, Glasgow and Coventry, and the sailing will be held at Weymouth and Portland, to name just two events that will be held outside of London. There is thus a need for policymakers, agencies, services and authorities to recognise that other cities may well provide sites and settings in which trafficking, prostitution, sexual exploitation and sexual assault may occur during the 2012 Games.

### **Sport-related intimate partner violence**

There is a growing body of research, and indeed concern among agencies and authorities, that links intimate partner violence to sport and sporting events. Increased competitive tensions and alcohol consumption are cited as conducive factors, particularly for women already living in vulnerable domestic arrangements. Government reports in the UK show that during major sporting events, incidents of intimate partner violence increase (MoJ, 2010; BBC, 2010). A Home Office report highlights that reported incidents of intimate partner violence increased by as much as 30 percent on the days of England's fixtures during the 2006 FIFA World Cup (Home Office, 2006), concluding that this data is strong enough to show a clear correlation between sporting events and incidents of reported intimate partner violence.

Jacks (2011), writing about 'Old Firm' football matches in Scotland (ie. between Rangers and Celtic clubs) notes that "according to Strathclyde police, offences of domestic violence in the west of Scotland rise by 138% when the game is played on a Saturday, with smaller but still significant rises (96% and 56%) for games played on Sundays and weekday evenings" (p. 37). Although no baseline data is offered to provide a point of comparison, such stark increases in reported incidences of intimate partner violence are notable.

Similar trends are also found when national teams compete. Sivarajasingam et al's (2005) study into violent behaviour and its connection to sporting events where national teams are represented (in this case the Welsh men's rugby and football teams) found, perhaps surprisingly, that injuries inflicted against women were more frequent when national teams *won* than when they lost. They also claim that the actual type of sport (ie. football or rugby) made no difference – although team sports are implicated in the above claims, supporting earlier findings that participation in aggressive, contact, team sports is one of the factors that contributes to violence against women.

Another example which serves to illustrate this correlation comes from Greater Manchester, where figures released by police cover the day England were defeated 4-1 by Germany in the football World Cup in South Africa. Police statistics show that this was a record day for reports of intimate partner violence. Three hundred and fifty three incidents were recorded in a single day; this was 15.7% higher than the same day the previous year (InsidetheM60, 2010). Similarly, during the 2010 six-nation rugby tournament in Wales, a marked increase in recorded incidents of domestic violence was documented. Sixty six incidents were recorded by South Wales Police between Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2010. The following weekend, which saw Wales hosting England in Cardiff, this number rose by 79% to 118 (Alford, 2010). No academic literature has been published on these apparent 'spikes' in intimate partner violence and the staging of major sporting events. There is thus a need for further research that can assist in the analysis and interpretation of these trends in meaningful ways, given the under-reporting of intimate partner violence and the role of team, contact sports in promoting insensitivity to others' pain and a glorification of violence cited previously in this report.

The Home Office report recommends that police be aware of intimate partner violence as a crime when planning for major sporting events. It should be considered alongside, and in a similar way, to more recognised public order issues, such as noise or being drunk and disorderly:

In considering policing responses to major or significant sporting events, forces and BCUs should provide additional resources to respond effectively to increased levels of DV in addition to other local policing needs (Home Office 2006, p.36).

Increased competitive tensions and aggressive forms of masculinity are cited as amongst the contributing factors in instances of sport-related intimate partner violence. With reference to televised spectator sport and its link to domestic violence, Sabo, Gray and Moore (2000) suggest that televised sport acts as a vehicle for men to “deploy manly aggression to maintain their gender identity and domination of women partners” (p.141). It is open to debate, however, whether the Olympic events will provide the same vehicle for intensified aggressive behaviour as the more popular team and contact sports (eg. football, rugby. American gridiron or Australian Rules football) that are implicated in analyses of aggressive sporting behaviours and violence against women. This will certainly be something for agencies, authorities and other stakeholders to monitor.

### **Alcohol and sport-related intimate partner violence**

Increased and excessive alcohol consumption has also been implicated in violence against women (Palmer, forthcoming; Peralta, Tuttle, & Steele, 2010). The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) has identified that increased alcohol consumption during large scale sporting events poses specific risks for women and therefore impacts on policing strategies (MPA, 2009), for it correlates with higher rates of intimate partner violence incidents (Stuart, Temple, Follansbee, Bucossi, Hellmuth & Moore, 2008; Sivarajasingam, Moore & Shepherd, 2005). The “holy trinity” (Wenner, 1998) of increased alcohol consumption, sporting events and the associations with particular forms of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ referred to previously, presents a particular challenge for policy makers, police, agencies and authorities. The Home Office, for example, express their concerns thus:

Major sporting events do not cause domestic violence, as perpetrators are responsible for their actions, but the levels of alcohol consumption linked to the highly charged emotional nature of those events seem to increase the prevalence of such incidents (Home Office, 2006, p.36).

As documented elsewhere (Palmer & Thompson, 2007; Palmer, 2009; Palmer, 2010, forthcoming), excessive alcohol consumption is a strong feature of the more aggressive or brutal dynamics prevalent in male sport cultures. Reflecting the suggestion by the Home Office (2006) that major sporting events do not, in themselves, cause intimate partner violence, Messner and de Oca (2005) argue that “by itself, alcohol does not ‘cause’ men’s violence against women or against other men; however, it is commonly one of a cluster of factors that facilitate violence” (p.1, *Ibid*), and increases the seriousness of injuries and the risk of homicide. Alcohol misuse can be expected at any major spectator event (Enoch & Jacobs, 2008) and should therefore be prioritised as a particularly important consideration

during the planning of the Olympics Games and Paralympics in 2012 and the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

## **Violence against female athletes**

In addition to violence against women that is perpetrated by male athletes and VAW that is facilitated by major sporting events, coaches of female athletes also commit acts of violence. There is emerging research evidence documenting this aspect of violence against women, with emotional and physical violence through coaching methods or the sexual harassment, assault and exploitation of the athlete by their coach all being identified in the research literature. In Australia, for example, incidents of sexual abuse of female juniors have been reported in swimming, cycling, kayaking, rowing, baseball, gymnastics and other sports (Leahy et al. 2002). Elsewhere, qualitative studies of the experiences of abuse by female athletes have been conducted most notably by Brackenridge (1997a; 1997b), Cense and Brackenridge (2001), Kirby (2002) and Lapchick (1995). According to Fasting, Brackenridge and Sundgot-Borgen (2004), female elite athletes who participate in 'masculine' sports appear to experience more abuse and harassment than women who take part in other sports. Most abuse of female athletes begins when the athletes are young girls, and frequently continues throughout their athletic life, often prompting their cessation of training and competition (Brackenridge, 1997a; Fasting et al, 2011).

Brackenridge, Bishopp, Moussali and Tapp (2007) argue that sexual abuse has many motivations, including elements of anger, hostility or a misplaced desire for intimacy. The realm of sport provides an active setting for such motivations and the relationships formed between an athlete and her coach arguably facilitate the conditions whereby a coach can abuse trust, power and position. While, incidents of abuse in the coach/athlete relationship have been researched (Leahy, Pretty & Tenenbaum 2001; Brackenridge, 2001; Toftegaard-Nielson, 2001), there are, however, some difficulties with how to interpret the data. As is the case with other forms of violence against women, abuse by coaches tends to be under-reported, and while quantitative studies that attempt to measure the prevalence of abuse across sports have been undertaken by Volkheim et al. (1997), Brackenridge and Kirby (1997), Fejgin and Hangeby (2000) and Fasting et al, (2011), sample sizes tend to be small, thereby making claims to internal validity and representativeness of the data difficult to sustain (Brackenridge 2001).

Brackenridge and Fasting (2002) argue that sport holds a special status through its marketing as a vehicle for well-being, positive citizenship, self-discipline and morality. On the flip side however, they argue that it is this special status that protects those within it from critical scrutiny, meaning "social inequalities and other problems, such as sexual harassment and abuse, have all too often been ignored or tacitly condoned" (p.12).

Brackenridge (2008) uses the imagery of the powerful coach to highlight the often exploitative relationship between coach and athlete:

...perpetrating symbolic violence over the athlete by virtue of his or her power, status or charisma and thereby to intimidate, undermine or coerce. It is this symbolic power that often underlies acts of sexual abuse in sport since athletes have very little power to resist and risk losing their chances of advancement if they blow the whistle on undesirable practices by authority figures (p.2).

This feeling of powerlessness by the victim is often reported as endemic in the dynamics of sexual harassment (Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Mackinnon, 1987). This echoes findings in institutional sexual harassment (such as that in the workplace), where behaviours such as written or verbal abuse or threats, sexually oriented comments, intimidating sexual remarks, propositions, invitations or familiarity and bullying based on sex may be considered as harassment. These are also found in sporting environments (Kane & Disch, 1993; Brackenridge, 1997a: p.117).

Supporting Brackenridge's argument, Tomlinson and Yorganci (1997) highlight the complete level of control available to some coaches over their athletes' medical treatment, diet, social life, and even sexual behaviour. A comprehensive body of research appears to support this theory and a general hypothesis appears to be that the further up the performance ladder a female athlete climbs, the more susceptible she is to sexual harassment (Leahy, Pretty & Tenenbaum, 2002; Fasting & Knorre, 2005; Chroni & Fasting, 2008). Brackenridge, Lindsay and Telfer (2009) attribute this to the increased emotional investment alongside a shift in cultural power towards the coach.

The increasingly intense relationships between coach and athlete that will develop over the coming months and years, as athletes seek to qualify for the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, suggests a need for better systems of monitoring, reporting and acting upon this form of violence against women which involves female athletes in very particular ways.

## **‘Culture change’ initiatives and campaigns**

Despite the research literature presented here, which is strongly suggestive of a link between violence against women and sport as it relates to male athletes, major events and coach/athlete relationships, there are surprisingly few documented ‘culture or behaviour change’ programmes or campaigns instigated or implemented by sporting clubs and organisations. Those violence prevention education programmes and campaigns that do exist tend to be focussed on male athletes, rather than on raising broader awareness of issues such as intimate partner violence or trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation within sport.

### **Athlete focused programmes**

In the UK, the most notable programmes have focussed on child protection in sport, rather than on violence against women. The Football Association, for example, has a ‘Safeguarding children and young people in football’ programme, intended to provide guidance for grassroots football clubs. While sexual violence is clearly included in this programme alongside issues such as bullying or racial harassment, it does not have a focus on women or girls, but on children and young people more broadly.

There are, however, several violence prevention education programmes focussing specifically on violence against women that have been developed in the United States and in Australia. These may provide useful lessons for the UK to learn from, and are discussed in more detail below.

### ***Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme (US)***

First established in 1993, the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme is a gender violence prevention and education program based at Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society. The MVP programme enlists high school, collegiate and professional athletes in an effort to prevent all forms of men's violence against women. Using a ‘bystander’ approach to gender violence prevention, the MVP programme views male athletes not as potential perpetrators, but as empowered ‘bystanders’ who can confront potentially abusive peers. By taking part in the programme, participants develop leadership skills and learn to mentor and educate younger boys and girls on the nature and consequences of violence against women.

As well as focusing on the education of male athletes, the MVP programme adopts the approach that empowered women have numerous opportunities to interrupt and confront sexist and abusive behavior by men. Traditionally, prevention efforts have focused on how

women, as potential victims, can protect themselves or avoid dangerous situations. The MVP Female Student-Athlete project, which forms a part of the overarching MVP programme, by contrast, educates women and girls about their options as bystanders in scenarios involving actual or potential assaults against women.

The MVP Female Student-Athlete Project works with women's teams at colleges and universities across the USA, as well as with high school girls. The main teaching tool used is the 'MVP Playbook', which consists of a series of realistic scenarios involving sexual assaults, harassment, and abuse of women. The sessions are highly interactive. Participants are encouraged to share personal experiences and discuss ways that interventions have been or might be effective in preventing rape and sexual harassment, reflecting the pedagogical approach of feminist self defense (Seith & Kelly, 2003).

MVP trains some of the college female student-athletes to provide direction and role modeling for girls in high schools and to provide leadership to their peers on campus and to young people in their communities. Graduates of the programme speak about men's violence against women to their peers in forums, classes and at new student orientations. The MVP has also developed a community-based 'speaker's bureau', comprised of former high school and college athletes who are trained to conduct MVP sessions in schools and community organisations.

As the focus of the MVP programme is on student athletes it is anticipated that the awareness about VAW that is raised at this early stage in a male athlete's career and his experience of sport will set in place particular ways of relating to women that do not involve violent or exploitative behaviours.

**Website:** <http://www.sportinsociety.org/mvp.html>

### ***Respect and responsibility (Australia)***

To turn now to a violence prevention education programme that focuses specifically on raising awareness among *professional* sportsmen, the 'Respect and Responsibility' programme represents the Australian Football League's (AFL) attempt to address violence against women and to work towards creating safe, supportive and inclusive environments for women and girls across both the AFL industry and in the community more broadly.

In this scheme, the AFL works closely with VicHealth (a unit within the Victorian government's Department of Health) to implement the 'Respect and Responsibility' programme. First launched in 2005, the programme focuses on five key areas:

- developing model anti-sexual harassment and anti-sexual discrimination procedures across the AFL and its 16 Clubs;

- developing organisational policies and procedures to ensure a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for women;
- creating changes to AFL rules relating to 'Conduct Unbecoming' which covers the specific context of allegations of sexual assault;
- developing targeted education programs; and
- creating model policies and procedures which can be implemented at the community club level.

Focusing particularly on player education, all AFL players and clubs receive targeted training through specific modules that address the issues above. Co-facilitated by former players and VicHealth, the training modules aim to provide information that enable clubs to:

- promote safe and inclusive environments for women and girls at all levels of Australian Football and the wider community;
- increase players understanding of how sexual assault, violence, harassment and abuse can affect the lives of women and girls;
- provide practical information that assists players to understand the meaning of consent, and identify situations that have the potential to go wrong; and,
- provide players with information that may assist them to build and maintain social relationships with women that are healthy and respectful.

**Website:**

[http://www.afl.com.au/Portals/0/afl\\_docs/Practical%20Education%20R&R%20Booklet.pdf](http://www.afl.com.au/Portals/0/afl_docs/Practical%20Education%20R&R%20Booklet.pdf)

Although there are very few examples of these violence prevention education campaigns in the literature (and even fewer have been evaluated to monitor effectiveness), recent reviews (Berkowitz, 2004a, 2004b; Flood, 2005-2006, Dyson & Flood, 2007) have argued that effective violence prevention programmes share certain key features that those agencies, services and authorities planning similar programmes before, during and after the London Olympics and Glasgow Commonwealth Games could usefully learn from.

**Effective programmes:**

- are comprehensive, in that they address and involve all relevant community members and systems;
- are intensive, in that they offer learning opportunities that are interactive, involve active participation, are sustained over time and have multiple points of contact with reinforcing messages;

- address cognitive, affective and behavioural domains: what people know, how they feel, and how they behave;
- are relevant to the audience; they are tailored to the participants and acknowledge the special needs and concerns of particular communities;
- focus on peer-related variables, use peers in leadership roles, and emphasise the relationship of sexual assault to other issues;
- Offer positive messages which build on men's values and predisposition to act in a positive manner (Flood & Dyson, 2007).

While the literature on athlete based violence prevention programmes is extremely limited, the literature that relates to community based education programmes aimed at educating on issues relating to sports-based violence against women is even more so. That said, there are clearly some messages that can be taken from the characteristics of effective programmes cited above, as UK authorities and agencies develop programmes aimed at issues such as sport-related domestic violence or trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and prostitution.

## **Recommendations**

From the review of literature, it is clear that further work needs to be undertaken in order to contribute to some immediate and longer term policy developments and debate.

- Better systems of monitoring the range of sport-related VAW included in this report are needed to paint a more accurate picture of locations, prevalence and timing. The range of settings in which VAW occurs (homes, pubs and clubs, hotel rooms, brothels, the street and other public spaces) makes it difficult to monitor and police.
- Whilst acknowledging the hidden nature of much of violence against women, there is nonetheless a need for more robust empirical (qualitative) research to be undertaken with women who have been trafficked, involved in the sale of sex or subject to other forms of violence (including violence against female athletes) that can support - and give voice to - the largely secondary, statistical data collected on violence against women and sport. This should be an ongoing research programme.
- Policymakers, agencies, services and authorities need to recognise that other cities may well provide sites and settings in which trafficking, prostitution, sexual exploitation and sexual assault may occur during the 2012 Games.

- There is a near total absence of research relating to the Paralympics and Special Olympics, and to the experiences of women with disabilities. This is a significant gap, and further research is needed to inform policy debates and practice.
- As the Olympic and Commonwealth Games each occur every four years (with two years in between each), it is recommended that the literature be reviewed bi-annually to enable research from the sporting events that occur on this cycle to be included as new data and literature is gathered and published. These can provide legacy documents for successive Games and events, as well as identify emerging agendas for further research.
- Greater policy and research attention needs to be directed towards the role of alcohol sales and consumption with regard to sport-related violence against women. A review of any evidence of increased alcohol sales around times of major sports events may potentially be a pertinent link to VAW.
- There is a need for a research and evaluation component to be built into any athlete or community based violence prevention education campaign or programme. The lack of evaluative data makes it very difficult to make assessments about the effectiveness of existing programmes that can then help inform the development of future programmes and initiatives that can help prevent violence against women.
- There is a need to provide meaningful training for male athletes/sportsmen that can develop awareness of, and provides strategies for intervening when abuse takes place, in order to encourage men to act in a positive manner and promote assertiveness among women and girls.
- Governments in the UK can make a major contribution to ensuring VAW and women's safety is factored into planning for major sporting events by highlighting the issues associated with trafficking for sexual exploitation and paid sex. The 2012 Olympic Games presents an important opportunity for the United Kingdom to respond to VAW in a strategic and rights-based manner.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear from the review of literature that sport-related violence against women takes a number of forms, and is embedded within a broader context of power and exploitation. Sport-related violence against women occurs in a number of settings and contexts, including homes, pubs and clubs, hotel rooms, brothels, the street and other public spaces, it is perpetrated by both male athletes and coaches of female athletes and is facilitated by

sporting events as well. It is also clear that there are some sporting cultures or subcultures that share the sexist peer norms and other characteristics that may make them particularly dangerous for women.

Although the hosting of events such as the Olympic Game and Paralympics in London in 2012, and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 is enormously attractive to governments, sporting bodies, and statutory and local authorities, there is clearly a 'dark side' to the games that cannot be ignored. As the London Olympic Games and Paralympics and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow draw closer, there is a need for policy makers, agencies and other stakeholders such as the Greater London Authority, the Cities of London and Glasgow and the Olympic and Commonwealth Games Organising Committees to take seriously the potential for these events to exploit female athletes, female spectators and women in general. Efforts to curb such sexual exploitation will need to embrace lessons learnt from past games while also making predictions as to how the Olympic and Commonwealth Games may impact on violence against women, so as to pass the lessons learnt on to future hosting nations.

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