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How do sporting organisations conceptualise and operationalise the prevention of violence against women?

Sport settings have great potential to influence social change and are therefore important locations to engage in the prevention of violence against women. The following study draws on in-depth interviews with 16 stakeholders who have been involved with the implementation of prevention programs within competitive/team sport settings. A qualitative thematic analysis of the interviews was undertaken to examine how sporting organisations understand, strategise and practise prevention work in Australia and New Zealand. Implications for long-term changes in the prevention of violence against women are discussed with reference to key prevention actions and frameworks.

Key words: Gendered Violence, Prevention, Sport, Violence Against Women.

How do sporting organisations conceptualise and operationalise the prevention of violence against women?

There is consensus amongst key Australian agencies that effective prevention strategies for violence against women need to engage people in the environments where they ‘live, work, learn socialise and play’ (Our Watch, ANROWS, & VicHealth, 2015, p. 38). Similar to schools and workplaces, sport settings are key institutions of socialisation for many people. For the purpose of this paper, ‘sport settings’ are those which support and facilitate organised sport (e.g., amateur or professional teams, their governing organisations and clubroom spaces). Many Australians are involved in sport in some manner as fans, players, volunteers, parents, staff, or through ancillary social activities (see e.g., Australian Sports Commission, 2016). Sport is also an especially important institution of men’s socialisation (Flood, 2011). A sport setting can be a place where problematic attitudes and behaviours thrive, just as it can be a place where those behaviours can be challenged (Dyson & Flood, 2008; McCauley et al., 2014; McCray, 2015). Sport settings are therefore crucial to include in efforts to address gender inequality and prevent violence against women.

The following paper first outlines the significance of violence against women, along with key prevention frameworks. It then outlines a number of international violence prevention initiatives that have been implemented in sport settings, before moving to the current research that aimed to examine how sporting organisations understand, strategise and practise the prevention of violence against women in Australia and New Zealand. Much of the practical work on this topic has been published in reports rather than peer-reviewed research, meaning that this paper draws from a larger quantity of grey literature than most scholarly articles.

The prevention of violence against women

Violence against women is an issue of significant criminal justice and public concern locally and internationally. In Australia, on average at least one woman per week is killed by a current or former partner, and approximately one in six women have experienced a form of sexual or physical violence since the age of fifteen (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). This violence encompasses a range of harms that also includes emotional, psychological and financial abuse (COAG, 2012, p. 2). A number of key factors have been identified in the research as the most consistent societal predictors or ‘drivers’ of violence against women: ‘(i) condoning of violence against women; (ii) men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life (iii) rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity; and (iv) male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women’ (Our Watch et al., 2015, p. 8).¹

These drivers, along with a number of reinforcing factors, contribute to the social context in which violence occurs (Flood, 2015). Australia tracks lower than a number of similar Western democracies and developing countries on the Global Gender Inequality Index, and has dropped from 24th place in 2014, to 36th in 2015, and as low as 46th in 2016 (World Economic Forum, 2016). This indicates that a significant amount of work needs to be conducted in order to achieve the gender equality necessary to significantly reduce the incidence of violence against women in Australia. Whilst appropriate legislation, allocation of sufficient policing resources and support for victims are all important factors in addressing violence against women, they are limited in their ability to prevent violence before it occurs. A preventative approach is vital to achieve the social changes necessary to increase gender equality, address the drivers of violence against women and lower the likelihood of that violence occurring.

¹ For the purposes of this paper we will be using the Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth shared framework, “Change the Story” (2015).

Research, policies and practice initiatives to prevent violence against women are often framed in relation to public health principles, rather than purely crime prevention. Public health principles look to the social and structural causes of violence, using evidence from decades of empirical research. The most commonly used model of violence against women prevention borrows from a typology developed in epidemiology which categorises disease prevention into primary, secondary and tertiary approaches (see Table 1). This model allows policy-makers, researchers and practitioners to focus more sharply on the prevention techniques that clearly address the drivers of violence against women, namely those categorised as primary prevention (World Health Organization & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010).

Table 1

Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention framework

Prevention Type	Violence Against Women Prevention
Primary (prevent the harm)	Prevent violence before it occurs by addressing the root causes/drivers
Secondary (reduce the risk)	‘Change the trajectory’ for those at higher than average risk of committing or experiencing violence through early intervention (Our Watch et al., 2015, p. 67)
Tertiary (reduce relapse/recurrence)	Reduce recidivism and recurrence of violence, provide support to survivors

Primary prevention addresses the root causes of harm by seeking to alter norms, practices and structures through education, engagement and mobilisation (Quadara & Wall, 2012). It does this across all levels of the social ecology from micro to macro (individual, community, institutional, societal): (VicHealth, 2007; World Health Organization & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010). This ‘transformative cultural change’ can

only be achieved through working across the whole of population, rather than solely with those at-risk (Women's Health Victoria, 2012). In practice, this does not mean that *every* initiative must reach *all* members of society, but rather they should be aimed at changing the structures, norms, practices, attitudes and behaviours that are the underpinning drivers of violence against women. The "Change the Story" framework identifies five 'essential actions' to address the gendered drivers and prevent violence against women: '(i) challenge condoning of violence against women; (ii) promote women's independence and decision making; (iii) challenge gender stereotypes and roles; (iv) strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships; and (v) promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life' (Our Watch et al., 2015). The best prevention strategies, according to this framework, will include all of these essential actions.

Sport as a setting for violence prevention

Globally, a number of initiatives have utilised sport settings in their efforts to prevent violence against women. Many of these are programs where participants receive education and training aimed at improving attitudes and behaviours concerning gendered violence (direct participation programs). For example, some programs support sports coaches to educate players about respectful and healthy intimate relationships (Jaime et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2012). The rationale for engaging coaches is that they spend significant time with athletes and are therefore often influential non-parental role models, meaning they are well-positioned to deliver anti-violence messages.

Other direct participation approaches include bystander programs, which seek to engage immediate observers of violence and other allies (e.g., friends, family members, colleagues) in prevention. These 'active bystanders'² can speak out against gendered violence

² A bystander can be defined as someone who observes an act of gendered violence, discrimination, or unacceptable behaviour but who is not the direct perpetrator or victim (VicHealth, 2012).

and take prosocial action to intervene when witnessing sexist or violence-supportive attitudes, behaviours and practices. The logic behind this approach is that participants will be more receptive to such programs if they are addressed as peer leaders and mentors as opposed to potential perpetrators (Corboz, Flood, & Dyson, 2016).

Empathy-based programs are another approach that aim to change attitudes and behaviours (Foubert & Newberry, 2006). The underlying assumption of these programs is that if participants can empathise with victim/survivors of gendered-violence, they will be less likely to engage in violence and more likely to support victim/survivors. While empathy-based programs have been used in a variety of settings, they are frequently used with sports coach and athlete populations (Carmody, Salter, & Presterudstuen, 2014; Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & Perry, 2007; Katz, 1995; Moynihan & Banyard, 2008; Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, & Stapleton, 2010).

A number of community-based prevention strategies also exist in sport settings. These include communications and social marketing campaigns that aim to raise awareness about gendered violence prevention, hosting themed games, fundraising and community events, along with more formal community education efforts delivered into local schools and clubs ([removed for review]. Additionally, elite athletes are often involved in the promotion of campaigns as ambassadors for the prevention of violence against women by attending and speaking at events and to the media [removed for review]).

While it is promising to see a range of prevention efforts taking place in sport settings, the distinction between primary prevention, early intervention and response efforts are not always clear-cut. Indeed, the broader literature indicates that there is often confusion surrounding what primary prevention involves, with diverse interpretations and applications, particularly with regards to social issues such as violence against women (Bloom, 1980; Storer, Casey, Carlson, Edleson, & Tolman, 2016). For example, in interviews with 29 global

organisations that engage men in violence prevention, Storer and colleagues (2016) found that frontline service providers often had more fluid understandings of primary prevention work compared to the public health distinctions between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. This led the researchers to question the relevance of public health prevention frameworks for guiding the prevention of violence against women, and to advocate for more holistic interpretations of prevention that acknowledge the overlap of prevention levels and emphasise multi-level initiatives to end violence against women.

The aim of the current research was to gather first-hand and in-depth accounts of how sporting organisations conceptualise and operationalise the prevention of violence against women. It is important to examine how sporting organisations understand and apply prevention principles in order to ensure that actions are in line with policy goals, to identify and clarify any misunderstandings, and to maximise sporting organisations' potential for effecting long-term changes in the prevention of violence against women. To our knowledge, no published works have formally examined this research question. The bulk of the literature tends to focus on the prevalence of violence against women in sport settings, as well the prevalence of violence-supportive attitudes amongst athlete populations (e.g. Dyson & Flood, 2008; McCauley et al., 2014; McCray, 2015). The current paper helps to highlight how sport settings can be used constructively to sustainably prevent the occurrence and recurrence of violence against women.

Method

All research was approved by a [removed for review] University Human Research Ethics committee. To understand the prevention of violence against women work that is being undertaken in sport settings in Australia and New Zealand, the researchers undertook a 'stakeholder consultation' process over a two-month period in 2017. This involved conducting semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 16 people (10 women, 6 men) who had been

involved in the implementation of programs within competitive/team sport settings (for example, but not exclusive to, Rugby and Netball Australia) that aimed to promote gender equality and/or prevent violence against women. Stakeholders were identified through consultation with contacts in the prevention and academic sectors, as well as through a grey literature research of current practices and prevention work in sport settings.

The stakeholders (henceforth referred to as interviewees) included people who worked in national, state and local level sporting organisations as well as government and non-government organisations which had partnered with sporting organisations to undertake violence prevention work. We interviewed people who worked in/with sports that have been traditionally ‘male dominated’ such as football and rugby, as well as sports that have been traditionally ‘female dominated’ such as netball. Three interviewees were academics in the field of sports, gender equality and prevention of violence against women, while other interviewees had roles such as community engagement officers for national sporting organisations, health promotion workers and general managers in clubs. Fifteen interviewees were located in Australia and one in New Zealand. In order to ensure confidentiality, no further details are provided about the identities of the individual interviewees quoted in this paper beyond their broad category of work: ‘sporting organisation’, ‘sporting club’, ‘academic’ or ‘government organisation’, and whether their associated sport is female or male dominated.

Interviewees were asked about the kinds of initiatives their associated sporting organisation or club ran to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. They were also asked to reflect on their experiences doing this work (e.g., what had enabled them to do their work successfully, what challenges they had faced and how they might have overcome them). Asking these questions enabled us to examine how sporting organisations understand, strategise and practise prevention work. Interviews took on average 60 minutes to complete.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis (Hennink, Bailey, & Hutter, 2011; Lapadat, 2010). The first-named author read all transcripts and manually coded emergent and recurrent topics with reference to the primary research question, namely ‘how do sporting organisations conceptualise and operationalise the prevention of violence against women?’ The second-named author also independently read and coded the transcripts in a deductive manner. Both researchers subsequently met to discuss and refine key themes and sub-themes.

Results

All interviewees acknowledged that sport has an important role to play in the prevention of violence against women. Sport was described as a “social glue” and a “vehicle” that has the ability to influence a large audience of people. Interviewees also spoke about a range of initiatives in sporting clubs and organisations that were directed at promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women. Analysis of their responses led to the identification of four key themes for how sporting organisations conceptualise and operationalise the prevention of violence against women: (i) changing attitudes through education, (ii) the promotion of female participation in sport, (iii) cultural change through policy, and (iv) the tension between embedding and celebrating prevention work. Each theme along with associated sub-themes will be discussed in turn.

‘All about attitudes’: Changing attitudes through education

Interviewees working for or in conjunction with sporting organisations emphasised that a large part of their prevention work comprised education and awareness raising about violence against women. They stated that education primarily involved ‘direct participation’ programs with internal staff and junior and senior players in clubs, but also external workshops and short courses with young people and the wider community, for example in local secondary schools.

Some participants described programs run by trained community educators and sports administrators, where facilitators aimed to change people's attitudes by discussing themes such as gender bias, sexual consent, respectful relationships and domestic violence.

Several interviewees commented that their education programs had evolved over the last few years, with a greater emphasis on attitudinal change. One interviewee remarked that their programs were previously designed to react to "bad behaviour" and incidents of violence against women, but their messages were now deeper and more informed to include examples of how player's views and behaviours may contribute to the overall culture that condones and perpetuates violence against women. This point was echoed by another interviewee who said that their updated programs now aimed to get players to realise that the issue is not just about men's physical violence towards women; it is about broader attitudes and actions that are connected to violence against women.

"It's an interactive workshop and it really harnesses the movement of [sporting organisation] as a team sport, to get messages across, messages such as communication and not being silent around the issue of violence against women. Around using [resources] to change the narrative, to get the message across that little comments that you make that belittle females contribute to the bigger picture and can evolve into attitudes that contribute to violence against women." [Interview 6: Male-dominated sporting organisation]

'Gender equality is our business': Promoting female participation in sport

Another key theme that emerged from the interviews was that many sporting organisations appeared to connect the prevention of violence against women with female empowerment and gender equality in sport. A prominent approach to prevention work in sporting organisations was therefore to increase the profile of women in sport and increase the

numbers of women participating in sport. Some participants remarked that the promotion of women in sport served a dual purpose: it helped to promote gender equality and also made good business sense.

“Our strategy basically says that we don’t want to be a male dominated sport anymore, we really want to promote females across every aspect of our organisation.” [Interview 1: Male-dominated sporting organisation]

“We’ve got a really strong female participation base but we can do better. Only one female board member, only one female executive. It’s not good enough.” [Interview 13: Male-dominated sporting club]

“Fifty percent of the population is female. If you don't cater for those markets your game's going to shrink and shrink and shrink. If we stay the male, pale game we're going to shrink and die in 20 years' time.” [Interview 9: Academic]

While there was agreement among participants that the promotion of women in sport was an important factor in the primary prevention of violence against women, all three academic interviewees noted that prevention is not just a matter of ‘add women and stir,’ and given the hostile environments of some sporting clubs, increasing the number of female members could actually put some women at risk of gendered violence. Hostile environments were described as unwelcoming and male-dominated spaces where women experienced discrimination and harassment; for example, in the clubrooms when men are drinking alcohol after the game and women are not welcome or expected to put up with sexual attention or harassment if they stay. Indeed, some Australian research has indicated that experiences of sexist behaviour and violence in sport settings is a key factor in young women's decisions to discontinue participation in sport (Dyson, 2010; Morrone, 2003). Interviewees emphasised the

importance of examining and addressing the cultures and networks of power within sporting organisations before true gender equality and violence prevention can be reached:

“There has to be accountability around if you’re opening up your doors to women, you really need to ensure that you’re not inviting women into a space that is actually going to be unsafe for them.” [Interview 8: Government organisation]

Another point raised by some interviewees was that most of the direct participation programs are targeted towards men and men’s behaviour. While these participants acknowledged the gendered nature of violence against women, they also had reservations about the effectiveness of these programs with female sports players. This was a particular issue for sporting organisations that have majority women players:

“People assume because we’re female dominated we believe in gender equality... Just because they’re women doesn’t mean they understand this stuff or are educated on it in any way. And that’s the whole point. If the first point is that gender equality is the primary thing we’re trying to do, you need to educate the women on gender equality, not just your men.” [Interview 3: Female-dominated sporting organisation]

One participant from a sporting organisation with a women’s league expressed that women also need to receive education about gendered violence, and that education programs need to be tailored to acknowledge that women can be victims, perpetrators *and* bystanders to violence against women.

“So we’re trying to find there how do we get these messages across to women without making them sound like victims. We have done some sessions and there was some sort of pushback: ‘just because we’re women doesn’t mean we experience it [violence] always.’” [Interview 5: Male-dominated sporting organisation]

Some interviewees were also concerned that the content of education programs may not be as relevant to women sports players in same-sex relationships as the programs tend to assume that all participants are heterosexual. Similar concerns have been raised in other research on respectful relationships and consent programs (e.g., Carmody et al., 2009), as well as domestic violence prevention programs more broadly (LGBTIQ Domestic Violence Interagency and University of NSW, 2014; Our Watch & GLHV, 2017). The interviewees in our research were interested in extra resources and ideas to assist them to navigate these conversations about gender, sexuality and violence.

Culture change: Core business or crisis management?

Interviewees acknowledged that sport settings were key sites where cultures of violence and disrespect towards women can occur, and they frequently spoke about the prevention of violence against women requiring a “cultural change” in sporting clubs. They perceived that a key way of achieving this change was via the instigation and amendment of organisational policies and procedures within sporting organisations. For example, some interviewees who worked in state and national level sporting organisations said their workplace had implemented recruitment policies that involved gender quotas and audits to promote female recruitment, particularly for senior leadership positions. Other examples included updating policies to incorporate gender neutral language and ensuring an equal balance of imagery of men and women sports players displayed on marketing material, websites and around the office and clubrooms. On a local level, one participant described changing the culture in their sports club by discouraging alcohol intake after games and encouraging family-friendly and prosocial practices (e.g., giving away food hampers as prizes instead of bar tab vouchers).

“It doesn’t stop at random participation. The culture is the biggest, yeah. It’s the crux of it. And how do we use our processes and our funding to keep that conversation going for culture change?” [Interview 7: Government organisation]

Although there was participant consensus regarding the importance of cultural change in sport settings to prevent violence against women, interviewees also held the view that there are different motives and levels of commitment amongst various sporting organisations in enacting policies to achieve these changes. It was evident that some clubs and organisations were very passionate about ending violence against women and had built gender equality and violence prevention into their core principles and initiatives. For example, some clubs redefined their club’s values so that gender equality and prevention of violence against women became core business. As one interviewee explained:

“It’s not a special project. It’s something that if you work on it has positive benefits for the club—and the community as a whole.” [Interview 13: Male-dominated sporting club]

But in interviewee experiences, other sporting organisations appeared to implement policies as reactive crisis management strategies in response to high profile incidents of violence against women. While some organisations saw this as an opportunity to enact change, others found that a constant crisis mode was limiting in terms of the ability to plan for the longer term.

“And certainly, I guess what we probably found was that it was very difficult to embed the kind of commitment and sustainability of that work, when the motivation was that kind of crisis response and, ‘let’s develop up some policies that will kind of tick off on things,’ but without a really greater depth of understanding and commitment, it was very hard to keep that work afloat... And so unless that very co-ordinated, long-term strategic investment occurs, it will be hard to not only maintain but hopefully build the

momentum and continue to shift and improve the culture.” [Interview 8: Government organisation]

“When it does happen, they get the sanction or the reaction a bit wrong.” [Interview 9: Academic]

In one participant’s view, some clubs also seemed to have inconsistent policies: on one hand they invested in educational prevention programs, but on the other they administered inconsistent and ineffective sanctions when players were involved in incidents of violence against women. Several participants echoed the notion that ‘change will not happen overnight’ and consistently applied policies with genuine intentions and long-term investment are needed in order to effect meaningful cultural change in sport settings. Numerous interviewees also mentioned that buy-in from their leadership, at the CEO and board level, was a vital part of effective cultural change in their prevention efforts.

“I mean if you didn’t have support from the CEO, it [prevention of violence against women] would be a very hard thing to push 'cause it really needs to affect every layer of the organisation.” [Interviewee 1: Male-dominated sporting organisation]

This was not a universal opinion, however, with others suggesting that motivated individuals (or ‘champions’) were more important than top-down commitment in sustaining momentum:

“You’ve just got to find people who care about this, and they become your army. Like yes, of course, having authority from up [SIC], but everyone’s going to be working extra hours to deliver things that aren’t core increasing participation in the sport. So yeah, from my point of view, that really is the key.” [Interview 3: Female-dominated sporting organisation]

“I think there’s a top down, bottom up approach in [implementing change]. I think that for the business people around the room it’s a no-brainer and it makes good business sense. Finding their time to actually get involved in and get their elbows dirty is always going to be a challenge for you, competing priorities. [...] But to say that it’s up to one single individual, I disagree with. I think it’s up to an individual to put it on the table but I think it’s actually important that there’s, you know everyone’s on the same page. [...] We have representatives of all, from senior management to exec on, across every department on our bigger group, then we have a smaller operational group that is made up of three or four of us that actually drive this work every week. To get the buy in from [...] that larger group is really critical but we haven’t got a board member and we don’t have our CEO on it. Now, I suppose the reason why we’re doing that is that leadership isn’t defined by your title.” [Interview 13: Male-dominated sporting club]

Embed or celebrate? ‘They weren’t as ready’

The interviews also suggest that a tension exists for sporting organisations between pitching a message that is palatable to the wider community and doing genuinely effective prevention work. Some interviewees suggested that often clubs and their supporters were at varying levels of readiness to accept particular messaging around violence against women. For example, some regional sporting clubs were reluctant to be ‘singled out’ as frontrunners in violence prevention because they did not always have a good understanding of the important role that sport, and their organisation, can play (Interviewee 7 and 8: Government organisation).

“And what was found was that people potentially got defensive, or they felt like they were being accused of not doing the right thing. Basically, where they felt that this is a massive, broad issue that’s affecting society and that their club was being targeted, or

sport was being targeted, or them as the secretary of the whatever, whatever - tennis club, was being accused. That's, of not doing something." [Interview 7: Government organisation]

Likewise, an explicit violence prevention message was deemed inappropriate for young people (Interviewee 10: Male-dominated sporting club). The result of this was that while gender equality formed the basis of many strategies, the role of such initiatives in preventing violence against women was not necessarily made explicit at the public and community level (even if it was usually recognised as such internally).

While, on the face of it, this lack of publicity may appear counterproductive, 'embedding' prevention in positive messages of equality and inclusion, rather than presenting such activities as explicitly 'violence prevention' could be part of a well considered strategy. Explicitly labelling pro-social activities as prevention 'will not necessarily render them more effective, or attractive to those involved at the grassroots' (Sutton, Cherney, & White, 2011, p. 37). On the other hand, sporting organisations that design reactive risk-averse strategies, with a concern for brand protection rather than ethical responsibility as the impetus, may not engender sufficient culture change required to achieve the primary prevention of violence against women (Dyson & Corboz, 2016). There is also risk that a lack of focus on the desired social outcomes may result in policy drift; for example the push to simply increase the numbers of women in a club or a sport as a means of reaching quotas without broader consideration of their needs and safety. For that reason, a strong commitment to the primary prevention of violence against women and recognition of gender inequality as its cause at the organisational and policy level is vital.

Discussion

The current paper aimed to examine how sporting organisations understand, strategise and practise the prevention of violence against women. Analysis of stakeholder interviews yielded rich insights into how sporting organisations conceptualise and operationalise prevention work—above and beyond publicly available information and initiatives. We now discuss these findings with reference to key prevention actions and frameworks in order to guide future understanding and practice.

Whilst an understanding of gender inequality as the primary driver of violence against women was evident, at interview those working on the frontline of prevention of violence against women in sporting organisations rarely conceptualised or operationalised their work in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. This finding is consistent with other research in this area with global organisations that engage men in violence prevention (Storer et al., 2016). The multi-strategy approach adopted by many organisations we interviewed contain elements of all prevention levels, from broad cultural change (primary) to targeted direct participation programs (primary/secondary) and policies for how to respond to incidents to reduce recurrence (tertiary), along with a number of strategies aimed at ameliorating secondary reinforcing factors such as excessive alcohol consumption. It was clear from the interviews, however, that sporting organisations often vaguely addressed primary prevention as ‘cultural change’ and indicated limited understandings of what is required to achieve long-term and meaningful cultural change.

With this in mind, a useful way of assisting sporting organisations to conceptualise prevention may be through a more explicit focus on key drivers and essential actions rather than ‘primary prevention’. The approach developed by Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth offers a potential model for sporting organisations whereby prevention is underpinned by a ‘theory of change’ that includes strategies to address all four gendered drivers of violence against women through five essential actions: ‘i) challenge condoning of violence against

women; ii) promote women's independence and decision making; iii) challenge gender stereotypes and roles; iv) strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships; v) promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life' (Our Watch et al., 2015, p. 33). In doing so, organisations can work to change structures, norms, attitudes, behaviours *and* practices both internally and externally and can be assisted to move beyond merely condoning violence against women towards meaningful culture change and the safe and equitable inclusion of women in sport. What this means is that gender equality becomes core business, and prevention of violence against women becomes part of the organisation's guiding values rather than just one of image management.

The public health model to violence prevention is still integral to guiding prevention initiatives. Secondary and tertiary prevention strategies must always be included in violence prevention programs alongside primary prevention (World Health Organization & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010). Overt sexism, misogyny and intentional gender discrimination require early intervention—that is, secondary responses. Incidents of violence require a tertiary response to ensure the victims' safety and the perpetrator is brought to justice. But where organisations are struggling to understand and practically address the principles of primary prevention (e.g., cultural change), a framework that focuses on key drivers and essential actions and specifies what it is in a culture that needs to change may be a useful guide and supplement to the public health framework.

Our research raises a question as to how far sporting organisations are willing to go to achieve true equality for women in their sports, for example with pay parity, board quotas, and equal access to training facilities and travel opportunities. For this to be achieved, some men within organisations are likely to lose their positions and status. To quote Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau: "If we're going to elevate women, some men are going to lose power they unjustly have. Men have an essential role to play in feminism, in equality, because, like it

or not, we have power that is unjustly given to us that we need to use and put in service of levelling the playing field” (Women In The World Canada Summit, 2017). There is also the possibility that some sports—with their restrictive constructions of masculinity and male identity, and tacit or explicit condoning of aggression, boundary stretching, rule breaking and even violence—may contribute to the normalisation of harmful masculinity scripts and violence (Kidd, 2013). How willing sporting codes are to truly turn a mirror on themselves and examine the role that the actual playing of those sports—on the pitch, field or court—has in promoting a culture of gendered violence, remains to be seen.

Caveats and conclusions

The current research did not directly ask interviewees about their understandings of prevention principles. In some respects, this can be perceived as a strength of the current data because our method of asking interviewees about prevention initiatives in general enabled us to indirectly examine how they understand prevention work, without prompting contrived responses and definitions. Nevertheless, future research could probe deeper and take a more targeted approach in exploring how sporting organisations conceptualise the prevention of violence against women.

Our qualitative sample is also not representative of all sports in Australia and New Zealand. A broader research project that surveys a wide range of sporting organisations (from state level through to local clubs) in both national and international settings would help to further understand how sport settings practise prevention work, with the ultimate goal of improving their platforms and strategies for preventing violence against women.

Despite its limitations, the current study has helped to shed light on how some sporting organisations are conceptualising and operationalising the work of preventing violence against women. At interview, representatives of sporting organisations understood that prevention of

violence against women requires an emphasis on gender equality and changes in attitudes and cultures that condone violence against women. They had enacted many of these values in direct participation educational programs, changes to organisational policies, and a targeted approach to increase the numbers of women in sport. Both top-down and bottom-up buy-in were recognised as important mechanisms for long-term cultural change in sport settings. Key points of tension and consideration, however, were the potentially harmful impacts of introducing female athletes into hostile environments; tailoring prevention programs towards female athletes; ensuring policies are driven by genuine primary prevention aims rather than crisis-management; and deciding whether to explicitly showcase prevention initiatives or take a deliberately subtle approach to embed prevention in positive messages of equality and inclusion.

Based on our core finding that members of sporting organisations who are leaders in enacting efforts to prevent violence against women rarely conceptualise their work in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary models of intervention, we recommend that a supplementary framework, consisting of key drivers and essential actions, may be best suited to help guide their prevention policies. This is an important approach that will assist sporting organisations to ensure that they are engaging in long-term and meaningful prevention of violence against women. Sporting organisations, as key institutions of socialisation, have a crucial role to play in the culture change necessary to reduce the incidence of violence against women. Strategies that assist organisations to enact meaningful change are vital in assisting willing organisations to achieve this goal.

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