

ATTACHMENT SD-3

This is the attachment marked "**SD-3**" referred to in the witness statement of Suzanne Joi Dyson dated 4 August 2015.

**CHALLENGES OF BYSTANDER INTERVENTION IN MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSIONAL
SPORT: LESSONS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

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Challenges of Bystander Intervention in Male-Dominated Professional Sport: Lessons from the Australian Football League

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Abstract

Programs aimed at preventing violence against women have increasingly adopted bystander approaches, yet large gaps remain in our knowledge about what drives bystanders to act or not, particularly in settings where there is an increased risk of violence against women occurring. This paper contributes to this gap by examining data from research with professional male athletes from the Australian Football League. Drawing from a mixed methods approach, including a survey and interviews with football players, we outline some of the challenges to bystander intervention faced by professional athletes and discuss some of the possible similarities and differences between these and other groups of men.

Introduction

The field of sexual violence prevention has, historically, typically focused on engaging women as they are the main survivors of sexual violence. This prevention work has often emphasized women's risk management strategies, such as self-defense, personal safety education, and the avoidance of potentially dangerous situations (Carmody, 2003). More recently there has been a greater focus on engaging men in violence prevention strategies, particularly education, because men perpetrate the majority of violence against women. Furthermore, gender inequality and constructions of masculinity have been found to play a key role in the reproduction of violence against women (Flood, 2006). Rather than construct all men as (potential) perpetrators of violence, violence prevention work suggests that men have a positive role to play in ending violence against women (Dyson & Flood, 2008; Flood, 2006). Some of the literature has addressed engaging men who are known to be past offenders, in order to minimize the chance of future perpetration of violence. More recently,

violence prevention has been increasingly implemented with non-offending men who nonetheless belong to groups that have been identified (in some cultural contexts) as showing higher rates of violence or reproduction of violence-supportive norms. These groups have included college/university fraternities, contact sports teams (college-based and professional), and the military.

An approach to engaging men in violence prevention that has quickly gained popularity is the bystander approach. Bystanders are understood to be individuals who observe an act of violence, discrimination, or other problematic behavior, but who are not the direct perpetrator or victim (Powell, 2011).¹ In relation to violence against women, bystanders may be onlookers, spectators, or otherwise present in some sense, who witness evidence of violence-supportive social norms, acts of violence, or disrespectful verbal communication to or about women (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Powell, 2011).. Bystander approaches have been seen as particularly valuable ways to engage men in violence prevention (Katz, Heisterkamp, & Fleming, 2011). The last decade has seen a rapid increase in the implementation and evaluation of bystander programs aimed at violence prevention, particularly in US college/university environments. Empirical research and evaluation has focused mainly on testing the efficacy of bystander education on participants' knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy in relation to active bystander intervention, and their intentions to intervene or self-reported interventions. Nevertheless, there are still many gaps in our knowledge about why bystanders choose to intervene (or not) in situations involving violence against women (McMahon, 2011). It is necessary for violence prevention work to begin turning attention to men in non-college environments that may also reproduce violence-supportive norms. Indeed, while such men have been increasingly targeted for violence prevention interventions involving bystander approaches, some of which have been evaluated

(see Potter & Stapleton, 2012 for an evaluation of a military intervention), little is known about the challenges these men face in active or pro-social bystander interventions.

This paper contributes to the literature on challenges faced by men in bystander situations in high-risk environments, by focusing on the Australian Football League (AFL), a professional and commercial sport organization in Australia. The AFL gained significant attention in 2004 after a series of allegations of sexual violence perpetrated by players. The paper draws from research with professional AFL players and discusses five key themes related to challenges to bystander intervention among professional AFL players..

Bystander Approaches to Preventing Violence Against Women

Bystander approaches to preventing violence against women treat men as peer leaders who are capable of intervening when witnessing violent social norms or behaviors, thus contributing to safer and more positive environments (Banyard et al., 2007; Berkowitz, 2005; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Katz, 2006).ⁱⁱ Bystander programs often incorporate education on other important issues such as understanding and negotiating consent (Berkowitz, 2002), and developing empathy for rape victims (Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Perry, 2007).. These programs may also involve shifting traditional masculine norms by promoting alternative models of manhood that move away from perceptions linking male strength with domination over women (Katz, 1995).

A small but growing part of the literature on bystander approaches to sexual violence prevention has recently turned attention to the various challenges to and factors enabling active bystander intervention. A key challenge is related to men's relationships with other men in their environment. Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Lindenback, and Stark (2003) found that men typically underestimated the non-violent norms of other men and, furthermore, that their perceptions of the social norms of other men in a group significantly impacted on their willingness to intervene. Men's reluctance to intervene may also be related

to fears of being negatively viewed by their male peers, who may accuse them of being a ‘cock block’ (Casey & Ohler, 2012) or label them as ‘weak’, ‘wimp’, ‘gay’ or ‘less than a man’, thus calling their heteronormative masculinity into question (Carlson, 2008; McMahon & Dick, 2011; Powell, 2011, 2012).ⁱⁱⁱ Another key challenge may be related to men’s self-perceived lower status or position within the group’s hierarchical relationships according to age, authority, or some other characteristic (Casey & Ohler, 2012). Bystander intervention may also depend on men’s relationships with women in their environment. For instance, men’s relationship with the potential victim, or their perceptions of her status, may impact on bystander intervention such that a situation involving an unknown woman, or a woman perceived to be lacking status, respect, or an insider identity with the person/people in question, may reduce men’s willingness to intervene (Banyard, 2011; Burn, 2009; McMahon, 2011).

Other challenges to bystander intervention may not be associated with men’s relationships with (male or female) peers, but may be related to the broader social normalization of everyday forms of disrespectful or sexist behavior. For instance, in an Australian study of bystander intervention, Powell (2012) found that participants referred to the ambiguous nature of everyday expressions of sexism as an obstacle to bystander intervention.^{iv} This was further supported by the finding that participants would be less willing to intervene in situations involving more subtle forms of violence or abuse against women, such as sexist comments, jokes, or slang, when compared to situations involving more explicit forms of violence, such as enacting verbal or physical violence. Furthermore, men were significantly more likely than women to report believing that sexist comments, jokes, or slang had some level of acceptability in general social situations, while women were more likely than men to report that these behaviors are never acceptable (Pennay & Powell, 2012).

The small but growing research literature on challenges or barriers to bystander intervention in situations that could lead to violence against women has typically sampled male subjects from US university/college backgrounds (Carlson, 2008), or from broader community groups, including men who participate in anti-violence advocacy groups (Casey & Ohler, 2012; McMahon & Dick, 2011). Less is known about barriers to men's bystander intervention in other cultural or organizational contexts, such as sporting clubs (McMahon & Farmer, 2009). McMahon and Farmer take a step towards addressing this gap in the literature through their study of bystander intervention attitudes among athletes at one university in the USA. One of their key findings was that some male athletes, particularly those participating in contact sports, reported having strong social and personal bonds with their team mates and claimed that these bonds ensured that they would 'have each other's backs' by intervening if in a situation where sexual violence might occur. They also found that barriers to intervention may include lack of knowledge about how to intervene, and fears about making false accusations and potentially damaging the reputation of a team mate.

Professional Football, Sexual Violence, and Masculinity in Australia

Australian winter sports are dominated by two football codes, both team-based contact sports played at a professional level only by men: Australian Rules Football and Rugby League. The Australian Football League (AFL) is the highest-level professional competition in the sport of Australian Rules Football, currently consisting of an 18-club national competition. Since the commercial growth of the AFL within Australia, players have become both highly professionalized and commoditized as new demands and expectations are placed upon them to represent and protect the AFL's brand and reputation in a highly visible public sphere (Kelly & Hickey, 2008). This has involved the increasing scrutiny and regulation of players' behaviors, both on and off the field (Kelly & Hickey, 2012). One way in which player conduct has been progressively more regulated is through the introduction

and expansion of adult education programs on topics such as alcohol and illicit drug use, gambling, discrimination and racial vilification, and respectful and responsible behaviors towards women. This last topic became a key one on the AFL's agenda in 2004 after several allegations of sexual violence against women perpetrated by professional Australian male athletes swept through both the National Rugby League (NRL) and the AFL.

The 2004 sexual violence allegations attracted enormous attention from both the media and academics, with feminist critics asking whether Australian football clubs were breeding violent and disrespectful masculine cultures (Philadelphoff-Puren, 2004; Waterhouse-Watson, 2007). Earlier Australian sociological studies had illustrated the various ways in which violence-supportive norms and behaviors were reproduced and enacted within masculine football club cultures (Fitzclarence & Hickey, 2001; Hutchins & Mikosza, 1998; Light & Kirk, 2000; Mills, 1997). Many of these studies drew from Connell's (1995) work on hegemonic masculinity, which argues that in any given historical or cultural context, a culturally exalted form of masculinity serves to legitimize and maintain the patriarchal gender order. As Albury, Carmody, Evers, and Lumby (2011: 344) suggest, this hegemonic masculinity in Australia is

...deeply embedded within archetypes (the brave Anzac digger, the sporting hero, the surf lifesaver) and specific rituals of sporting success and athletic heroism – acts to prove one is strong, courageous, aggressive, autonomous, masterful, adventurous, tough, heterosexual, brave, honorable, competitive, capable, not intimate, not soft, not emotional, and so on.

The reproduction of these masculine norms might be emphasized in particular organizational, institutional and group contexts in which violence may occur. For instance, while there is no evidence in the Australian literature to suggest that men who participate in contact and team sports are more likely than other men to enact sexual violence, there is some evidence to

suggest that male-centered contexts such as football clubs may reproduce violence-supportive cultural norms (Dyson & Flood, 2008). This can occur through the combination of a range of beliefs, practices, and opportunities, including: players' legitimation of on-field violence taking form in off-field contexts (Grange & Kerr, 2010); a celebration of the hardness, strength and toughness of footballers' bodies (Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner, 2003); the enactment of team-bonding rituals through the sexual objectification or degradation of women (Philadelphoff-Puren, 2004); and players' increased access to sexual encounters due to elevated celebrity status (Lumby, 2005).

Little is known about how violence-supportive attitudes, practices, or norms may influence male athletes' willingness to intervene in high-risk bystander situations. While McMahon and Farmer's (2009) study on bystander attitudes among US college athletes revealed that intra-team personal bonding could increase bystander intervention among men in contact sports, research in Australian professional football contexts, albeit limited in scope, may yield different results. Professional athletes in the AFL typically range between 18 and 35 years of age and this diversity may impact on intra-team social relationships. For instance, in their study on masculinity and social networks in AFL football clubs, Robins, Lusher et al. (2005) found that outside of the club context, players of similar ages/football playing experience socialize mainly with one another, leading to little after-hours social contact between junior and senior players. Furthermore, they found that 'in some clubs players with more dominative [masculine] attitudes socialize together in circumstances where the leadership and influence of more senior players is not available to moderate behaviours and norms' (Robins et al., 2005: 6). Despite evidence of dispersed social relationships among players in AFL clubs, researchers have suggested that expectations of team loyalties persist, sometimes superseding players' sense of personal integrity, leading to the reproduction of codes of silence around certain behaviors or practices, particularly acts of sexual violence

(Dyson & Flood, 2008; Philadelphoff-Puren, 2004). Yet little is known about how these or other characteristics of AFL team dynamics may impact on bystander intervention.

Description of the Study

This study is based on data collected in ‘Taking a Stand: A Case Study of Respect and Responsibility in the AFL’. The project was based at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University in partnership with the AFL, and funded by the Australian Research Council and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). Researchers from La Trobe University partnered with others from the University of Western Sydney and University of Wollongong. Approval for the research was obtained from the human ethics committees at all three participating universities.

‘Respect and Responsibility’ is a policy and program for the prevention of violence against women developed and implemented by the AFL in response to the 2004 sexual violence allegations, and broader social concerns about sexual violence and disrespectful cultural norms in Australian football. The Taking a Stand (TAS) research project aimed to use the AFL’s Respect and Responsibility policy as a case study for identifying good practice principles for violence prevention in workplace settings. It included a component of research on the AFL’s violence prevention education program for players that covers various topics, including: the incidence and gendered nature of sexual violence; the meaning of sexual consent and communication skills in negotiating consent; how to ensure a respectful team culture that can work to prevent sexual violence; the legal definition of rape and the impact of sexual violence on victims/survivors; ways of supporting victims/survivors; understanding individual responsibility and accountability; and intervening in high-risk bystander situations involving friends or team-mates. In relation to bystander education, trainers framed intervention according to values supported by the group such as loyalty and ‘taking care of your mates’. This paper is not an attempt to evaluate this education program but, rather, an

analysis of players' reported attitudes towards bystander intervention and some of the key barriers that they perceive themselves to face in contexts where violence against women may occur.

Methodology

The study used a mixed methods approach, drawing from a survey and interviews. The data were collected under a sequential explanatory design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003), with the survey data collected and analyzed first and the interview data collected and analyzed second, whereby the latter was partially used to further explore the results of the former. Data were integrated at the level of interpretation via a complementarity model of triangulation, whereby survey and interview data supplemented one another to provide a more complex understanding of the research results (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003).

Player Survey

The TAS survey was designed to elicit information on players' background information (including age and number of times players had participated in the Respect and Responsibility violence prevention education), and knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to violence against women. The survey included questions on perceptions of rape myths, understandings of consent, attitudes towards bystander intervention, and attitudes towards masculinity. These questions were not based on standardized measures, but were designed to be culturally appropriate to the AFL context and to identify players' knowledge in relation to the content of the violence prevention education. In addition, several questions (particularly those related to rape myths) were derived from the Australian National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (McGregor, 2009), in order to make comparisons between football players and other men in the Australian population.

The survey was reviewed by three AFL staff members and piloted with two ex-players employed by the AFL, after which necessary modifications were made to the survey.

Three hypothetical statements from the survey that were related to bystander intervention are included in this paper, with responses measured on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). The first, “If I am with mates who are behaving in ways that might offend women (even if it’s all in fun), I would have no problem telling them to stop”, is a scenario involving intervening when witnessing disrespectful or offensive behavior targeted towards women. The second, “When I am in a group of men who are speaking disrespectfully about women, I would feel uncomfortable telling them to stop” is a scenario involving the use of disrespectful language about women. The third statement, “What happens on end of season trips stays on end of season trips” is related to intra-team codes of secrecy.

Seven hundred and eighty players from 17 AFL clubs who were active in the national competition in 2011 were invited to participate in the (paper based) survey. A total of 379 surveys were returned (almost 50 percent of professional players active in the national competition), of which 366 were usable. All participants were male and their ages varied between 18 and 32 years, with a mean age of 22.4. No other demographic data were recorded.

Data were coded in Excel and then exported to PASW Statistics 18 for analysis. Descriptive statistics were generated and tabulated to identify frequency of response across Likert scale data. Given the project’s interest in social and ecological factors in challenges to bystander intervention and their change over time, Spearman Rho ranked correlations were performed to identify relationships between the three survey statements and player age.

Semi-Structured Interviews with AFL Players

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with professional football players from four AFL clubs who at the time of interview were either playing in the national

competition or had recently retired. The age of participants ranged between 19 and 32 years. The semi-structured interview schedule covered a number of themes included in the Respect and Responsibility violence prevention education program, such as: knowledge of sexual violence; key learnings from the education program; meanings of respectful relationships; and perceptions of, and challenges to, bystander intervention. The interview schedule also included questions designed to follow up on and further explain the results of the survey. Length of interviews ranged between 20 and 40 minutes and all interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

An inductive content analysis approach was used whereby a researcher performed a close reading of the interview transcripts, searching for key themes related to bystander intervention (Patton, 2002). Transcripts were read by other project researchers and initial themes and interpretations were reviewed in order to ensure consistency. Once key themes were identified, all interview transcripts were coded using QSR NVivo software.

Results

We focus first on the quantitative data from the TAS Player Survey regarding AFL players' responses to three statements discussed above. The data suggest that the football players are equivocal about their willingness and comfort to act as pro-social bystanders. Two-thirds of players agreed that they would tell mates (friends) who were behaving in potentially offensive ways towards women to stop (55.7% agreed and 10.7% strongly agreed), a quarter (24.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and a smaller proportion of men disagreed (1.6% strongly disagreed and 7.4% strongly disagreed). Close to half of players disagreed that they would feel uncomfortable in a group of men who were speaking disrespectfully about women telling them to stop (7.7% strongly disagreed and 37.8 agreed). However, 22.3% agreed and 1.6% strongly agreed, with close to one-third (30.7%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Half of players agreed (35.8%) or strongly agreed (14.5%) that

what happens on end of season trips stays on end of season trips, a fifth of players disagreed with this statement (5.7% strongly disagreed and 14.2% disagreed), and 29.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

There was evidence that age is a strong factor associated with both willingness to intervene and belief in intra-team codes of secrecy. Spearman Rho tests detected significant correlations between age and agreement with all three statements, suggesting that younger age is related to: less willingness to intervene in situations involving friends behaving in offensive ways towards women ($r_s(365) = .103, p < .05$); greater discomfort intervening when in a group of men speaking disrespectfully about women ($r_s(364) = -.185, p < .001$); and greater agreement that what happens on end of season social trips should stay on end of season trips ($r_s(365) = -.110, p < .05$).

Analysis of the qualitative interviews confirmed that age was a highly salient factor in players' self-reported comfort and willingness to intervene, with younger age being a potential barrier to intervention. The interviews also revealed an additional four key themes related to bystander challenges: hierarchy, ambiguous limits, potential negative repercussions, and intra-team codes of silence.

Age

While older players reported having no problem intervening in situations involving fellow team-mates, younger players reported feeling uncomfortable with the idea of intervening in certain situations, particularly those involving an older, more senior member of the playing group. According to a 19-year-old player:

Probably I suppose for a young fella like myself, you know, if there was an older, respected guy around the Club, you probably wouldn't feel as comfortable going up and saying something to them just because, you know, they're older than you, they've been around the Club a bit more and you're not

sure whether you should be intervening. But, if it was someone my age or someone that I knew and had a better relationship with, I'd be, you know, I'd be straight in there to say, you know, "Probably not the right thing to be doing."

Reluctance to intervene in situations involving older players was particularly strong for first-, second-, and third-year players who felt they had not yet established close relationships within the team. These players also suggested that intervening would be less challenging in a situation involving somebody their own age, particularly if it was a close friend, suggesting that bystander decision-making may depend on both age and closeness of relationships. It may also depend on a feeling of belonging with the team. According to a 32-year-old player:

... you've got to have confidence and then you've got to feel like you belong in the group as well. If you don't feel like you belong in the group then you definitely won't do it, and I think if you're a younger player it's extremely difficult to pull someone up a little bit older, who's got some more seniority.

Despite referring to younger age and lack of belonging in the group as intertwined potential barriers to bystander intervention, this older player also suggested that developing a sense of belonging within the group likely would take any player, regardless of age, some time to achieve.

Another age-related barrier to bystander intervention suggested by several players was the tendency for younger players to behave in ways modeled by older or more senior players, including disrespectful and violence-supportive behaviors. According to a 32-year-old player:

I can do it [intervene] now. But when I was young, I couldn't do it. I just did it on the weekend, actually, to a friend. I said, "Mate, pull up," you know. But, when I was younger, I'd go, "Shit is that how you behave, is it?" you know.

Modeling of behavior can clearly become a problem if senior players are engaging in disrespectful behaviors, but it can simultaneously be an enabling factor for intervention if the behavior of senior players is respectful and responsible. Clubs have attempted to foster closer social relationships between younger and older players, especially where the latter display respectful and responsible behaviors, both on and off the field, whereby younger players can learn from and emulate these positive behaviors. This has been done through a variety of leaderships programs designed to increase open communication and social contact between younger and older players through, for instance, ‘buddy’ or mentoring activities.^v

Hierarchy

Another factor related to age that may be a barrier to bystander intervention is the hierarchical nature of football clubs, particularly within the playing group. Players tended to relate hierarchy and authority with seniority and length of playing experience, particularly if the more senior player was in a leadership role such as Captain or Vice-Captain. For instance, when presented with a hypothetical scenario involving a player walking in to find two teammates having sex with a woman who was heavily under the influence of alcohol or drugs, a 21-year-old player suggested:

I’d love to say I’d just go straight up and go “No, stop that guys.” But I don’t know if I would, it depends who it is. If I walk in on the captain and the vice captain, and the two are having a ganger [group sex] with a girl, and it looks dodgy [dodgy or problematic], I don’t know if I’d feel as comfortable as [I would] talking to a 20-gamer [a junior player who has only played 20 games].

It is important to note that although hierarchy and age are interrelated issues, they should not be conflated. While older or more experienced players are more likely to have greater authority and status within the team, this is not always the case due to some clubs consisting of a predominantly young and inexperienced playing group and, consequently, having young

players (as young as 21 years old) acting as Captains or Vice-captains of the team. This is true both for newer and more established clubs.

While clubs are attempting to mitigate the issues of age and weaker relationships between younger and older players, breaking down player hierarchies may be difficult to accomplish. During an interview with a 29-year-old player, he was asked how he would react to a younger player intervening in a situation if he was the recipient of an attempted intervention. He suggested that despite club attempts to minimize player hierarchy, ‘young guys can’t be talking out of place’:

Like I said, we have these programs in place now with these leadership programs where everybody’s entitled to a say and everybody has an opinion at the club. For the club to get better, everybody needs to be on the same level. I believe that’s all well and good, but there’ll always be at footy clubs senior players demanding and getting the respect of the younger guys coming in.

A 21-year-old player confirmed that although his club had attempted to encourage younger players to intervene, hierarchy within the playing group and the tendency to respect ‘one’s place’ persisted strongly. He suggested that a ‘pay your dues’ system was normalized within playing groups and compared it to his schooling experience in an all-boys school, where younger men had to withstand lower status and bullying, eventually working their way up to their final year of high school when they would have the ‘right’ to subject younger male students to the same behavior. No other players referred explicitly to such a ‘pay your dues’ system so it is difficult to know whether other players within the same club interpreted the existence of a similar hierarchical system, or whether other clubs displayed similar systems.

Ambiguous Limits

Players also identified ambiguous limits in everyday situations as an important challenge to bystander intervention. This challenge was primarily associated with

establishing whether a situation required intervention or not. For instance, when speaking about a hypothetical social scenario involving a team member acting disrespectfully towards a woman in a bar, a 23-year-old player stated: ‘you never know if they actually know the person. They could be friends with them and they just, they’ve always acted that way together.’ According to a 21-year-old player, this confusion when attempting to read a situation could be partly based on football intra-group norms:

... you’re in a footy club. The line of where things are taboo, it’s very blurry... people bag you out about anything. Like, there’s almost no limits. Like nothing’s, probably because we’re all so close, we realize that everything’s a joke.

This player’s comment suggests that the limit between what is right and wrong in relation to disrespectful behaviors may be frequently blurred by a highly normalized mode of communication between players that takes place both on and off the field. On the field, this may take the form of sledging, a common practice involving players’ attempts to distract their opponents or put them off their game by verbally insulting or intimidating them. Off the field, it may involve ‘bagging out’, an Australian slang term meaning to tease or make fun of. Consequently, recognizing the limits of disrespectful behavior may be challenging given the everyday normalization of derogatory language use.

Another ambiguous limit named by players was related to identifying the extent of threat involved in a situation that may require bystander intervention. A 32-year-old player suggested that while he would find it difficult to intervene in a social situation involving a team mate, one of the driving forces behind active intervention would probably be if his team mate’s health was in jeopardy. This attention to jeopardy or threat was also spoken about in relation to the potential impact on a woman who was the recipient of disrespectful behavior from a team mate. For instance, when asked how he would respond if a team mate was using

derogatory and sexist language towards a woman, a 21-year-old player suggested that it would depend on the context:

... it depends on who the comment was said to. Like, you know, if someone said to a random girl walking past something super-derogatory, you'd just have to [say] "What was that? I don't know if I liked that at all." But you know, if we're just in here and someone just makes a joke about someone's mum or wife, or something like that, the boys generally just laugh it off.

This separation of high threat, involving disrespectful behavior directed towards an unknown woman, from low threat, involving disrespectful language directed towards a known woman but expressed in an all-male group, may shed some light on the survey results for the questions related to bystander intervention. For instance, while one survey question asking about respondents' discomfort in intervening in a situation involving a group of men speaking disrespectfully about women showed a strong correlation with age, the quote above suggests the possibility that discomfort intervening may be partially related to the normalization of derogatory language use in everyday humor or conversation.

Potential Negative Repercussions

When asked about possible barriers to active bystander behaviors, one of the most common issues raised by players was the potential negative repercussions of intervening. This issue is partly related to ambiguous limits, whereby players reported having to evaluate both a situation (i.e. whether intervention is necessary) and the potential repercussions of intervening, particularly if their evaluation of the situation was mistaken. According to players, possible repercussions included: experiencing resistance or even violence at the hand of the team mate requiring intervention, potentially aggravated through alcohol consumption; damaging the relationship or friendship with the team mate; or being perceived negatively by the team mate and others present. Specifically in relation to this last point, players raised

concerns about being perceived as a ‘stiff’ or ‘fun police’. For instance, a 19-year-old player said ‘I guess you don’t want your mate to feel like you’re being a dickhead or you’re trying to hold him back from having fun or whatever’.

Concern with the perception of others was common among the players interviewed, and largely revolved around two key issues. The first was a widespread concern about the perception of others, based on working in a highly scrutinized commercial sports entertainment industry where, in the words of one player, ‘everything we do is about perception’. Indeed, outsider perceptions of players, and the industry more widely, are highly regulated by the AFL’s governing body, and players are expected to conduct themselves in a professional way at all times. The second issue was more specific and related to a pressure to fit in within an all-male group. This was particularly linked to masculinity, and several players reported having a sense of belonging and connection to the others in the team in terms of ‘being one of the boys’. Furthermore, this sense of belonging was articulated through the desire to earn respect from ‘the boys’, coupled with fears of losing respect by intervening in a high-risk bystander situation, particularly one involving senior players.

Intra-Team Codes of Silence

The survey results suggest that intra-team codes of silence persist to some degree in football clubs, with approximately half the players surveyed agreeing that ‘What happens on end of season trips stays on end of season trips’; however, the interview data reveal a more nuanced interpretation. When players were asked whether they thought it was true that football teams stuck to a code of silence, all players were adamant that this would not occur in their club, and that if there was a serious incident involving, for instance, sexual violence or other potentially dangerous, illegal, or violent behaviors (whether at home or on an end of season trip), a member of the team would alert a club staff member. Nevertheless, players reported believing that this may not have always been the case or still may not be the case in

some circumstances. Older players suggested that a code of silence within the playing group did once exist but that there had been a shift in relation to intra-club expectations about open and honest communication from players. Younger players reported at least having once heard of this code, even if not currently expected to abide by it, but insisted that their club encouraged players to be accountable by speaking up if witnessing another player make a mistake or misdemeanor. When further questioned, several players suggested that intra-team codes of silence probably persisted depending on the type of behavior or action in question. For instance, less serious incidents would be less likely to be reported. According to several players, a minor incident might involve consuming alcohol excessively and being a public annoyance, or a player cheating on his wife, in which case the code of silence would probably be maintained.

While the interview data suggest that there has been a shift in club expectations of player honesty, there also appears to have been a shift in relation to the direction in which player loyalties are expected to lie. Past literature has suggested that intra-team codes of secrecy have been rooted in perceptions that looking after your mates and maintaining team loyalty are paramount to establishing trust within the group and, thus, experiencing success as a team. This is still likely to be true to some extent. According to a 23-year-old player:

... you see them [team mates] every day or you play with them on the weekends. You want to be able to trust them and things like that. So you're going to take their word over most other things.

However, according to players' comments, it appears that expectations of trust and loyalty have expanded to encompass the club rather than simply the playing group. For instance, when speaking about maintaining codes of silence in football clubs, one 22-year-old player stated:

... if that's happening, those clubs are going to go through some dark times I think, with all that crap happening underneath the surface. You don't want that, and, yeah, here we're just trying to change that, keep each other accountable. I know if you're going to tell someone about it, your mates aren't going to be happy. But they'll get over it. And at the end of the day, it's what's best for the club, and what's best for your mates. So it's a good thing.

This perceived importance of loyalty being expressed through honesty and respect for 'what's best for the club' was particularly common among the younger players, which indicates a general shift away from valorizing trust and loyalty through secrecy within the playing group. Nevertheless, it appears that certain activities (likely those perceived to be less threatening to the club) may remain protected under the players' code of silence, evident through the high number of players (particularly younger ones) who agreed with the survey statement "What happens on end of season trips stays on end of season trips".

Discussion

Bystander-based approaches are increasingly prominent in efforts to prevent men's violence against women, and are the focus of an expanding number of dedicated prevention programs, routinely embedded in face-to-face educational groups, and communications and social marketing strategies (Dyson & Flood, 2008; McDonald & Flood, 2012; Ricardo, Eads, & Barker, 2011). Efforts to engage men as pro-social bystanders are being expanded to sporting teams and other historically masculine domains and institutions. However, our research on professional male athletes in a national sport, Australian Rules Football, suggests that there are significant challenges in bystander intervention in such contexts, and that players' willingness and comfort regarding particular strategies of bystander intervention is equivocal at best. On the one hand, significant proportions report that they are willing to tell, or are comfortable with telling other men to cease behaving in offensive or disrespectful ways

towards women. On the other, substantial numbers are unsure, reluctant, or uncomfortable to do this. There are significant associations between younger age and this reluctance, and with a belief in intra-team codes of secrecy. In turn, the qualitative interviews highlight the role of collective team relations in limiting individual men's participation in bystander intervention. In particular, players' pro-social interventions are stifled by age, hierarchies, perceived ambiguities regarding problematic behaviors and situations, concerns about the costs of intervention, and homosocial codes of silence.

Many of the challenges of bystander intervention highlighted in this professional sporting context appear to be similar to those present in other contexts. Clearly, bystanders may weigh the costs and benefits of intervention before choosing to intervene or not (Banyard, 2008, 2011; Latane & Darley, 1970; McDonald & Flood, 2012). One significant challenge here concerns limited perceptions of *how* to intervene. Some players assume that interventions must be direct and confrontational and, as a consequence, that they risk retaliations and violence. Instead, bystander approaches highlight the range of strategies, direct and indirect, which can be used to reduce or prevent perpetration and victimization (McMahon et al., 2011) and the need for situation-specific skills in how to act (Banyard, 2011).

Furthermore, it is clear that men's relationships with other men in their environment play an important role in shaping bystander behaviors. In particular, our findings are consistent with the US research that suggests that men may avoid being pro-social bystanders out of fear of being viewed negatively by their peers, particularly due to perceived threats to masculinity (Carlson, 2008; McMahon & Dick, 2011), or concerns about interfering with the perceived fun of other men or their access to sex (Casey & Ohler, 2012). They lack positive reinforcement for engaging in violence prevention, whether intrinsic (e.g. through group dynamics) or extrinsic (Crooks, Goodall, Hughes, Jaffe, & Baker, 2007). One important

strategy in response, the social norms approach, seeks to correct individuals' misperceptions of group norms. 'Social norms' campaigns seek to close the gap between men's perceptions of other men's agreement with violence-supportive and sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement (Kilmartin et al., 2008). Although the AFL players' support for bystander intervention was equivocal, it is likely too that they overestimate group norms against intervention. Evaluation of a recent intervention incorporating both bystander intervention and social norms approaches suggests that it is possible to increase men's perception of other men's likelihood to intervene (Gidycz et al., 2011).

Our research is also consistent with evidence suggesting that status and hierarchy within male groups may further impede active bystander behaviors (Casey & Ohler, 2012). Some of these kinds of challenges to bystander intervention may be amplified in professional, male-dominated sport settings. For instance, while age and hierarchy may be common challenges to pro-social bystander behaviors among college/university athletes and even other groups of men (Katz, 2006), professional athletes such as AFL football players may work within a team setting for a much longer period of time, and difference in ages between younger and older players may span as much as 17 years. Consequently, the possibility of a whole male sports team developing strong social bonds off the field, like those seen in one US study among college athletes (McMahon & Farmer, 2009), is less likely in the AFL context, where older or more experienced players have been reported to rarely socialize with younger players, limiting the possibilities for younger players to model positive bystander behaviors from older players (Robins et al., 2005). Nevertheless, our research suggests that this may be changing in response to AFL clubs' attempts to increase social bonds within the playing group, by encouraging active leadership and mentoring across age groups. Given this study's finding that older players feel more comfort and willingness in intervening and are

influential models for younger players, engaging them as bystanders may be particularly effective.

Our research findings share a number of other similarities and differences with studies on bystander behaviors. In relation to codes of silence, which are indicative of broader features of masculine loyalties in multiple male-dominated settings, McMahon and Farmer's (2009) study found that US college athletes' care for one another within the team ensured pro-social bystander intervention, and superseded codes of silence surrounding acts of violence against women. Our data suggest that codes of silence among professional AFL players in Australia are beginning to change, but persist to some degree, particularly in relation to situations or events perceived to be a low threat to the team or club. Furthermore, the football players in our sample indicated feelings of loyalty and care to their club rather than only to other members of the team, suggesting that values associated with accountability and responsibility are shifting.

The literature has documented key challenges of bystander intervention involving difficulties construing a situation or event as problematic and requiring intervention (Banyard, 2011; Burn, 2009). This literature corresponds to Latane and Darley's (1970) second step in their five stage model of understanding enablers and barriers to bystander intervention, and is indicative, in part, of bystanders potentially lacking the knowledge or skills necessary to identify some situations as requiring intervention. Knowledge or skills pertain mainly to individual factors and attributes, but say little of broader social, cultural, or ecological factors that may intersect to produce confusion or ambiguity about construing situations as problematic (Banyard, 2011). Our research suggests that broader cultural patterns of relationality may also play a role in making situations or events ambiguous in nature. We found that players' perceived ambiguities regarding problematic behaviors and situations in which bystanders may intervene reflects the blurring and overlap between

obviously violent and abusive behaviors and everyday forms of gendered interaction (McDonald & Flood, 2012). This includes the normalization of everyday forms of disrespectful behavior, which, according to Australian football intra-group norms, may involve derogatory and sexist language use, both on and off the field. This normalization of disrespectful language is certainly consistent with Powell's (2012) findings on bystander intervention in Australia, which suggests that participants were less likely to interpret a situation as requiring intervention when it involved sexist comments or jokes, compared with situations involving more direct forms of violence.

Limitations and Conclusion

It should be noted that this study has a number of limitations. A key one was related to the first and second survey questions, used to measure willingness and comfort with intervening. These questions were non-standardized due to researchers' attempts to maintain survey question consistency with the violence prevention education delivered to players. Furthermore, the wording of the questions restricted possibilities for statistical analysis. Given that the Australian literature has identified differences in willingness to intervene between situations involving direct violent or disrespectful behavior targeted *towards* women, and situations involving sexist or disrespectful language expressed *about* women, it would have been interesting to make statistical comparisons between the first two survey questions. However, given the first question measured willingness to intervene and the second measured comfort intervening, comparison was not possible. These problems with the survey question wording, and lack of standardized measures, are related to a broader limitation of both the quantitative and qualitative research conducted in the study. The survey and qualitative interviews were designed primarily to evaluate the efficacy and impact of violence prevention education, not to specifically examine bystander intervention or other

issues related to violence against women, limiting our application of these data to other domains.

Despite these limitations, this study makes an important contribution to examining challenges to bystander intervention among men in diverse cultural and organizational contexts, particularly in male-dominated environments where violence is more likely to occur. Violence prevention efforts in general, and bystander intervention strategies in particular, must address the constraints and particularities documented here. Effective violence prevention is crafted with an attention to context, both in terms of larger social and structural constraints and with a concern for local beliefs and norms (McDonald & Flood, 2012). The data in this research suggest that the collective cultures and relations of professional sports have a significant influence on participants' perceptions of violent and abusive behavior and the actions they take in response. Bystander intervention approaches to the prevention of men's violence against women are promising, but must be tailored to relevant cultural and collective dynamics. A possible area for future research that would contribute to the growing area of bystander interventions would be to understand more about men at the extremes of the bystander continuum, those who indicate they are likely to intervene and those who indicate they are unlikely to intervene.

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ⁱ In some accounts the term ‘bystander’ expands to include those who directly perpetrate violence (McMahon, Postmus, & Koenick, 2011), but we reserve the term for those who are not directly involved in the violence in question.

ⁱⁱ Violence prevention strategies have also engaged women in bystander approaches (see for example (Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, & Stapleton, 2011)); however, this paper is primarily concerned with engaging men, particularly those in high-risk environments.

ⁱⁱⁱ According to Casey and Ohler (2012), ‘cock block’ is a colloquial term to describe somebody who restricts a man’s access to sex.

^{iv} This study was conducted with both men and women in the Australian state of Victoria.

^v The topic of how the AFL and AFL clubs are attempting to implement broader cultural change (in addition to education), by, for instance, strengthening relationships and social bonds between younger and older players, thereby increasing the likelihood of active bystander intervention, is an important one that cannot be dealt with in depth here but will be the subject of future papers.

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Julienne Corboz received a PhD in anthropology from the University of Melbourne and won the Australian Anthropological Society’s Best PhD Thesis Prize for her dissertation. She has conducted research on topics as varied as gender, sexuality, violence against women, poverty, health, and education. More recently Dr Corboz has conducted research in Afghanistan on marginalized girls’ education, the economic empowerment of women, and women’s participation in Afghanistan’s peace and reintegration program.

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