

## Masculinity and Sport Revisited: A Review of Literature on Hegemonic Masculinity and Men's Ice Hockey in Canada

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Ice hockey is particularly significant in Canada, since it acts as a primary site of socialization for boys and men. This form of socialization raises questions about masculinity on the public agenda in terms of the problematic nature of hypermasculinity in sport, stereotypical images of athletes, and questions of social responsibility as both men and athletes. These issues are presently relevant as Canada (and perhaps all of North America) finds itself in an era characterized by media accounts of competitive athletes' cavalier lifestyles, hazing rituals, violence, homophobia, drug addictions, and suicides. Scholars agree that these social issues can largely be attributed to problematic socialization through participation in hockey. This literature review uses secondary research to problematize masculinity in the ice hockey context by presenting the overarching claim that male hockey players embody hegemonic masculinity. The piece begins by defining R.W. Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity and situating it in its current academic context. Next, it offers an overview of relevant literature on masculinity and sport along with a concise examination of scholarly work on the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and ice hockey in Canada. It concludes by summarising calls for further research in the field and by suggesting approaches to future studies.

**Keywords:** athletes; hegemonic masculinity; hockey; sport

Au Canada, le hockey sur place a une place toute particulière puisqu'il constitue un site de socialisation primaire pour les garçons et les hommes. Cette forme de socialisation soulève des questions sur la masculinité dans la perception générale, au regard de la nature problématique de l'hyper masculinité dans le sport, les stéréotypes d'athlètes et la responsabilité sociale des hommes et des athlètes. Ces questions sont d'actualité au Canada (et peut-être même dans le reste de l'Amérique du Nord) à une époque caractérisée par des images répandues de la vie insouciantes des athlètes ainsi que des rituels d'initiation, de la violence, de l'homophobie, de la toxicomanie et du suicide. Une étude de la littérature se fonde sur des recherches secondaires pour cerner la problématique de la masculinité dans le contexte du hockey en présentant une hypothèse générale selon laquelle les joueurs de hockey masculins constituent des modèles de masculinité hégémonique. Le document présente d'abord la définition avancée par le sociologue australien R.W. Connell de la masculinité hégémonique (1987) avant de la situer dans un contexte académique contemporain. Ensuite, l'étude propose un survol de la littérature associée sur la masculinité et le sport, ainsi qu'un survol concis des études académiques sur le rapport entre la masculinité hégémonique et le hockey au Canada. La conclusion définit une synthèse des études à venir et propose des méthodes pour des études éventuelles sur le sujet.

**Mots Clés:** athletes; masculinité hégémonique; hockey; sport.

## Introduction

Over the past decade, ice hockey has been approached from an increasingly critical standpoint both publicly and academically in Canada. Sport researcher Julie Stevens and historian Andrew Holman state that “until the early 1990s, only a handful of university-based scholars took the game seriously as a place where academics might find real, meaningful fodder for the study of society and culture, and the expression of power in a variety of forms, physical and psychological” (2013, p.251). Consequently, these researchers call for more work that deals directly with people involved in ice hockey. In the public domain, many eyes have turned to the men’s ice hockey stage in Canada and North America. Prior to the 2012-2013 National Hockey League (NHL) lockout, mainstream media was littered with accounts of athlete hazing, violence, drug addiction, and suicide. For example, in 2009, twenty-one year old Canadian Junior hockey player Don Sanderson died after having been in a coma and on life support following a hockey fight (McGran & Vyhnak, 2009). During the same year, former captain of the NHL’s Calgary Flames, Theoren Fleury, released a book outlining his battles with sexual abuse, drugs, alcohol, and gambling (CBC, 2009). In 2011, three NHL players died in just over three months, all results of suicide or drug overdose. The league vowed to look into the string of deaths and the role of the enforcer was called into question as critics became decreasingly convinced that fighting and its associated safety issues was a necessary component of ice hockey (CBC, 2011). Also in 2011, a fifteen-year old hockey player in western Canada was reportedly forced to walk around the team dressing room with water bottles tied to his genitals (Turner, 2011). Lastly, homophobia has become a popular topic of conversation, inaugurated by such events as the alleged homophobic slur voiced by Wayne Simmonds of the NHL’s Philadelphia Flyers in 2011 (Johnston, 2011) and the rising notoriety of the You Can Play Project, an anti-homophobia organization founded in part by Patrick Burke, who is the son of former Toronto Maple Leafs President and General Manager, Brian Burke. The Burkes founded the organization following the death of their brother and son, Brendan Burke, who was a homosexual hockey player in the United States who sought to create awareness and acceptance of gay athletes (Shoalts, 2013).

Several scholars have pointed to hegemonic masculinity (understood as hypermasculinity or to encompass a traditional and brawny set of personality traits) in sport to explain the problematic behaviour of male athletes, while others are proponents of an increased social and cultural openness among male athletes, especially within the debate over whether or not homophobia in ice hockey is a growing concern. In light of the call for ‘rinkside research’ and the attention placed on harmful forms of masculine identity created by the socialization of boys and men who participate in ice hockey, the following review of literature seeks to delineate secondary research on hegemonic masculinity in order to lay groundwork for future studies of ice hockey and masculinity involving those who are closest to the game—players, coaches, officials, families, and fans.

Controversy surrounding these and other events is not altogether new. Academic literature on Canadian ice hockey shows that it has long been accused of promulgating masculine character traits to the extent that they become problematic (Robidoux, 2001, 2002; Adams, 2006, 2011; Allain, 2008, 2010, 2012; Gee, 2009; Atkinson, 2010). Since hockey is so deeply engrained in Canadian culture, it is often a primary site for the socialization of young males. This socialization becomes problematic when young men begin to embody traits of a dominant masculinity, what Connell (1987) deems ‘hegemonic masculinity, a concept which will be unpacked before reviewing its relevant literature. As a consequence of this socialization, hockey players are expected to be aggressive, stoic, competitive, independent, to show little emotion, and to police the maintenance of these traits amongst themselves, especially in the context of the game. Further, they hold other

players to the same standard (Colburn, 1985; Robidoux, 2001, 2002; Allain, 2008, 2010, 2012).

The active trajectory taking place in men's ice hockey provides an opportune moment for academics to re-examine claims made in the literature on masculinity and ice hockey. This review of literature commences by examining work on masculinity and sport and subsequently channels into a review of relevant literature on hegemonic masculinity and ice hockey in Canada. The review will conclude by indicating disparities in the literature and summarising the authors' suggested ways of proceeding with further research.

### **Defining and Contextualizing Hegemonic Masculinity**

The development of women's and gay liberation in the 1970s necessitated new ways of understanding gender and society (Connell, 1987, 2005; Messner, 1992). Connell (1987) proposed a model of four types of masculinity to signify the socially constructed hierarchical classification of masculinities in the West. This new classification would correspond to different forms of masculinity based on divisions of race, class, and sexuality, thus accommodating for societal and worldly interaction.

Although historically and socially/spatially contingent, hegemonic masculinity sits atop the hierarchy of masculinity types and refers to a normalizing ideology of gender relations involving the production, negotiation, and reproduction of male domination over women and other men (Levy, 2007). The core tenets of hegemonic masculinity can be summarized by the work of sex role researcher Robert Brannon (1976), in which he proposes four rules that men are expected to follow. The first rule, 'No Sissy Stuff,' calls for the rejection of all that is feminine; this includes traits such as openness and vulnerability. The second rule, 'The Big Wheel,' requires striving endlessly for fame, success, and social status by all means. The third, 'The Sturdy Oak,' encourages independence, confidence, strength, and toughness. The fourth and final rule, 'Give 'Em Hell,' denotes violence, aggression, bravado, and a willingness to defy authority.

Connell (1987, 2005) uses Gramsci's (1975) term "hegemony" to indicate the ways in which the characteristics in question are ideologically and institutionally perpetuated. She begins by stating that "[h]egemony" means a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (1987, p. 184). She states that although hegemony is not based on force, the two are related. Additionally, it does not mean total control over other types of masculinity to the point of extinguishing them. There are always other categories and hegemonic masculinity can only exist in comparison to them. What is more, it can involve the creation of a set of unachievable physical and personality traits, such as the masculine identity of a film character like John Wayne or Sylvester Stallone. She emphasizes that "the most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual, being closely connected to the institution of marriage; and a key form of subordinated masculinity is homosexual." (1987, p. 186).

The other three masculinity types are complicit, subordinated, and marginalized (Connell, 2005). Individuals in the subordinated category—namely homosexuals or men with supposedly feminine characteristics—could be said to engage in practices and attitudes that are not consistent with the hegemonic category. The marginalized category is reserved for non-Caucasians, the ill, disabled, and poor who are seen as having no hope of ever attaining hegemony (Connell, 2005). Most notably, gay men, who are not considered real men, fall into the marginalized category. Lastly, the complicit category houses men who do not fully embody hegemonic masculinity but support it in order to avoid subordination. This is the largest category of the four (Levy, 2007).

## Review of Literature

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used extensively in scholarly research and in discussions of modern sport. It is typically argued that male athletes in combative sports such as football and ice hockey demonstrate the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity; therefore it is imperative that relevant studies of gender and sport consider this type of masculinity in such a context (Bryson, 1990; Messner, 1992, 2002; Whitson, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2010). The following is a review of the relevant literature on the subject.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has not developed without criticism regarding its theoretical utility. For example, Connell has been accused of subscribing to the existence of an objective position from which to view masculinity, resulting in a simplified understanding of masculinity that overlooks complex apparatuses of masculine domination (Moller, 2007). In 2005, Connell and criminologist James Messerschmidt wrote an article responding to critiques of the concept and offered an updated version of it. They argued that it was still culturally relevant in part because it was useful to disciplines such as education studies, criminology, studies of men's representation in the media, men's health studies, and organizational studies, among others. The concept did, however, require some alteration due to accepted criticisms such as its tendency to devolve into static typologies and the specificities of men's lived experiences of masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) opted to keep the basic definition of the concept, but acknowledge that their simplistic model of social reactions attributed all masculinities to a singular global pattern of power. They also decided to work towards clarifying hegemonic masculinity as a non-fixed category. They accordingly added the geography of masculine configurations at the local, regional, and global levels (geopolitics on micro and macro levels), acknowledged the increased prominence of academic work on social embodiment and the importance of the body in social relations, and discussed dynamics of masculinities such as the possibility of positive forms of masculine hegemony.

Sociology professors Marc LaFrance (2010a, 2010b) and Anthony Synnott (2009) at Concordia University in Montreal also examine the evolving constellation of masculinity studies utilizing the concept of hegemonic masculinity. While LaFrance (2010a, 2010b) relies very much on Connell's work and agrees that hegemonic masculinity is ever present, he has noticed a recent trend in representations of men, specifically in mainstream media. He points out the image of the 'idiot male'—a portrayal of men in advertising, television and film as unintelligent and lethargic. This image opposes the classic ideals of hegemonic masculinity and LaFrance (2010a) suggests that some men have begun to feel inferior and face a loss of identity due to changing gender roles, some of which have been propelled by the increased participation of women in the workforce. Synnott (2009) has also acknowledged this change in his work on the state of contemporary masculinity, which presents a gender continuum that places men as heroes, villains, or victims. He posits that men have been pegged as “the suicide sex, the violent sex, the criminal sex, the death sex, the disposable sex—and as the enemy, misogynistic and morally inferior to women” (2009, p.1). He argues that “all these wars against men are not matters of gender so much as of power: political, economic, religious, ideological, and so forth—and of how power is exercised, by whom and for what ends, and how powers change and evolve and conflict” (2009, p. 9).

Michael Messner (1992) notes that by applying a framework that orders gender, it becomes apparent that the status of hegemonic masculinity is in crisis, as it no longer sits atop the gender hierarchy. In light of this, Connell (2005) argues that maintaining and defending the patriarchal order is quite simple, given that the men who tend to exemplify hegemonic masculinity are the ones

in charge of the state, large corporations, and cultural practices. She attributes this structural maintenance of competitive and dominant masculinity to current environmental problems, military destruction and violence, and economic inequality, among other issues. While some scholars disagree that hegemonic masculinity is structurally maintained, Connell and others agree that modern sport is a central site of the production, negotiation, and maintenance of hegemonic or dominant masculinity in Western culture (Whitson, 1990; Messner, 1992, 2007; Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2008, 2010).

Several other scholars partially echo the work of Connell, Kimmel, and Messner by agreeing that masculine roles and perceptions are changing and that hegemonic masculinity is contemporarily ubiquitous. Michael Atkinson (2011) argues that “white masculine hegemony has been maintained in Canada for quite some time through complex interplay between male-dominated capitalist power, institutional authority, social position, and common ideology across social landscape[s]” (p. 106). Moreover, White & Young (2007) state that in particular contexts, “some types of masculinity may be ascendant over others. Some men will enjoy more access to power and influence than others” (p. 262). Pollack (1998) and Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman (2002) agree that this masculinity is learned at an early age, often in terms of social popularity, and that young boys are taught to value toughness, contention of authority on the one hand and learning, sporting ability, and fashion on the other. Pollack (1998) establishes a ‘Boy Code’, which is based on Brannon’s (1976) four rules of masculinity and, akin to Kimmel’s (2008) Guy Code, encourages emotional detachment and silence. Kimmel (2008) refers to this silence as the Guy Code while Pollack (1998) terms it the Mask of Masculinity.

### **Masculinity and Sport**

Literature on masculinity and sport, whether depicting hegemonic masculinity or not, can be classified into three themes: interpersonal relationships of athletes, appearance, and the physicality of sport. Much of the work on the subject begins by offering a general overview of the historical connection between sport and masculinity. Eitzen (2012), Connell (1987, 1990, 2005), Messner (1989, 1990, 1992, 2002), Whitson (1990), Bryson (1990), and Kimmel (2007, 2008, 2010) establish that young boys who participate in sport are encouraged by families, friends and coaches to embody a particular type of masculinity. They are taught that skill and force will lead to sporting success, which is very important in the lives of boys and men. This importance has historical roots in the movement of women from the private to public sphere during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Organized sports were created as a homosocial sphere where men could enact masculine practices in a space of their own, away from the supposed threat of femininity (Messner, 1990, 2002).

Although women participate in sport more than ever, it remains an institution that perpetuates aggressive and competitive masculinity (Messner, 2002; Kimmel, 2008, 2010; Rand 2012). That said, some scholars (Messner 1989, 1990, 2002; Kimmel, 2010) suggest that the gender order within sport is quite complicated and that although there does exist a dominant masculinity, other forms of less dominant masculinity are apparent and should be considered as well. Messner (1992) posits that hegemonic masculinity is defined in relation to the other masculinities and that resistant masculinities are not successful in overcoming the hegemonic norm that is characterized by competition, aggression, physicality, and the subordination of femininity. Lower-class men and members of ethnic minorities tend to be excluded or lack resources and opportunities compared to those in the hegemonic category (Messner, 1989). In addition, David Whitson (1990) points out

that confrontational or combative games such as rugby and football especially work to maintain hegemonic masculinity while less combative or individual sports such as badminton tend to deviate from it because they lack physical contact and thus the opportunity to demonstrate body-to-body physical dominance. Finally, Connell (1990) notes that many athletes who exemplify hegemonic masculinity cannot do so all the time; they also exhibit contradictions to it. In support of this claim, she lists athletes who have limited social and romantic lives because of the demands of their training and competition regime. In other words, their lack of social lives or romantic commitments can be attributed to their athletic careers and not to their lack of personal qualities.

Other scholars weigh in similarly on the subject. Like Connell, Varda Burstyn (2004) attributes the development of sport to men's backlash to feminism and extends the explanation to the absence of working class fathers in the nineteenth century. Sport was used to replace fathers and train boys and young men for the workforce. She remarks that sport was supposed to be a site of asexuality, yet it has developed homoerotic masculine characteristics, mostly through the commercialization and worship of athletes that has come to characterize contemporary Western society.

Theberge (2000) and Young (2000) also extend the notion of hegemonic masculinity in sport by discussing its challenges. They acknowledge the continued marginalisation of women and homosexuals, but still remark on their increased participation in sport, which indicates a challenge to traditional gendered understanding of sport. Eitzen (2000) and Rees & Miracle (2000) discuss the positive and negative impacts of sport on boys. D. Stanley Eitzen (2000) agrees with Connell, Kimmel, and Messner in stating the following:

Sport serves to control persons ideologically by reinforcing society's values among the participants [and that] sport in its organization, procedures and operation serves to promote traditional gender roles. Most importantly, sport advances male hegemony in practice and ideology by legitimating a certain dominant version of social reality (p. 373).

Eitzen points to the importance of the coach in positively shaping the male experience in sport as the coach is responsible for teaching both athletic skills and personal values. The clear consensus among these researchers is that sport has been and continues to be a male-dominated sphere that systematically socializes boys and men into hegemonic masculinity through interpersonal relationships, physicality, and most recently, physical appearance.

Studies of male athletes' relationships with others have yielded complex and sometimes conflicting results. Some research suggests that male athletes lack unity with other individuals (Messner, 1990) while others argue that the bond between athletes—especially teammates—is a very deep and unifying one (Robidoux, 2001; Pappas, McKenry & Catlett, 2004). Connell (2005) and Messner (1990) posit that sport acts as a site where male athletes can come together and support or reproduce the tenets of hegemonic masculinity by not having to show or share emotion. Furthermore, they claim that interaction is laced with competition. Kimmel (2008) agrees, but acknowledges that they do share the emotions associated with winning and losing. Michael Robidoux (2001) extends Kimmel's point by adding that some interviews with professional athletes revealed that they felt they had invaluable and close personal bonds with some of their teammates.

Messner (2002) provides a view of the internal dynamic of athletic peer groups. Very much in line with Connell's (1987) four types, Messner suggests four types of team members: the leaders, audience, marginals, and target. The target comprises the group that is feminized, ridiculed, and

victimized for not adhering to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity. The leaders are the team members with the highest status who orchestrate misogynist, homophobic and degrading attacks on the target both physically and verbally. The audience encompasses boys and men who are not leaders, but applaud their attitudes and actions. Finally, the marginals are the lower-status group who choose not to support the leaders, but nonetheless do so with their silent complicity in situations geared towards the subordination of the targets. Messner's (2002) work, which is also echoed by Kimmel's (2007) work on masculinity as homophobia, reveals that many athletes choose to remain silent in order to avoid being included in the target group.

David Coad (2008) posits that male gender roles are changing and describes the interpersonal relationships and team dynamics among athletes as 'jock culture' (Lipsyte, 2004). Such a culture is centered on hypermasculinity and mirrors the descriptions of the athletic sphere made by Connell, Messner, Robidoux, and others. Coad (2008) makes an interesting addition to jock culture by listing a preoccupation with fashion as a new aspect of jock culture. He uses Simpson's (2002) term 'metrosexual' to describe athletes who are now becoming interested in fashion and personal care and having an aesthetically pleasing and fit body. He lists athletes such as football player Joe Namath and soccer player David Beckham as examples. He states that "metrosexuality does not discriminate against homosexuality or insist on heteronormativity," (p. 17) making the phenomenon an internal challenge to hegemonic masculinity.

Media and sport researcher Garry Whannel (2002) notes the increase in body-centered research on sport as well. While physicality in a literal sense is at the forefront, appearance has also gained importance among athletes. He claims that "the growth of body culture, the popularising of personal grooming and the changing forms through which gender relations are lived have placed focus upon the appearance of men in new ways" (2002, p.71). He prefaces this discussion with the assertion that the athletic body is a necessary aspect of this phenomenon and that non-athletic bodies are marginalised.

The literature ties the physicality of sport to hegemonic masculinity by emphasizing the importance of the athletic male body and highlighting the significance of violence in the connection between sport and masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity in the context of sports has been constructed throughout Western history as physical superiority over women, femininity, and non-athletic masculinities (Connell, 1987; Messner, 2002). Sport puts men's bodies on display and emphasizes required physical characteristics such as an active, muscular body that is capable of acquiring specific skills, undergoing intense training, accepting and overcoming pain, and inflicting pain on other bodies (Connell, 1987, 2005). Messner (2002) points out that this form of masculinity is produced in opposition to other forms of physical play such as those involving equality and amusement encouraged through educational systems by mostly female educators.

Connell (2005) and Whitson (1990) state that team sports in particular perpetuate and legitimize male aggression. While most of the literature on violence in sport frames aggression and violence as problematic (Whitson, 1990; Messner 2002, 2007; Connell 2005), other sources state that violence is a necessary part of the game that acts as an outlet for aggression and builds respect for opponents (Robidoux, 2001; Pappas et al., 2004). Some research is concerned with whether or not athlete aggression in sport carries over to non-sport situations. Messner (2002) and Pappas et al. (2004) conclude that athletes who are involved in revenue-producing contact sports are most likely to use violence outside of the sport context. In addition, the objectification of women could also be linked to violence and assaults external to the sport environment. Messner (2002) specifically points to Canadian ice hockey as violent and claims that "looking at Canada, where the central sport, ice hockey, is dominated by white men, we see the vast majority of sexual assaults

by athletes are committed by white males” (p. 29). He also notes that a central point in his analysis is “the fact that the majority of male athletes do not commit acts of off-the-field violence against women or other men. Though in the numerical minority, the men at the center of the athletic group are expressing the dominant, hegemonic, most honoured form of masculinity” which is being upheld through violence and aggression (2002, p.29).

Several other scholars add to the discussion. Jamieson & Orr (2009) and Whannel (2002) list hockey violence as an issue both on and off the ice in Canada. Violent episodes can break out between players, fans, parents, and others involved with the sport. This is akin to hooliganism and soccer riots in Europe. Jamieson & Orr (2009) attribute these problems to poor management on the part of those in charge of hockey leagues and venues. Whannel (2002) and Pollack (1998) stress the importance of athletes being role models and the fact that they perpetuate violence with this social power. Along with the debated nature of interpersonal relationships between players and appearance, physicality is a third common theme in studies of male athletes. American psychologist and psychoanalyst William Pollack (1998) sums up debates over masculinity in sport rather well when he states that although sports can offer “a chance for openness, expression, and intimacy, sports can also push boys back to loneliness, shame, and vicious competition...the goal of winning at any cost, a quest for narcissistic glory at the expense of others” (p. 273).

### **Sport’s New Relationship to Homophobia**

Homophobia is a term that has recently gone viral in the North American sport world. It has been a recurring theme in scholarly literature on sport (Anderson, 2012; Eitzen, 2012; Lenskyj, 2012; McCormack, 2012; Messner, 2012) and has been equally popular outside of academia since the inception of the You Can Play Project (Bella, 2012; Burke 2013) and the National Basketball Association’s Jason Collins announcing that he is the first openly gay male athlete in professional sport (Collins & Lidz, 2013). The commonly accepted definition of homophobia is ‘the fear and/or hatred of homosexuality’ (Palmer & Hunt, 2011; Taylor & Peter, 2011). Some also choose to designate the victimized party as LGBTQ, a term that encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer individuals, not just homosexuals (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Homophobia is generally acted out in the form of prejudice, discrimination, name-calling, and violence (Taylor & Peter, 2011; Lenskyj, 2012).

Literature on masculinity and sport often mentions homophobia. Mary Louise Adams (2011) argues in her work on figure skating that sport remains a site that privileges men and their bodies, in turn reinforcing cultural expressions of sexism and homophobia. Helen Lenskyj of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education writes, “despite more accepting societal attitudes and practices in most western countries, sport remains one of the last bastions of heterosexism and homophobia” (2012, p. 8). Eitzen (2012) and Adams (2011) contend that young boys are so strongly encouraged to exhibit traditionally masculine traits associated with sport such as toughness and heterosexuality that boys often become afraid of femininity and homosexuality. These comments indicate that homophobia—or perhaps more specifically antigay sentiment—is a common tenet of hegemonic masculinity and is currently under scrutiny.



## Hegemonic Masculinity in the Realm of Canadian Ice Hockey

Ice hockey is Canada's official winter sport and the NHL is largely populated by Canadian-born players (Eitzen 2012). Literature that bridges hockey and hegemonic masculinity surfaces from two key fields—men and masculinity studies and sport sociology. Moreover, it focuses on three main themes that mirror the literature on masculinity and sport in general. They include the construction of one's identity as a hockey player, the physicality of the game, and the interpersonal relationships of the players.

Identity construction is closely linked to both hegemonic masculinity and nationalism in Canada. Canadian sport is often associated with masculinity due, in part, to its promotion through the muscular morality movement (Lucyk, 2011) and, like hegemonic masculinity, sports such as ice hockey are thus said to “encourage values of dominance, physical strength, and aggression” (Lucyk, 2011, p. 71). Some of the literature (Robidoux, 2001, 2002; Adams, 2006) states that ice hockey has undergone a notable change; it has gone from a Canadian pastime to a way of life in the sense that the sport now involves family, social, educational, and economic relations in Canada ever since it was introduced to bourgeois society in the late nineteenth century.

Robidoux (2002) and Kristi Allain (2008) claim that the popularity and appeal of ice hockey are rooted in Canadian nationalism. They argue that Canada can, therefore, be viewed as representing, exemplifying, and understanding its own national identity through some tenets of hegemonic masculinity, such as physical dominance, competitiveness, and heterosexism. Additionally, Robidoux (2002) and Mary Louise Adams (2006), a professor in the Cultural Studies department at Queen's University, state that hockey has enabled Canadians to reinforce discourses of patriarchy and national belonging. They assert that hockey is a fundamental site for males to negotiate their worth as men through practices of hegemonic masculinity. In a similar vein, Gruneau & Whitson (1993) contend that although women are increasingly involved in hockey, Canadian culture is particularly centred around men's ice hockey and, as alluded to by Robidoux and Adams, Canadians place as much importance on ice hockey as they do on employment and education. According to these scholars, hockey is purposely used to promote national pride and unity in Canada. Lastly, Sarah Gee (2009), a lecturer in Sport Management at Massey University in New Zealand, analyzes media representations of hockey masculinity and lists the National Hockey League's 'Inside the Warrior' campaign (created by the NHL and aired on NBC in 2005) as a message about identity construction conveyed to North Americans. She states that it takes a particular type of aggressive, brave, proud, and driven man to play hockey and points out that this campaign was produced in spite of the increase in women's participation in hockey and the perceived 'crisis of masculinity' (e.g. Atkinson, 2011), which warns of the endangerment of hegemonic masculinity.

The next common theme in the literature is that of physicality in hockey. It, too, focuses on the body and violence, respectively. Robidoux (2001) argues that the concept of hegemonic masculinity challenges conceptions of the body in terms of hockey, because the sport privileges the body over the mind, which decidedly opposes patriarchal values (mind over body). This contradicts the work of Connell (1987, 2005), who acknowledges the importance of the mind in hockey, but places more emphasis on the body being touted as an integral part of hegemonic masculinity.

Allain states that “a hegemonically desirable Canadian hockey masculinity predicated on a hard-hitting, physically aggressive game has been ascendant in Canadian hockey practice for at least 50 years” (2008, p. 476). Most of the authors agree that the physical nature of ice hockey requires players to display a certain form of aggression and bravado that they would not require in

everyday life (Colburn, 1985; Young, 2000; Robidoux, 2001; Adams, 2006; Allain, 2010). British sport sociologist Kevin Young (2000) notes that although sport violence in Canada and the United States often technically qualifies as criminal assault, athletes are usually excused from such crimes during games. Young (2000) states that regardless of these exceptions, hockey still rates as one of the Canadian sports with the highest rate of criminal reports.

A unique aspect of hockey is the fist-fight. Robidoux (2001) discusses the importance of ‘enforcers’ on a hockey team—those individuals who make a point to demonstrate a physical presence, hit, and fight regularly to defend themselves and their teams. These individuals are well-respected by teammates, coaches, and fans alike for their contributions. Colburn Jr. (1985) and Pappas et al. (2004) conclude that the fist-fight has symbolic significance as a way to settle battles of dominance, restore order, release aggression, and show respect for opponents (i.e. a just way to settle a dispute). According to these researchers, the fist-fight is a legitimate act for hockey players. University of Ottawa Economics professor Marc Lavoie (2000) further investigated the fist-fighting phenomenon and discovered that hockey violence, more than quality of play, promotes high attendance rates and economic gain. In light of this, Pappas et al. (2004) note that although hockey specifically requires more aggression than everyday life, sometimes “interpersonal aggression is common in the lives of these hockey players, both on and off the ice” (2004, p. 308). This echoes Messner’s (2002) argument that athletes in revenue-producing contact sports are more likely to be violent outside of the sport context because the violent nature of the sport alludes to off-ice aggression in the players’ everyday lives. Atkinson (2011) weighs in on the issue, encouraging social scientists to consider the ways in which different forms of violence are deemed acceptable in ice hockey and further, to analyze young men’s socialization through ice hockey into a particular set of traditional or stereotypical masculine values and practices such as aggressive behaviour.

The final theme in the literature on hockey and hegemonic masculinity encompasses matters of interpersonal relationships among teammates: debates over the closeness of the players on the team, the extent of homosocial activity among teammates, and the homogenization of players on a team. Research relating to the closeness of players on a hockey team resembles the aforementioned scholarship. These studies are divided by debates between players’ lack of ability to share emotion and their claim that sport allows them to have very close and meaningful friendships with teammates. Robidoux’s (2001) work shows that players feel so close to each other that they are comfortable joking around in a homosexual manner with one another by grabbing each other’s private parts or making suggestive verbal jokes. His work also shows that the players believe they could not find such close friends anywhere else. This contradicts Messner’s (1990) argument that sport acts as a site where emotion is unnecessary and discouraged and interpersonal relationships are limited and superficial. At the same time, Robidoux (2001) also states that the players’ relationships are based on competitiveness because they need to contend for spots on the team and time on the ice. Homosociality is also a common theme in terms of interpersonal relationships among teammates. Seemingly homosexual acts and utterances are used by hockey players for friendly and joking purposes (Robidoux, 2001; Kimmel, 2008) or to feminize and victimize the group that Messner (2002) would call the target. He also notes that this practice always functions both ways insofar as men can ridicule their peers in a friendly manner, yet use the exact same words and actions to intentionally insult someone as well. Robidoux (2001) establishes that his account of players’ homosexual acts, although not actual homosexual relations, calls into question hegemonic notions of heterosexual masculinity in hockey.

The homogenization of teammates is the last aspect of players' interpersonal relationships in the literature. It is discussed in terms of both hazing rituals to bring the team together and teams holding a collective worldview. Bryshun and Young (2007) and Atkinson (2011) report that knowledge of hazing in Canada is limited and more research is required on the subject as the activity continues to be increasingly problematic. These rituals involve the veteran players forcing new ones into acts of nudity, excessive alcohol consumption, feminization, and infantilization (Bryshun & Young, 2007; Robidoux, 2001; Kimmel, 2008). Atkinson (2011) adds that information on hazing may be limited since it is an activity that is quietly conducted regardless of it being formally banned by many athletic organizations. He specifies that although not all athletes are in favour of hazing practices, they are still concerning and high school and college-age males can be the cruellest when administering initiation rituals. For Atkinson, hazing refers to acts of social degradation that new players must endure in order to prove their loyalty and respect to veteran members. He adds that these rituals are particularly common in contact sports such as ice hockey and football. Robidoux (2001) also states that initiation rituals are important for a team because they quickly work to build trust and good relationships on the ice. He notes that this is especially meaningful in Junior hockey in Canada because this level of hockey represents a player's official entrance into highly competitive and career-oriented hockey. (Robidoux, 2001). Kimmel (2008) agrees that initiation has positive effects on athletic teams, but warns of the dangers caused by overstepping boundaries with initiation rituals, resulting in sexual and violent assaults. For Kimmel, such activities do not encourage team cohesion. He, like Robidoux (2001), attributes them to the fact that young men in this context are freed from parental constraints and left to create their own form of socialization that allows for harmful and degrading initiation rituals.

The homogenizing effect on a team is accelerated through initiation rituals but continues to happen throughout players' time spent together as they begin to take on a shared worldview. Robidoux (2001) and Pappas et al. (2004) argue that players begin to acquire not only a shared set of goals in relation to hockey, but a collective worldview premised on characteristics of hegemonic masculinity: aggression, preoccupation with success, a disregard and lack of respect for women, and a lack of emotion outside of that associated with winning or losing. In addition, Robidoux (2001) notes that hockey players tend to develop a violence-oriented vocabulary along with their own regional terminology.

### **Disparities in the Literature and Future Research**

Some scholars have begun to observe behaviour and identity management that opposes hegemonic masculinity, specifically at the high school and college levels (Anderson, 2009, 2011; MacDonald, 2012). American sociologist Eric Anderson's (2011) work on college athletes in the United Kingdom revealed that young men were accepting of gay teammates and were open to non-hegemonic expressions of masculinity. This type of work has inaugurated discussions of the state of homophobia in sport in congruence with media accounts, which indicate that homosexuality, which would otherwise be unacceptable under a traditional and hegemonically masculine regime, is slowly becoming more acceptable. At the same time, however, no male hockey player has come forward as openly gay despite the NHL being the first professional league to officially sign on in support of the You Can Play Project (Shoalts, 2013). This suggests a need for further inquiry into the mechanisms of both hegemonic masculinity in Canadian ice hockey and Canadian culture. The lack of continuity between media and academic accounts of homophobia and ice hockey in Canada should be a central locus of inquiry in moving forward with future studies as the topic is current

and constitutes an opportunity to reassess hegemonic masculinity as a useful concept within the realm of masculinity and sport studies.

Lastly, there is an overemphasis on hazing and violence in ice hockey, but very little on the identity construction and interpersonal relationships that underpin them and other social contexts in sport. These are vital aspects of research that could answer the call for further understanding of how hegemonic masculinity operates among athletes. It is imperative to speak directly with these players in order to determine how they perceive their own masculinity and how those perceptions are played out in their relations with the people around them. With this in view, several scholars who work on masculinity, sport, and ice hockey propose various ways in which to proceed.

Some scholars (Connell, 1987; Messner, 1989, 2007) call for more work on the understanding of different dynamics of masculinity and how hegemonic masculinity operates. Others suggest a closer examination of the structural perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1990; Messner, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Atkinson, 2011) and its maintenance of racial, gender, and power norms through organized sport (Messner, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Pascoe, 2005; Kimmel, 2008). Some authors call for activism such as rewarding positive forms of masculinity in sport (Whitson, 1990), launching athlete anti-binge drinking programs (Messner, 2002), and providing athletes with an environment that encourages open communication regarding violent or degrading behaviour (Messner, 2002; Anderson, 2011). Finally, some suggest that more time should be spent speaking directly with hockey players (c.f. White & Young, 2007; Stevens & Holman, 2013). At the same time, Allain (2013) argues that it is incredibly difficult to gain access to them as they are a relatively closed group and that this challenge must be overcome in order to move forward.

With regards to homophobia and ice hockey, several scholars offer hockey as an example of a site that reproduces homophobic and hypermasculine characteristics (Anderson, 2010; Atkinson, 2010; Adams, 2011; Eitzen, 2012; Rand, 2012), but the specific intersection of homophobia and ice hockey is largely absent from recent scholarly literature when compared to media accounts of the two (Johnston, 2011; Bella, 2012; Shoalts, 2012; The Canadian Press, 2012; Burke, 2013). This disparity is a useful entry point for the other gaps in the literature as it presents an opportunity to reopen the topic of hegemonic masculinity in ice hockey, update studies of hazing, violence, drug addiction, and suicide, and advance the broader intellectual conversation on the status of homophobia in ice hockey. Additionally, controversy over the 2014 Winter Olympics provides several opportunities for academic investigations of gender and sexuality as the host country, Russia, passed a law banning the promotion of non-heteronormative sexual relationships, leading some to believe that homosexual athletes will not be safe participants in the event (Lally 2013). In light of the controversy, The Sports Network (TSN) released a three-part television series that addressed athlete homosexuality and featured an in-depth discussion of ice hockey with current and former NHL players as well as league commissioner Gary Bettman (TSN 2014). This series along with the reception of the Olympic Games will undoubtedly further direct scholars' attention to both homophobia and representations of masculinity in ice hockey. This will not only move the academic discussion forward, but assist in the extension of the path towards acceptance and inclusion of male ice hockey players who do not meet the seemingly reigning standards of hegemonic masculinity.

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