

The evolution of elite hockey culture in Canada: A scoping literature review

Prepared for Hockey Canada

by

Dr. Teresa Anne Fowler

Correspondence or questions regarding this review can be directed to

teresafowler@concordia.ab.ca or drteresafowler@gmail.com.

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About the Author

Dr. Teresa Anne Fowler is an Assistant Professor at Concordia University of Edmonton and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. Dr. Fowler's research expertise centers around critical white masculinities and their impact on various aspects of society, specifically elite hockey culture. Through her work, she aims to explore the complexities of gender identity and challenge traditional notions of masculinity, seeking to promote healthier and more inclusive understandings of masculinities. Particularly, she investigates the intersection between masculinity and mental health, examining how societal expectations and stereotypes surrounding masculinity stemming from hockey culture influence boys' and men's mental well-being. Her multidisciplinary research draws from education, sociology, psychology, gender, and cultural studies.

Dr. Fowler is a dedicated advocate for a healthy hockey culture and healthy masculinities with a commitment to fostering inclusivity within the hockey community and more nuanced understandings of masculinity. Dr. Fowler strives to challenge traditional norms within hockey culture, as these norms influence how Canadians come to understand gender and specifically masculinity and whiteness. Her work has garnered attention for promoting gender equality, breaking down barriers to access, and creating safe spaces for everyone to enjoy the game. Dr. Fowler was named a "Social Change Advocate" by the Hockey News in 2023 and she is a member of Scholars Against Abuse in Canadian Sport. She was called to testify based on her research to both the Heritage Committee's study on Safe Sport in Canada and the Standing Committee on Women's study on Women and Girls in Sport.

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Executive Summary

Change in ice hockey is not new to the sport. Since hockey's formal regulation stemming from the Montreal Rules in 1875, hockey has moved from a sport with little to no protective equipment to equipment that is now out of reach of many children due to the cost. Change is not a process that hockey needs to be fearful of but instead embrace – as it has in the past. Hockey in Canada is precious but also offers children, youth, and adults an opportunity to participate in a healthy and active lifestyle and see positive representations of masculinity. Sport encourages physical fitness, which reduces obesity and improves healthy outcomes; builds healthy life habits, including diet and exercise; improves motor skill development; builds self-regulation, social skills, self-esteem, and confidence; improves emotional and mental well-being; and is *fun*! However, the current state of hockey culture is preventing many from accessing these opportunities.

This scoping literature review examines how hockey culture has become a site of exclusion due to the privileging of a particular brand of hockey that is “not for everyone” (Aliu, 2020). Ice hockey has become synonymous with men's ice hockey due to the continued focus on the men's game in the media and gendered stereotypes that keep women and trans people out. Hockey grew alongside the pre-colonial development of Canada as Canada moved to become an independent nation-state after colonization. Colonization, world wars, the cold war, civil unrest, and progressive movements toward inclusion all influenced our hockey cultures today. Hockey internalized what it meant to build a nation: a need to be strong, masculine, and white. This legacy remains part of the systemic tradition that needs to change to make room for those who are marginalized from the sport and remain marginalized.

This review revealed three themes, including first, the fabric of ice hockey, woven from threads of colonization, nationalism, whiteness, hegemonic masculinity, and violence resulting in a systemic structure that has erased Black and Indigenous roots and maintained a privileged status quo that includes an unhealthy culture and unhealthy representations of masculinity. The thread of hockey masculinity considers how hegemonic masculinity has created a culture of violence with limited potential for inclusion. Inclusion, as defined by the United Nations, ensures access – which is limited in ice hockey. Outcomes of the unhealthy hockey culture

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include racism, sexism/misogyny, disabilities, and mental health—barriers to inclusion, the second theme of this review.

The final section is not a prescribed remedy, as the systemic nature of hockey culture is complex with unwritten codes such as “the code of silence,” “the locker room code,” and “the bro code.” However, the research included in this review point to positive change arising from an ecosystems approach which takes intersectionality into consideration. Potential for change arises from naming the issues plaguing hockey in Canada and turning to an intersectional, trauma-informed, and ecosystems lens to guide change. In addition, there are opportunities for research to move change more broadly in inclusion, sexism, and mental health.

Hockey is at a crossroads. It can continue because it works – but only for a certain few. Specifically elite white cis/heterosexual men. However, hockey offers an opportunity to respond and lead change in the game and society more broadly by reducing violence, aligning rules to support player safety from an intersectional lens, enforcing said rules, not rewarding/upholding hypermasculinity, taking an ecosystems approach to organizational change, revise and monitor training programs, consider the difference between amateurism and professionalism, and engage in/with research to inform the shift.

On February 3rd 2010, Brendan Burke sent a message through Facebook to Brock McGillis telling Brock that he could not wait until Brock was ‘out’ to his family like Brendan was. 2 days later, Brendan was killed in a car accident. Brock, a gay man, was inspired by Brendan’s words and told his family but not his hockey family – out of fear of homophobia. When Brock ended his hockey career, he could “feel free and experience life as a gay man without judgment from the hockey community” (Blondel, 2018). 2021 marks the first time an openly gay man is playing professional hockey however, it is “statistically impossible” to continue to have a lack of people in the LGBTQ2S+ community in hockey (Desouches, 2023).

Luke Prokop is leading change as the first actively playing gay player believing that “living my authentic life” will bring him success but also will demonstrate that “gay people are welcome in the hockey community” (Kaplan, 2021). Change arises through disrupting cis-heteronormativity and provides for alternate forms of masculinity. Like his teammates, Earl Betker, a goalie who played in the 1940s–1960s shown below, played with limited equipment,

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and their toughness was valorized – their masculinity was privileged. However, the game has changed, and it is time for a change again and for Hockey Canada to take the lead in shifting hockey cultures, specifically elite white masculine hockey culture and performances of masculinity.



Note: Used with permission (J. Betkar, Personal Communication, May 24, 2022)

The evolution of hockey culture in Canada: A scoping literature review

Ice hockey holds a cherished place in the hearts of Canadians and is often referred to as Canada's national winter sport – or only sport. Ice hockey is integral to our Canadian identity, with its roots deeply embedded in the country's history and culture. As a result, it has garnered substantial attention from researchers across various disciplines seeking to understand the sport's impact, development, and significance within the Canadian context. Tangled with discussions of hockey and nationalism, many researchers have also focused on research in whiteness and masculinity. Disciplines such as kinesiology, medicine, psychology, sociology, law, business, and education have all engaged in studying hockey culture, and this scoping literature review provides a comprehensive overview and critical analysis of an existing body of research on ice hockey in Canada by exploring hockey's historical, social, and cultural dimensions. Hockey culture is not a singular identity¹, while it is an easy label to hang our problems on, we also need to tease out which culture, as there are multiple hockey cultures, such as Black hockey culture, Indigenous hockey culture, and women's hockey culture. We are speaking about the culture at hand, elite men's hockey culture, which is the stimulant of the broader issues facing ice hockey.

Ice hockey's significance in Canada extends beyond the realm of sport, offering a lens through which various social and cultural aspects of Canadian society can be examined, making it an intriguing subject of scholarly inquiry. From community engagement and youth development to gender dynamics and Black, Indigenous and multicultural representation, researchers have delved into numerous facets of ice hockey to shed light on its broader implications on and off the ice. One central theme in the literature is the historical development of ice hockey in Canada, including people that were erased or pushed to the margins. The review will explore seminal works that discuss the sport's origins, tracing its evolution from early iterations played on frozen ponds and community rinks to organized leagues' establishment and professional teams' formation. Understanding the historical context of ice hockey in Canada is crucial for comprehending its cultural significance. In addition, the

¹ Hockey culture has become known as a singular culture plaguing hockey however, there are multiple hockey cultures, not one and this review is focused on Elite Hockey Culture.

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factors that have shaped its growth and popularity and the threads of exclusion have woven themselves into the fabric of Canadian ice hockey. This literature review will examine the cultural dimensions of ice hockey, including hockey's impact on identity formation and social in/exclusion. As will be shown, ice hockey acts as a unifying force, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and fostering a sense of belonging however, we need to question what belonging means. Belonging is more than simply wearing a jersey; this review questions the system we seek to belong to. Hockey is not in a good space, and sport in Canada is not in a good space therefore, the review will examine studies that investigate barriers to participation and inequalities within ice hockey.

Additional cultural aspects of ice hockey will also be explored, including the rituals, traditions, and symbols associated with the sport. The review will examine how ice hockey has permeated and influenced Canadian culture and address topics such as fandom and the impact of hockey on Canadian national identity. By critically analyzing the existing body of research on ice hockey in Canada, this literature review aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the sport's multifaceted nature but, most importantly, provide insight for Hockey Canada and sport leaders as a means to shift a culture that has proven to be harmful. This review will identify gaps in the current knowledge base and highlight areas requiring further investigation. In addition, provide insights that can inform future research, policy development, and community initiatives related to ice hockey in Canada.

Following a brief discussion of the methodology employed, this literature review will outline three major themes. The first section takes a historical, and at times present, overview of ice hockey, including origin stories of hockey's role in Canada. This role also began the threads of whiteness, nationalism, and masculinity that remain deeply ingrained today. As such, I will engage these sub-themes within section one. The second section considers research from the margins – from the voices of those excluded in hockey culture, which form the 'isms – racism, sexism, homophobia, elitism, and ableism. The symptoms of an unhealthy elite hockey culture are derived from the root of the issues we are here to address.

The final section forms recommendations to move ice hockey forward to be inclusive and refocused on health instead of a culture of accumulation. Ice hockey offers a beautiful

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space for children and youth to foster various skills, be active and healthy and, for some, a career. As a result, it is imperative that hockey become inclusive and accessible for all Canadians in a healthy ecosystem. While literature was sought for both men's and women's ice hockey, this review focuses primarily on elite men's ice hockey culture², as elite men's ice hockey is at the core of hockey and is synonymous with broad understandings of Canadian culture. It is crucial to note that as a critical scoping review, a critical lens is taken to improve ice hockey in Canada and to do that, we need to acknowledge that ice hockey in Canada has been/is not a safe or inclusive space for all Canadians. This is not an exercise intended to cause shame or angst, but to quote Paulo Freire (2000), "Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who you are – so you can more wisely build the future" (p. 84). This review takes a critical lens as a means to raise awareness of how deeply engrained – systemic and historical, the issues of masculinity, privilege, and violence are in ice hockey and how ice hockey models for children, youth, and society more broadly expectations of what it means to be a man.

Methodology

This literature review was conducted during the spring of 2023 in response to the need for change in hockey culture in Canada after several abuse and assault accusations emerged in the summer of 2022. These public revelations disrupted Canadians' perceptions of the game and turned many people's attention to the broader culture promoted in hockey. Rather than rehash our collective memory of this moment that brought about a catalyst for change, this review is presented as a means to begin to understand how ice hockey in Canada came to this point and how we can move forward with a new approach to one of Canada's sports, and provide leadership of change to sport in Canada. The objectives of this project were established by Hockey Canada, including establishing the value of such an endeavour, the background context of ice hockey in Canada, an exploration into research in the ice hockey field, and providing areas of focus and recommendations to move forward. There was not necessarily a

² Elite men's hockey culture and elite men's ice hockey are used interchangeably with hockey culture as it is the focus of this review.

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specific research question to inform this review. Rather, a critical scoping review was undertaken to respond to the study's objectives and provide an overview of the research in the field. However, the motivating purpose of this review is to consider how hockey culture has emerged and how we can shift the culture moving forward.

Engaging with research for this project provides an overview of the history of ice hockey and specifically considers how ice hockey reached this point today. Research generates new knowledge and provides perspective regarding, in this case, the evolution of ice hockey and the underlying influences of colonization and nationalism. Research thus advances knowledge and our understandings of culture and looks to find solutions to problems, resolve controversies, and provide evidence to inform decision-making and policy generation. Research also has practical implications with respect to developing training programs, the type of training, and assisting members with making informed decisions. While research is the cornerstone of academia, its reach into social institutions is well-documented in medicine, science, technology, education, and sport. Currently, in Canada, sport is undergoing a culture shift, with a rise in athletes finding avenues to voice their experiences with abuse and the resulting calls for a national inquiry into sport (SAACS, 2023). Not only have athletes been called to testify to the House of Commons, for example researchers have been as well (See House of Commons Study on Safe Sport, 2023, for a list of athletes, researchers, and others).

A challenge with accessing research is along the same thread as accessing hockey culture. There are many barriers, such as research articles behind firewalls that require institutional access through a library or a fee. For example, one article in this review would have cost \$40 to access, which may seem insignificant but represents how gatekeeping is a common practice across institutions and may be an unobtainable reach for some researchers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Screenshot of purchase options for the article *Barriers to youth sport participation in dense urban centres* (O'Reilly, Hernandez, Séguin, Warwick & Hasani, 2023).

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Purchase

[Save for later](#)

International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing (2023)	\$1,729.00
International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing (2023)	\$1,244.00
Online	^
International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing (2023)	\$1,244.00
Purchase this article	\$40.00

Note: Screenshot taken May 2023, by author.

Gatekeeping limits access to information to a select group of people, academics in this case – specific academics. Gatekeeping is enacted by individuals and institutions and aligned with forms of authority such as religion, government, and academic institutions, which control the ways in which knowledge is disseminated. Some form of gatekeeping may be required, however, in an era where fake news and truth have become blurred, access to knowledge ought to be open as a means to encourage critical thinking, build transparency and accountability, and ensure that institutions are also moving towards equity and diversity. After emailing the author (and others included in this review), they provided the article for free. Slowly, barriers to knowledge are being addressed in the research community with a move towards more open-access publishing and reductions in academic language and jargon, such as through the publicly accessible medium: *The Conversation Canada*, which intends to bridge research with a public audience. However, much research remains hidden from public view thus, this review is an important contribution to shifting hockey culture within Hockey Canada, as there may be a lack of accessible research to inform change.

Critical Scoping Literature Review

A critical scoping review is a type of literature review that explores research in the field and is a combination of a scoping review and critical analysis (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Iannizzi et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2015). The approach to the scoping review was to “examine the extent, range and nature of research” in the field and identify gaps in research that would

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benefit Hockey Canada and ice hockey overall (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 21). A critical lens was taken as the state of hockey in Canada, and North America, needs a critical lens as it is at a key transitional point, and to move forward, we need to be critical of how we got here.

Undertaking a critical scoping review involves establishing boundaries by identifying key concepts and themes before developing a comprehensive search strategy. The search, outlined in detail below, involves utilizing academic databases, conference proceedings, thesis and dissertations, and the grey literature. Grey literature is published in non-traditional settings and includes organizations used in this review, such as Equimundo³ and the United Nations. Both these organizations offer international perspectives on masculinity and, as will be discussed, inclusion. Artifacts were screened for inclusion in the review by looking at the titles, abstracts, and keywords (listed below) and included artifacts are then considered data for the review. The data are analyzed for themes, relationships, and impact on the review to develop findings for discussion and for suggested ways to advance positive change. A critical scoping literature review does not necessarily offer specific, pragmatic changes but offers a deep understanding of existing knowledge in hockey culture and lays the groundwork for change and areas of future research. That is, it offers the knowledge that can be used to inform change. In this way, the changes are targeted to research-informed understandings of the underlying issues.

The approach to this review was to first engage in a keyword search. Keywords are markers which researchers use to ensure our publications are discoverable and initial words used were derived from the objectives of the project set by Hockey Canada and included: masculinity; ice hockey (women's and men's); sport; culture; privilege; whiteness; violence; training; zero-tolerance policies. After the initial search and work, the search was expanded based on themes noticed in the initial readings, including intersectionality; neoliberalism; nationalism; socialization; precarity; ecological systems theory. Articles included in this review were accessed through University of Calgary databases such as Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), Web of Science, SocINDEX, SPORTDiscus, and open-access publications. As an

³ Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice (formerly Promundo-US) works to promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women, girls, and individuals of all gender identities. <https://www.equimundo.org/>

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academic, I had access to the above databases however, where articles remained behind a firewall, as mentioned, corresponding authors were contacted who provided a copy of the research. While books were also included, the main content informing this review came from peer-reviewed research articles. Peer review in academia involves academics reading and providing feedback based on their expertise. Peer review is often completed 'blind', meaning that all author identity was removed to ensure an ethical read of the research is undertaken. Dissertations and master thesis were also reviewed as these offer new insights and emerging research in the field of ice hockey. In addition, the media also informs the review and the outlet *The Players' Tribune*, a medium for athletes to write about their experiences in sport. Literature included in the scoping review was uploaded into a researcher-generated database using Mendeley to be evaluated for emerging themes and gaps for future consideration. In addition, I also reached out to expert contacts in the field to confirm current trends in ice hockey. A wide net of literature was cast, focusing on seminal and recent research in the field. Primarily articles were sought that focused on the Canadian and North American hockey experiences however, as direct access to hockey institutions like Hockey Canada and the National Hockey League act as gatekeepers to researchers resulting in little 'insider' views, studies from Europe are included.

In what follows, the findings of the review are the three main themes, including the origin stories – the threads which form the fabric of the hockey culture we know today. This section chronicles the origins of ice hockey in Canada and the erasures based on nationalism, whiteness, and hockey masculinity. The erasures form the second theme – the outcomes of the fabric woven with the threads, including racism, homophobia and sexism, elitism, disabilities, and mental health. The last theme focuses on weaving new threads to create an inclusive hockey culture which first will explore the complexity of change needed and how a hockey ecosystems approach will provide a focus for change.

The Threads of Ice Hockey

Origin Stories

The origins of ice hockey are a debatable subject as there are histories which have been erased from our collective memory, and some are prioritized over others (Boyd, 2020;

Cummings & Burroughs, 2023; McKenzie & Joseph, 2023; Wilks, 2019). One historical thread has hockey's roots in Europe, with colonization bringing hockey to, then, a land which was inhabited by Indigenous Peoples who also have roots in the game. Indigenous Peoples⁴ played stick and ball games on frozen ponds, rivers, and lakes as play but also for skill development for hunting. Ricket, a game played as early as the 1500s by some Indigenous Peoples, marks the first form of hockey played in North America – or Turtle Island before colonization (Bennett, 2018). These stick-and-ball games also generated core concepts in sport, such as teamwork, collaboration, community bonding, and the acquisition of physical skills needed for survival. As colonization progressed, so, too, did ice hockey. The birth of the regulated game grew from the first documented rules of the game – the Montreal Rules in 1875 and in the late 19th century, hockey associations were formed, including the Amateur Hockey Association of Canada in 1887 and the Eastern Canada Hockey Association in 1908 which marked the beginning of the professionalism of the sport, a move away from amateur (Mason, 1998; O'Connell, 2015; Wyatt, n.d.). The Montreal Rules of 1875 were formed by the Montreal Hockey Club to establish a standard set of regulated rules for the game, which impacted ice size, the number of players, the use of the puck, the concept of offside, stick-handling and shooting rules, as well as the definition of a goal (Hardy & Holman, 2018). Other leagues emerged, including the Canadian Hockey Association, which quickly folded, as did the Pacific Coast Hockey Association once the Western Canadian Hockey League was formed (now the Western Hockey League). The National Hockey Association began in 1909, now known as the National Hockey League (NHL) (O'Connell, 2015; Mason, 1998; Wyatt, n.d.).

One league that does not get much mention, is the Coloured Hockey League (CHL). This league began at the same time as the early leagues mentioned above. The CHL began in Nova Scotia in response to racial segregation and to promote opportunities for skill development for Black Canadians (McKenzie & Joseph, 2023). In addition, the league used sport for “the ultimate liberation and equality of Black Canadians” (Fosty & Fosty, 2004, p. 44). The league prospered and brought together a sense of community as social institutions were combined to support its

⁴ Indigenous Peoples is generalized and not specific to any individual Nation or group. When referring to Indigenous Peoples, we need to refer to individual Nations, rather than a collective.

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success including churches, schools, and everyday Black Canadians (McKenzie & Joseph, 2023). This collaboration is something that our modern game still benefits from, as well as other innovations such as the butterfly technique, the slap-shot, and entertainment during intermissions (Boyd, 2020; Cummings & Burroughs, 2023; McKenzie & Joseph, 2023; Wilks, 2029). However, the rise of the NHL and ongoing forms of racial oppression, such as the destruction of Africville in the 1960s, which forced relocated Black Canadians, erased the history of the Coloured Hockey League in our associations with hockey in Canada (Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 2023).

This erasure of the Black origin story also omits the challenges faced by the CHL at the height of their run. Ice time was just as precious then as it remains today, and this resulted in the CHL being forced to play on less than ideal conditions as rink owners in the Maritimes refused to allow the league ice time except, for example, at the end of the season in March when the ice was in poor condition, and there was also little to no promotion of the CHL games which resulted in dwindling attendance (Fosty & Fosty, 2004; McKenzie & Joseph, 2023). This trend towards limiting ice time and media coverage of a particular makeup of players has continued today but is directed towards the woman's game. Media attention for our women's games, not only in hockey but all professional sports, has remained marginalized. The leading sport networks of TSN, SportsNet, and ESPN do not have a current dedicated women's hockey writer (I. Kennedy, personal communication, May 10, 2023), and when women's hockey games are broadcast, the commentators often focus on the men's game (Burgess, 2019). Not only within hockey is there ongoing gender discrimination, such as the folding of the Canadian Women's Hockey League in 2019, but also the Canadian Women's Soccer team who have experienced labour disputes for pay and media equity with the men's team (Davidson, 2023; Kalvapalle, 2019). In addition, the murky sea of origins of ice hockey in Canada has allowed certain narratives to be more mainstream than others. McGill University is often heralded as the birthplace of ice hockey (or Kingston Ontario) however, this negates other previous experiences that occurred before colonization, during colonization, and for Black Canadians. This mainstream understanding of the origin story also does not include the ways in which ice hockey was used as a tool during the colonization of now-called Canada. The bull-doing of

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Africville and the CHL signalled Black erasure, Indian Residential Schools, however, utilized ice hockey as a tool.

Indian Residential Schools were established in Canada during the 19th and 20th centuries, with the primary objective of assimilating Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture, resulting in cultural genocide (Gorelick, n.d.; TRC, 2015). These schools implemented policies that suppressed Indigenous languages, cultural practices, and traditional knowledge while enforcing Euro-centric values and lifestyles, often through abusive practices, as documented in the Truth and Reconciliation Report (2015). In this context, the introduction of the regulated hockey game within residential schools served as a tool for assimilation (Cairnie, 2019; Hiwi & Forthsyth, 2017; Robidoux, 2012). By adopting the sport, Indigenous children were encouraged to shed their cultural identity and embrace a Euro-Canadian lifestyle as “Western-European ways of living and knowing were superior to Indigenous lifestyles, and that in order for colonization to work, Indigenous peoples’ attachment to their land and culture had to be broken down and replaced with European values, beliefs, and practices” (Te Hiwi & Forthsyth, 2017, p. 83). The implementation of hockey served as a means to erase Indigenous traditions, language, and cultural practices, leaving a lasting impact on a sense of self and cultural heritage. Hockey was becoming synonymous with erasure and assimilation, which was in opposition to the CHL’s drive to bring communities together to enjoy the game of hockey and the acquisition of life skills by both the Black and Indigenous communities.

Hockey was on the path of forming a culture of accumulation. The CHL was created to promote development, life skills, build community, and unite under forms of oppression (McKenzie & Joseph, 2023) and stick-and-ball games like Ricket were used to help hone life skills needed to survive and thrive in pre-colonial Canada (Bennett, 2018). However, during colonization, hockey became a tool to promote Western-European culture while “discouraging Indigenous and Black cultural heritage” (McKenzie & Joseph, 2023, p. 3). What was being accumulated then was a form of cultural capital that marked progress, innovation, and nationalism. Hockey in Canada has not progressed in a vacuum. The desire to colonize Canada was motivated to accumulate land and commodify resources such as timber, furs, and minerals. As settlers moved in, so too did the way of life that was being indoctrinated in/onto Indigenous

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Peoples. Through this cultural shift to a nation-state, hockey was being elevated to national status. Hockey was either remembering or appropriating the CHL's goal of uniting a community. As colonization progressed, Canadians began to unite under a game that itself was undergoing evolution as it developed and progressed nationally. The game of hockey had moved from community building and skill acquisition to a gentleman's game to provide role models for children and youth (Allain, 2008), then to the one that established deep roots, one of aggression and violence to promote nation-building and separate identity from our colonial roots and our neighbour to the south (Dorland, 2018; Patione, 2015). Hockey was on its way to becoming a sport synonymous with whiteness, masculinity, and the pull-up-the-bootstraps mentality that moved Turtle Island to become Canada through colonization.

Nationalism

Nationalism is an ideology and a sentiment that emphasizes the nation as a primary source of identity and collective belonging. Nationalism often involves the belief in the uniqueness and distinctiveness of a particular nation, its culture, language, history, and values. During the time of colonization, certain cultural capital was being accumulated at the expense of others. Nationalism also focuses on the preservation and promotion of Canada's cultural heritage. At the time of hockey's birth as a regulated game, hockey offered a perceived unifying tool for all Canadians (Dorland, 2018; Patione, 2015). Canada was established as an independent dominion in 1930, seeking its' independence during a volatile time including two World Wars, the Depression, social reforms and progressive movements stemming from the Civil War in the United States as well as a movement towards multiculturalism. The Canadian national identity was also influenced by the Cold War, which spilled onto the hockey rink at the Summit Series of 1972, which was not only a game of skill, but a battle of ideologies (Scherer, Duquette, & Mason, 2012; Wilson, 2004). Although Canada won, this event reminded Canadians that other countries also had dominance in ice hockey. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Canadian men's ice hockey team was highly successful on the international stage, winning the gold medal at the 1950 and 1952 Winter Olympics and the World Ice Hockey Championships in 1950, 1951, 1952, 1955, 1958, and 1959 (Fandom, n.d.). This was not only a time of gold medals, but for Canadians, hockey offered a reprieve from wars. Indeed, Paul

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Henderson's goal in the Summit Series "brought together a nation" and many people who witnessed this moment can remember where they were when this happened (Aquilina, 2017). The Canadian men's ice hockey team was the most dominant internationally, made up of primarily amateur players. However, the heritage of one of our national sports was in question as other nations showed their expertise in men's ice hockey, and the 1960s were not as successful as the previous decade. The team did win the World Ice Hockey Championships in 1961, but the 1960s saw a decline in the dominance of Canadian teams in international hockey as other countries began to develop more competitive teams, such as Sweden and the Soviet Union (Hockey Canada, n.d.).

During the gold medal drought experienced by the men's ice hockey team, sport and recreation fell within the purview of different government bodies and departments before they were assigned to the newly created portfolio of Canadian Heritage. Before this, there was no specific department or ministry in the federal government that had the overall responsibility for sport and recreation, leaving both to be handled by a variety of different departments, such as the Department of Health and Welfare and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, along with the Provinces and Territories. The Department of Canadian Heritage was created in 1993 by the government of Canada as part of a larger reorganization of the federal government (Thibault & Jarvey, 2013). The main reason for its creation was to promote and preserve Canadian culture and identity and to have a dedicated department to focus on cultural issues such as arts, heritage, and sport and to coordinate and implement cultural policies across the federal government and with other levels of government and stakeholders – to "play a vital role" in the lives of Canadians. However, the notion that sport, particularly ice hockey, would unify Canadians and promote a Canadian culture is now rife with discontent. What was (is) being promoted is a specific brand of culture. One that has been accumulated through preserving a culture based on whiteness, privilege, and masculinity, as will be discussed below (Dennie, 2021).

Sport is "intimately bound to state and identity politics" (Norman, Esmond, & Szto, 2019, p. 141) and in Canada, our national identity is tied to ice hockey, particularly men's ice hockey. Men's ice hockey in Canada has been a long-standing pillar of what it means to be

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Canadian, and many Canadians regard hockey as our only national sport. In Canada, 1,239,000 people over the age of 15 play hockey; 22% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 play hockey; there are 37,500 organized hockey teams; and 48% of Canadians say hockey is a source of pride in Canada (CBC News, 2013; McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2013). In addition, as of May 2023, Canada has the all-time most number of players in the NHL with 5 414 players, ranked 1st above the United States with 1 404 players (QuantHockey, 2023). In the context of sport, nationalism can be seen through the promotion of national teams and athletes and the use of sport to promote national identity and unity through podium pursuits in international arenas. It can also be seen as promoting the country and its culture to the world. However, this culture is one not only with a 'dark' past but one that privileges a single colour and identity. To be white and masculine results in an accumulation of cultural capital that *Others*⁵ do not have access to, promoting a common identity amid a multicultural society (Dennie, 2021). As Adams (2006) questions, if "hockey is life in Canada, then life in Canada remains decidedly masculine and white" (p. 71).

Whiteness

The institutionalization of whiteness through historical, social, political and economic systems and structures has become embedded and systemic in the Canadian fabric (Carr & Lund, 2007; Cole, 2020; Dennie, 2021; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Messner, 2000; O'Connell, 2010). In Canada, whiteness was institutionalized in our education system, beginning with Indian Residential Schools, in government through colonization, and spilled into social structures such as hockey. Hockey erased Other identities to preserve whiteness, as whiteness is tied to nationalism (Nakayama, 2020; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Whiteness is an ideology that allows unrestricted movement within social structures for white bodies while racially oppressing non-white bodies through segregation and experiences like the bull-dozer in Africville and the cultural genocide at Indian Residential Schools. While many social institutions do not currently gather demographic data as good practice, one only needs to do a simple eye-test to notice that ice hockey is a white space and with less attention focused on the woman's

⁵ *Others* is used to denote identities which are subjected to forms of oppression, racialization and marginalization from the dominant group.

and girls' games, it also remains an inherently masculine space (Andrew & Richardson, 2022; Bains & Szto, 2020; Cummings & Burroughs, 2023). Gathering this data is key to moving toward inclusion. To assist in understanding equity in roles within an institution, race, for example, needs to be considered, including where there is an inequitable balance, such as between administrative roles vs. custodial roles, not just percentages of equity. The impact of gender imbalances in decision-making and policies (the need for sexual assault liability insurance), understanding barriers to inclusion that promote elitism (the need for funds to access programs and equipment), measuring accountability (racial/sexuality/gender make-up of competitive teams; people with disabilities can access hockey), and measuring progress (increase the representation of diversity at all levels) – remove the margins.

Whiteness is a universal centre which moves anything *other* to the margins. The term marginalized denotes this movement away from what systems value and what heritage is preserved in the case of nation-building. In hockey's current narrative, the Black and Indigenous roots have been pushed to the margins. Not only in the hockey community, but research also has neglected the stories which have persevered only through the memories of families saving news clippings and oral stories (Arcand, McKegney, Auksi, 2021; McKenzie & Joseph, 2023). The neglect of these origin stories pushed racialized communities into the margins, where they remain. The dominance of white culture in ice hockey has created a hegemonic structure that preserves the power and privilege of the dominant group and thrives due to cultural reproduction. Cultural reproduction perpetuates existing inequalities and power structures, such as the culture of silence in sport, which prevents individuals or groups from speaking out about important issues or concerns due to fear, shame, or a belief that their voice will not be heard or valued (Blurry & Fiset, 2022; Côté, 2018; Crawford, Wilson, Hurd, & Beauchamp, 2023; LeBlanc, 2021). Various factors, including power imbalances, social norms, and the fear of retribution or backlash, can perpetuate the culture of silence. For example, in our research with professional men's ice hockey players, many spoke about the precarity of their team positions. Some were constantly reminded of this as they had to walk past a shopping cart by the doorway, and they were often called a "suitcase" (Fowler, Moore, Skuce, 2022). If a player did not meet the coach's expectations, they would find their equipment in a garbage bag in the

shopping cart. Precarity in hockey is a lingering effect of globalization and Canada's nation-building period. Men's bodies were expendable in the wars, and hockey adopted this practice well through the establishment of violence and the competitive nature of professional sports (Besnier, Calabro, & Guinness, 2021; Messner, 1998; Robidoux, 2001)

It is important to reinforce that whiteness is not directly about white people but about the "social and political processes by which hierarchies and privileges are codified and normalized along lines of race. In countries like Canada, these hierarchies secure white bodies and cultures as the standard against which others are measured" (Joseph, Darnell, & Nakamura, 2012, p. 7). When discussions about whiteness arise, defences go up, and research on whiteness has only emerged in the past few decades as researchers have been focused on the outcomes and folks who reside in the margins, the "low-hanging fruit" (Fine, 2016). For example, ice hockey research has predominately focused on concussions, psychological factors related to gameplay, and performance, as noted in Table 1.

Table 1

Selected open access references since 2016

Concussions
Anderson, G. R., Melugin, H. P., & Stuart, M. J. (2019). Epidemiology of injuries in ice hockey. <i>Sports Health</i> , 11(6), 514-519.
Parizek, A., & Ferraro, F. R. (2016). Concussions in ice hockey. <i>Current sports medicine reports</i> , 15(1), 23-26.
Pauelsen, M., Nyberg, G., Tegner, C., & Tegner, Y. (2017). Concussion in ice hockey—A cohort study across 29 seasons. <i>Clinical journal of sport medicine</i> , 27(3), 283-287.
Kontos, A. P., Elbin, R. J., Sufrinko, A., Dakan, S., Bookwalter, K., Price, A., ... & Collins, M. W. (2016). Incidence of concussion in youth ice hockey players. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 137(2).
Krolikowski, M. P., Black, A. M., Palacios-Derflingher, L., Blake, T. A., Schneider, K. J., & Emery, C. A. (2017). The effect of the "zero tolerance for head contact" rule change on the risk of concussions in youth ice hockey players. <i>The American journal of sports medicine</i> , 45(2), 468-473.

Smith, A. M., Stuart, M. J., Roberts, W. O., Dodick, D. W., Finnoff, J. T., Jorgensen, J. K., & Krause, D. A. (2017). Concussion in ice hockey: current gaps and future directions in an objective diagnosis. *Clinical journal of sport medicine*, 27(5), 503-509.

Van Pelt, K. L., Caccese, J. B., Eckner, J. T., Putukian, M., Brooks, M. A., Cameron, K. L., ... & Buckley, T. A. (2021). Detailed description of Division I ice hockey concussions: Findings from the NCAA and Department of Defense CARE Consortium. *Journal of sport and health science*, 10(2), 162-171.

Psychological Factors

Christie, S., di Fronso, S., Bertollo, M., & Werthner, P. (2017). Individual alpha peak frequency in ice hockey shooting performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 762.

Chröisty, L. E., Janson, L., & Norlander, T. (2018). Mental Toughness: The Importance of Psychological Preparations for Penalty Shootouts in Ice Hockey. *Psychology*, 9(2), 165-178.

Géczi, G., Gurisatti, L., & Komlósi, L. I. (2022). Complex Ice Hockey Team Performance Model based on Expert Interviews. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 95(1), 76-84.

Lemoyne, J., Brunelle, J. F., Huard Pelletier, V., Glaude-Roy, J., & Martini, G. (2022). Talent Identification in Elite Adolescent Ice Hockey Players: The Discriminant Capacity of Fitness Tests, Skating Performance and Psychological Characteristics. *Sports*, 10(4), 58.

Pankow, K., Fraser, S. N., & Holt, N. L. (2021). A retrospective analysis of the development of psychological skills and characteristics among National Hockey League players. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19(6), 988-1004.

Potapchuk, A. A., Matveev, S. V., & Didur, M. D. (2021). Psychological features of female ice hockey players at start of their sports careers. *Theory and Practice of Physical Culture*, (6), 27-29.

Ronkainen, N. J., & Ryba, T. V. (2017). Is hockey just a game? Contesting meanings of the ice hockey life projects through a career-threatening injury. *Journal of sports sciences*, 35(10), 923-928.

Performance

Allain, J., Bloom, G. A., & Gilbert, W. D. (2018). Successful high-performance ice hockey coaches' intermission routines and situational factors that guide implementation. *The Sport Psychologist*, 32(3), 210-219.

Boland, M., Delude, K., & Miele, E. M. (2019). Relationship between physiological off-ice testing, on-ice skating, and game performance in division I female ice hockey players. *The Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research*, 33(6), 1619-1628.

Novák, D., Lipinska, P., Roczniok, R., Spieszny, M., & Stastny, P. (2019). Off-ice agility provide motor transfer to on-ice skating performance and agility in adolescent ice hockey players. *Journal of sports science & medicine*, 18(4), 680.

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Roczniok, R., Stanula, A., Maszczyk, A., Mostowik, A., Kowalczyk, M., Fidos-Czuba, O., & Zając, A. (2016). Physiological, physical and on-ice performance criteria for selection of elite ice hockey teams. *Biology of sport*, 33(1), 43-48.

Shynkaruk, O., Shutova, S., Serebriakov, O., Nagorna, V., & Skorohod, O. (2020). Competitive performance of elite athletes in modern ice hockey. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 20, 511-516.

Wagner, H., Abplanalp, M., von Duvillard, S. P., Bell, J. W., Taube, W., & Keller, M. (2021). The relationship between on-ice and off-ice performance in elite male adolescent ice hockey players—an observation study. *Applied Sciences*, 11(6), 27

This approach to research is important as it has fueled a focus on winning and ways to improve the performance of athletes, and teams. While there is absolutely a need to ensure a safe physical environment for athletes, the focus on elite athletes and their performance negates grassroots (amateur) hockey, and as noted in Table 1, there remains limited research with girls and women hockey players. In addition, it is not only the physical environment that needs to be safe from an inclusion lens but athletes need to be safe from microaggressions and abuse. It should also be noted here that research on zero-tolerance policies in hockey is focused

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primarily on concussions rather than current issues like racism and homophobia (as discussed in a subsequent section, there are issues with these policies regardless). For example, the NHL reports that in 1995-96 there were 17 reported concussions, and this prompted the creation of a concussion program in 1997 as it was estimated that there were “1.8 concussions per 1000-player hours” (Benson et al., 2011, n.p.). Initial research on concussions was focused on rates, trends, and impact on players however, the continued rise in concussions speaks to the elevation of ice hockey violence with respect to competitiveness. Moreover, as demonstrated in January 2023, the enforcement of concussion protocols remains questionable in professional ice hockey as Jean-Gabriel Pageau was hit by Alex Ovechkin and needed support off the ice as he was visibly in distress but later returned to continue the game (Kennedy, 2023).

Elite Hockey Masculinity

In hockey, the standard has evolved to one that is white and a specific type of masculinity. In addition, other outcomes of a hegemonic hockey trope are also in the margins, including homophobia, sexism, and ableism and will be unpacked as outcomes or symptoms of the culture of accumulation that has become our national winter sport. Elite hockey masculinity can be understood from the sub-themes of hegemonic masculinity, hockey culture, violence, and inclusion. Before understanding inclusion, the system needs to be understood from its’ exclusive makeup. The system needs reform before it can consider inclusion. However, there remain gaps in some key areas such as with mental health research, as noted by Rice et al. (2016) and Dormer (2020) and in inclusion in hockey, as will be shortly discussed.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Notions of masculinity are historically and culturally embedded. Within society, inherited understandings of masculinity continue to be contested, struggled over, silenced and transformed. Hockey has emerged as a central site in the social production of masculinity that fosters narrowly defined masculine traits such as overly aggressive play (violence), heteronormativity, xenophobia, homophobia, and effeminophobia. Effeminophobia is a concept which refers to the fear of being perceived as feminine or having overly feminine traits, behaviours, or characteristics. Messner (1989) states that “boys come to sports, not as blank slates, but with some imprinting of what it means to be a man” (p. 74-75). Within the

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context of elite-level hockey, this particular, narrowly defined and practiced hegemonic masculinity is deeply rooted. Connell (2005) defined hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (p. 77), and men’s ice hockey allows this hegemony to proliferate through the bodies of male hockey players as “exemplars” of a hypermasculine identity (Messner, 2002, p. 77). Violence arises from hypermasculinity, and hegemony maintains hypermasculinity’s hold, thus, male hockey players need to work between both (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Lusher & Robins, 2009; Messner, 1989, 1990; Weinstein, Smith, & Wiesenthal, 1995; Young, White, & McTeer, 1994).

Traditional and desirable, elite hockey masculinity is often predicated on an overly physical and aggressive play that has been an ascending practice since regulated hockey began and, at times, was in opposition to other styles of ice hockey, such as played in Europe and early Canada. Despite Messner’s (1990) findings that most males are not comfortable committing overly aggressive acts, many players continue to perform such acts, and here we need to problematize this resilience of masculine violence as a precursor for belonging within men’s ice hockey through grooming practices and hazing rituals for example. The socialization process becomes problematic as young men begin to embody certain traits of hegemonic masculinity that manifest in attitudes such as heteronormativity, xenophobia, homophobia, and effeminophobia (Schmitt, 1998). These traits, referred to as “toxic” or “hyper,” are frequently perpetuated and legitimized in various social contexts that extend beyond the limited confines of hockey through the idolization of these cultural symbols, as hockey is a beloved sport in Canada. The institutional violence in men’s ice hockey offers young boys a vision and rite of passage towards manhood as hegemonic masculinity remains “revered” and normalized through the media and through young boys aspiring to become hockey players (Young, White, & McTeer, 1994, p. 178; Weinstein, Smith, Wiesenthal, 1995).

Connell (2005) stated that not all men identify with normative hegemonic masculinity, however, “the majority of men gain from its hegemony” (p. 79), which she called the patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005; Messner 2000). Those that benefit from hegemonic masculinity without participating in its reproduction are complicit, allowing domination to

perpetuate despite internal resistance towards participating in forms of violence. Despite the fact that many traits of hegemonic masculinity remain entrenched in the Canadian Hockey League (CaHL⁶), the NHL and minor sports, this concept is neither fixed nor essentialized but is fluid and emerging. Studies conducted with boys and men playing elite and professional hockey reveal that although elite-level hockey appears to embrace and enact more fluid forms of masculinities, traditional hegemonic masculine traits are still desired (Fowler, 2021; Skuce, Fowler, Moore, 2022).

Hockey Culture(s)

Men's ice hockey has emerged as a dominant site for the social reproduction of hypermasculinity, a site where boys and men learn what it means to be a man – on the playground, on the pond, or watching games (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

An image depicting the layers of people impacted by the game of hockey.

⁶ Referring to the current Canadian Hockey League as CaHL seeks to restore the power of the acronym and honour the Coloured Hockey League



Note: From unpublished research, Hockey Dialogues (Fowler, unpublished).

Within the Canadian context, hockey is not only a site of a reproduction of hypermasculinity but where Canadians find themselves with a sense of belonging and pride through a national identity ensconced in men's ice hockey (Allain, 2008, 2011; Robidoux, 2001). This shared identity causes fans and non-players to lean into this ideal masculine identity which demonstrates grit and toughness based on hegemonic masculinity and the expectation hockey players “grind out” through the pain of violence on their bodies, akin to the pioneering spirit of the colonization of Canada. Violence within hockey culture contributes to a player's identity as those who engage in overly aggressive plays convey their strength to an audience and other players (Young, White, McTeer, 1994) and these plays are often rewarded by repeated airtime on sports shows such as the now cancelled iconic hockey show: *The Coaches Corner*. Commentated by Ron McLean and Don Cherry, *The Coaches Corner* featured players who engage in violent acts and demonstrate toughness and grit and Cherry effeminated players who did not engage in violence:

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The ones I'm really disgusted with The bunch of pukes that fought before -- Stu Grimson, Chris Nilan, Jim Thomson — the reason, 'Oh, the reason that they're drinking, drugs and alcoholics is because they fight.' You turncoats, you hypocrites. (Ho, 2019, np)

Hockey Night in Canada (HNIC) has historically been the most consistently popular public broadcast program in Canada and thus remains a dominant and vital cultural site for shaping and regulating North American masculinities (Rowland, 2013; Scherer & Whitson, 2009). In the 2022 - 2023 season alone, headlines included violent behaviours of coaches, racism and sexism in broadcasts, but still, headlines encouraging violence, such as “The Battle of Alberta” or “The Battle of the Original Six,” remain and have seen seismic rumblings into the acceptance of hypermasculine conduct within the NHL and beyond. It has not gone unnoticed, for example, that the firing of Don Cherry was directly linked to masculinity, racism, xenophobia and sport (National Post Staff, 2019). A national debate in sport erupted after his xenophobic remarks raised further discussion about white male privilege in sport culture, and as HNIC now runs parallel with HNIC Punjabi, what message of masculinity is being shared with a generation of new Canadians?

To belong within hockey culture assumes a certain identity and ability to perform acts of violence. Winning is often based on “the successful utilization of violence” (Messner, 1990, p. 203), and Messner furthers that violent sports offer men a place to hold onto hegemonic masculinity. Through the narrowing of hockey culture towards the elite white cisgender, heteronormative, middle-upper class male, men become isolated within an institution which gives a reprieve from broader society's uptake of equity issues for People of Colour, women, and LGBTQ2S+ peoples (Messner 1989). This isolation not only fuels space for opposition to social justice movements as recently demonstrated with NHL players refusing to wear Pride jerseys, but denies access to learning opportunities and accountability. The cultural status of elite hockey players maintains its hegemony through the embeddedness of hypermasculinity on men's bodies, as well as the surveillance strategies enacted on male ice hockey players, including adhering to the “code” (Allain, 2008, 2014; Atkinson, 2010; Fowler, 2021; Messner, 1989; MacDonald, 2014; Young, 1993). In addition to fans and media leaning into violence, the

resilience of “the boy code” or “the man-box” or “the bro code” or “the locker room code” within hockey culture offers an insidious form of surveillance on elite male ice-hockey players and young boys. Fear of speaking out against violence or turning away from a fight often results in effemination, ridicule, or being benched. Not only are players expected to perform hypermasculine identities, but if they step out of this identity, they risked loosening their belonging to the game.

Violence

One of the most potent forces in shaping the nature of normative masculinity in hockey is the discourse surrounding the practice and style of game played and the influence of tradition. Tradition has thus far established that hockey is a white sport and, with a focus on the men’s ice hockey team in Canada and internationally, also a masculine space. As noted previously, some of the innovations of the game originated in the CHL, such as the butterfly technique invented by Henry “Braces” Franklyn, goalies leaving the crease to engage in gameplay, and the slap shot invented by Eddie Martin, who played for the Halifax Eureka in 1906 (McKenzie & Joseph, 2023). The CHL also stressed the importance of sportsmanship, community building, and athleticism however, as the NHL took over as the lead institution of hockey, the style of gameplay shifted to one that was focused on winning, professionalism, and a business identity (Dennie, 2021). Hockey was also influenced by the influx of other countries in Europe and Russia, which caused a noticeable difference in the style of gameplay. Canadian hockey “privileges particular expressions of hegemonic masculinity while simultaneously marginalizing alternative masculinities, which are considered feminine” (Allain, 2008, p. 463). As international players began to take spots in North American leagues such as the CaHL, differences in the style of the game were apparent. Allain’s (2008) study with CaHL players revealed that international players not only found the game style difficult to adjust to, but the locker room culture was also alienating. Not only were the rules or size of the ice different, but the focus on aggression and the need to be “fast and tough” contrasted the international roots of gameplay (Allain, 2008; Vaz, 1982). European and Russian players were used to a style of game that focused on passing and skating rather than the aggressive masculine violence the Canadian game was privileging (Allain, 2008). However, Canadian hockey was not always like

this. Turning back to the CHL and Indigenous roots of Ricket, hockey was more than a “rough and tumble” sport (Allain, 2008, p. 471). Allain notes that there was a “gentlemanly” Canadian ice hockey identity in the 1940s and 1950’s as amateur athletes were considered role models for children, youth, and internationally (p. 469). However, the accumulation of gold medals marked the shift towards the need to stay on the podium and the move toward professionalism in hockey.

The structure and regulations governing Canadian ice hockey have also contributed to the prevalence of violence. As the premier professional league, the NHL sets the standards for the sport and has historically (currently) tolerated aggressive behaviour. The role of enforcers, players whose primary function is to engage in physical altercations and protect their teammates, has been ingrained in the league's culture (Boyle, 2014; Kong, 2013; Thelen, 2022). While efforts have been made in recent years to address excessive violence, the lingering perception of enforcers as integral to the game has perpetuated an acceptance of aggression. The broader Canadian society, with its emphasis on toughness and a macho pull-up-your-bootstraps culture, as noted in Allain’s (2008) study, has profoundly impacted the acceptance of violence in ice hockey. Popular media, including movies and television shows (*Coaches Corner*), often portray fighting as a spectacle, contributing to its glorification and normalization (Boyle, 2014; Emery, McKay, Campbell, & Peters, 2009; Lorenz & Osborne, 2017). Moreover, fans' demand for physicality and aggressive play, coupled with media coverage often highlighting violent incidents, creates a feedback loop that perpetuates the cycle of violence within the sport. Fandom also becomes a site to reproduce violence in hockey (Dennie, 2021; Kalman-Lamb, 2018; Kampersal, 2017; Sidani, Hyatt, & Kerwin, 2021). Popkin et al. (2023) recently revealed the impact of long-term hockey violence, finding that players who engaged in violence on the ice had an “earlier age at death” and often had “distinct” deaths (p. 6). Meaning players who engaged in repeated violence died younger than they otherwise would have and often died from self-inflicted violence such as suicide or overdose. With the wealth of concussion research, as briefly demonstrated above, and the attempt at zero-tolerance policies to eliminate concussions, we must question why fighting and full contact remain a part of ice hockey. Popkin’s study demonstrates that the acceptance, and even the expectation, of fighting

and contact in ice hockey, has profoundly impacted men's bodies, indeed their lives, despite zero-tolerance policies and safety measures.

Sports, in general, are often highlighted as a masculine arena, and few sports are more commonly associated with hypermasculinity than hockey (Tjønndal, 2016). Hockey organizations possess a taken-for-granted license to showcase the use of violence as part of the game, seen as a retreat from the mundane or predictable world of everyday life where acts of physical aggression and harm are normally prohibited and criminalized (Atkinson, 2010; Young, 1993). As an institution, ice hockey creates a culture of ideological insularity regarding violence in sport, underpinned by a historical ethos of traditional masculinity and aggression. In examining masculinity and sport, researchers borrow from the work of the aforementioned Connell (1995, 2005, Connell, & Messerschmidt, 2005) and her theoretical roots in "hegemonic masculinity." Hegemonic masculinity is built upon the theory of men's hierarchical power and privilege over other men and women. In looking at the culture of elite sport, many researchers have argued that sporting environments produce exalted forms of hegemonic masculinity – hypermasculinity – that link power and privilege to performances of strength, skills, pain, tolerance, aggression, heterosexuality, and toughness (Atkinson, 2011; Burdekin & Morton, 2015; Light & Kirk, 2000; Pringle, 2005, 2008; Tjønndal, 2016). With the desire and popularity of being an elite athlete in ice hockey, the production of the hegemonic masculine ideal has been treated as natural – indeed, required – in turn, normalized or invisible, much like whiteness. These messages of the dominant hegemonic male have shaped and continue to shape the ideology of what normative masculinity embodies and projects, particularly as it is perpetuated within the context of hockey. Hypermasculinity not only thrives in this male-dominated environment but also forces boys and men to withstand injuries (or find methods to cope) and engage in violent acts on the ice, which are not criminalized, but rewarded (Hickey, 2008; Messner, 1989; Young, White, & McTeer, 1994). Being human has become synonymous with masculinity in hockey culture, providing a "label-free existence" for white male ice hockey players thus, it also becomes natural to continue to leave *Others* with labels in the margins as outcomes of this privileged white male space (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 302).

Inclusion in Hockey

The lack of lived inclusivity in hockey culture remains, for example, with limited roles of women and with 2021 marking the first openly gay player to be on contract with the NHL (Allen, 2019; Benjamin, 2021). The lack of diversity in race, gender, and sex does not allow for exposure to multiple identities and normative categories other than the traditional hegemonic masculine. This ongoing exclusion propagates and privileges those that subscribe to experiences of heteronormativity through practices that centre on othering femininity, other races, and cultures resulting in the outcomes such as homophobia, racism, and sexism, as will be discussed in the next section. Even as women attempt to regain space within hockey, they need to adopt a more masculine frame and prop up the violence that breeds on the ice, and when they fail, fans reply with complaints such as the petition to remove Cassie Campbell-Pascall as a sports commentator (Stew, 2019). The role of women also becomes a performative measure, such as when the NHL used women to express its' diversity, as seen during the 2021 NHL draft where the Chicago Blackhawks draft picks were announced by women staff (Chicago Blackhawks Communications, 2021) during the same time Kyle Beach's lawsuit alleging sexual assault was filed (Westhead, 2021).

Inclusion in ice hockey is limited in this scoping review, as there is little to no research on inclusion in ice hockey. Using the search method for this review, searching for the keywords of "inclusion" and "ice hockey" returned zero results. However, in the next section, we will review the literature on the outcomes of a narrowed hypermasculine space, but with little to no specific research on inclusion in ice hockey, how will we know when this is achieved? Inclusion is a process which emerged through *Others* who were pushed to the margins fighting for the centre, such as in education. Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 was a landmark case declaring segregation based on race was unconstitutional and violated the 14th Amendment in the United States (Warren, 1954). This case impacted the education that we know today and helps in framing inclusion, a process which the NHL has begun recently. The "Accelerating Diversity & Inclusion" report marks seven key areas of focus for inclusion: leadership, education, employment, marketing, partnerships, participation, and community engagement and, importantly, a "relaunch" of the Hockey is for Everyone campaign (NHL, n.d.).

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However, inclusion cannot be an itemized list. Counterstories remain in education despite Brown vs. Board. For example, the United States “is the only industrialized nation in the west that has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” (Padilla, 2022, p. 54) and in Canada, only 44% of First Nations children who reside on reserve graduate from high school (Canada, 2018). Listening and engaging with counter-stories is key in developing a pathway towards inclusion. Counter-stories are derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990; Crenshaw, Gotanda, & Peller, 1995), which is a theory that uses counter-stories as a means to demonstrate the gaps which remain in an “inclusive” society. CRT recognizes that the system is culpable and needs to be restructured to be a reflection of society rather than the historical builders of society. The exclusion of the CHL, for example, is a counter-story to the origin story of ice hockey in Canada. The institution of ice hockey in Canada is not inclusive, as will be outlined in the next section, as it has been built as a specific type of establishment for a specific identity.

Hockey’s Fabric

Ice hockey in Canada’s fabric has been narrowed by the threads of masculinity and whiteness, producing a culture of accumulation. The narrowing was aligned with Canada’s development of an independent nation-state amid periods of colonization, war, strife, and globalization. A theme which emerged from this review included ecological systems theory which is a theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and recognizes that individuals are not isolated from the structural social institutions of everyday life (Leonard, 2011; Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013). Despite the legacy of hockey’s birthright, the narrowing has impacted individual's and Canadian society’s perceptions of ice hockey and Canadian identity. With over 5 414 Canadian hockey players having played in the NHL, we cannot deny the influence of Canadian ice hockey on hockey and the potential to create positive change. As demonstrated previously, ice hockey is a white, male, cis, hetero space resulting in boys adopting masculine traits to fit in and hang on to the potential of becoming an NHL player – their idols and role models. However, looking at ecological systems theory, the impact of the current fabric not only privileges a specific hockey masculinity but produces the outcomes of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, xenophobia, and effeminophobia. The next section of this review focuses

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on research from the margins – the outcomes of whiteness and hypermasculinity.

Hypermasculinity is the enlargement of masculine traits such as violence, aggression, and stoicism – traits that were rewarded by Don Cherry and are still in the limelight with commentator/analyst Kevin Bieska who is a regular commentator/analyst on HNIC and SportsNet and also “holds the franchise record for most post-season penalty minutes by a defenceman” (SportsNet, 2022a). Has commentating changed since the firing of Don Cherry?

Outcomes of an Unhealthy Culture

The current fabric of ice hockey, specifically focusing on the boys’ and men’s games, is not in a good place. The narrowed focus on masculinity and whiteness has created an atmosphere reminiscent of our history of colonization in Canada. Again, hockey does not operate in isolation. It can drive meaningful change or continue to focus on accumulating medals and national and international pride. To shift the culture, we must examine how the current fabric impacts and addresses inclusion in ice hockey. The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (n.d.) defines inclusion as a process in which organizations provide full access to “buildings and facilities, workspaces, information and communications, conferences and events.” The strategy provides a framework for programming, organizational culture, and leadership through an intersectional lens. Derived from Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work in CRT, intersectionality defined by the United Nations includes “factors such as gender, age, and location” (United Nations, n.d.) as these inform an individual’s societal experiences. As noted, the outcomes of an unhealthy hockey culture have led to an exclusive culture where People of Colour, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, women, people in poverty, and *Others* are pushed to the margins – are not welcome. However, men in this culture are also struggling with the outdated hegemonic masculine culture that is ingrained in hockey culture due to the focus on violence and the culture of silence, as Kalman-Lamb (2018) states, there remains an “unapologetically naked rehearsal of hegemonic whiteness that persists” (p. 290).

Racism

Racism in ice hockey has historical roots. From the erasure – or whitewashing – of the CHL and the use of hockey as a tool in Indian Residential Schools began the threads of racism which remain (McKenzie & Joseph, 2023). White-washing is a process by which history has been

narrated to elevate whiteness over other cultural roots and reinforces racism and stereotypes. Historically, hockey has been exclusive and inaccessible to marginalized communities resulting in the limited number of diverse players in the system today. However, this is changing. Demographic racial data from Hockey Canada indicated that between 2018 – 2022, 53.05% of registered players were white⁷ however, a gender divide remains with 82.3% males and 17.6% female (D. Pattyn, Personal communication, May 24, 2023). This positive movement towards racial diversity is heartening but not a panacea, as this data would be useful to help track across divisions, competitive levels, and within Hockey Canada's staff and leadership makeup. For example, the NHL's diversity and inclusion report (n.d.) shows 83.6% of employees and teams are white. Thus, knowing the point to which ice hockey becomes exclusively white would be helpful to determine a key intervention point for increasing equity and access. However, this would be only part of a solution as instances of racism on the ice, including slurs, derogatory chants, physical abuse, and the ongoing use of racialized logos, cause harm to individuals and create a hostile environment.

This hostile environment is well documented by researchers and racialized players as they feel safe to speak out. The embedded nature of racism in a white sport can no longer be ignored. Courtney Szto's work, for example, chronicles the South-Asian experience of racism (Bains & Szto, 2020; Szto, 2016, 2018, 2020; Szto & Gruneau, 2018). Scholarship on Black racism returns to the historical roots of the CHL and the ongoing Black experiences of racism as in Boyd, 2020; Cummings & Burroughs, 2023; Harris, 2007; Lorenz & Murray, 2014; McKenzie & Joseph, 2023; Sandrin & Palys, 2012; Wilks, 2019 for example. However, media is also an important inclusive gauge of the current trends in ice hockey. In 2020, Akim Aliu wrote a poignant essay, *Hockey is not for Everyone* (Aliu, 2020), about his experiences with racism in Hockey, stating that he was the "kid that didn't "get" the culture" and that he "had to fight for [his] life" to prove that he "wouldn't give up on the game" (n.p.). As the only Black player on the team, his experiences with racism and hazing prompted him to engage in violence and question the purpose of playing hockey. He was not alone. Mark Fraser wrote about his

⁷ Hockey Canada uses "Caucasian" however, it is recommended to use "white" (uncapitalized) to align with research-informed racial colonial "categories"

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experiences of racism in his essay, *Silence is Violence* (Fraser, 2020). He talks about fandom telling him to “stick to basketball” and that before he was signed to a team at the age of 33, a general manager asked the team captain if Fraser would be “bad for team morale” (n.p.). Fraser also poses an important question asking, “What’s changed? The same issues that plagued Willie O’Ree, Tony McKegney, Val James or Claude Vilgrain are still the same issues that we, as Black hockey players, have to deal with today” (n.p.).

In 1974, William R. McMurtry was tasked by the Minister of Community and Social Services in Ontario to investigate a game between Bramalea and Hamilton which resulted in excessive violence and the withdrawal of the Bramalea Blues from the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) 1974 playoff series. The game in question resulted in 189 penalty minutes, however, witnesses reported that many penalties were not called. There were “several vicious fights,” and five players and one official sustained injuries from fights (p. 15). Fans were also engaging in violence with each other and directed at players and coaches, resulting in “fourteen police officers” at the arena (p. 15). The resulting series was forfeited as Bramalea refused to play the next game in the series as they feared for the player's safety, however, due to the rule structure, Bramalea was penalized for prioritizing player safety by the OHA. The game, the playoff series, mattered more than player safety from violence. In February 2023, a similar thread of the game over violence reminds us of Mark Fraser’s question, “what has changed?” Coach Brian MacGillvray pulled his U11 A1 team off the ice during the third period due to Black racism. Players were called racial slurs by opposing players throughout the game, stating that whenever one of their top players went on the ice, the Ridge Meadows’ coach and players shouted “banana” (Larsen, 2023). As of this writing, the result was that MacGillvray was terminated and the team disqualified from the tournament as the rules require that teams play despite threats of violence, as in the Bramalea and Hamilton game, or racism projected at children. The incident in British Columbia resulted in Members of Parliament asking for “details” of the incident, while the Bramalea-Hamilton game resulted in a provincial inquiry (McMurtry, 1974). This begs the question of the tolerance of violence and anti-Black racism in hockey over time, but also that the current, and continued state of the rules of play (and enforcement) do not promote inclusion or the safety of players.

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McMurtry (1974) states with respect to the 1974 game, “the actual causes of violence were symptomatic of a trend in amateur hockey which threatens to become much worse if remedial steps are not taken” (p. 15), which they were not, resulting in increased levels of violence, and racial violence as noted in the stories by Aliu, Fraser and the research noted above. However, if hockey cannot acknowledge racism is an issue, it will remain. For example, a keyword search in the *Hockey Canada Action Plan* (Hockey Canada, 2022b) and the *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Cromwell, 2022) does not include “racism” despite Hockey Canada reporting over “900 documented or alleged incidents of on-ice discrimination – verbal taunts, insults, intimidation – across all levels and age groups during the 2021 – 22 season” (Clipperton, 2022). As demonstrated in the Hamilton-Bramalea and Surrey-Ridge Meadows games, the rules are not formed from an intersectional lens, nor are they placing player safety above the game. Indeed, nationalism, winning, and a sense of pride are stronger in sport.

Homophobia and Sexism

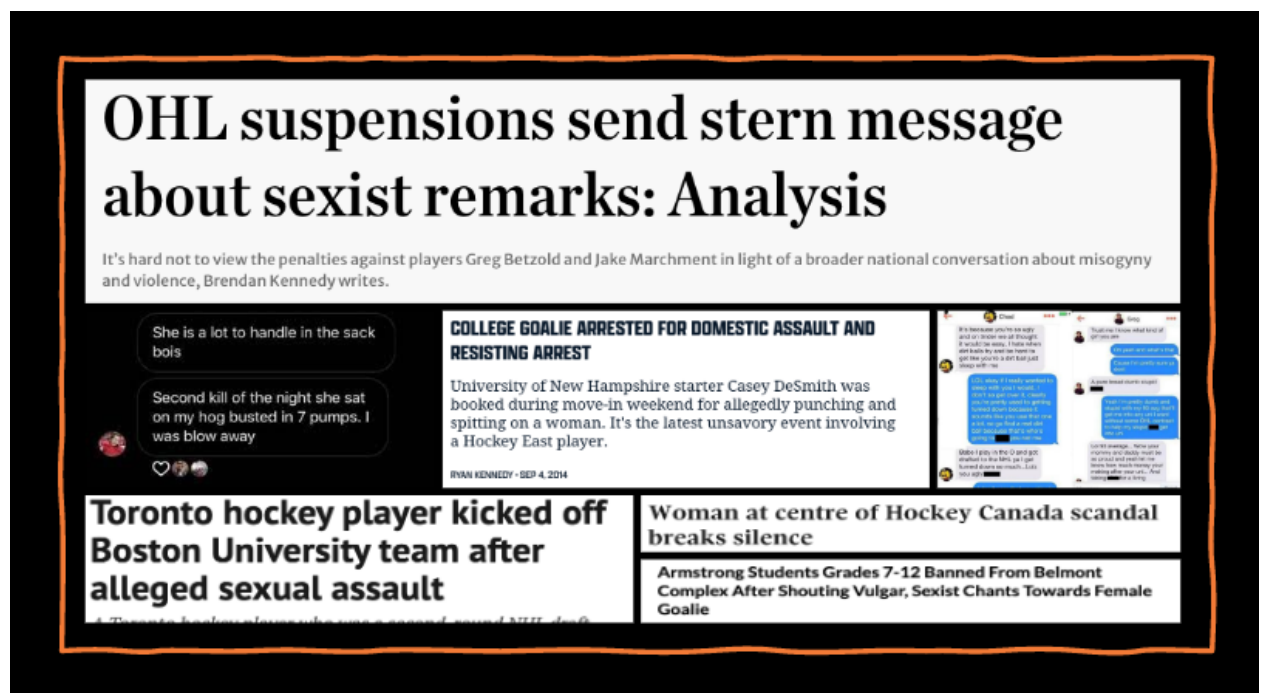
MacDonald & McGillis (2021) state that until sexism in hockey culture is addressed, gay men will remain marginalized. As mentioned previously, 2021 noted the first openly gay male hockey player despite there now being in Canada over 1 million members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, with 44% gay men (Canada, 2022). Given the number of boys and men playing hockey, there ought to be more openly gay men and boys playing the sport. Sexism in hockey culture is rampant, everyday sexism is invisible, much akin to whiteness and hypermasculinity (Valentine, Jackson, & Mayblin, 2014). Sexism and misogyny brought hockey to this point in Canada with the testimonies and news reports stemming from the 2003 and 2018 World Junior Teams alleged gang-sexual assaults (Burke, 2022). Women and girls in ice hockey are objectified, used as props and party points through hazing rituals and as a means to insight performance (Curry, 1991; Fowler, Moore, Skuce, In Press; Prettyman, 2003; Robinson, 1998). Robidoux (2020) states that “Canada’s history is based in patriarchy, hetero-sexism and capitalism” (p. 75), and the threads of “individualism, racism, sexism, and capitalism” form the fabric of our colonial history, formed alongside the sport of hockey (McKegney & Phillips, 2020, p. 108). Despite this entrenchment, similar to the lack of research on inclusion in hockey, there

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is a lack of research on sexism. Much hockey research is completed outside organizational structures, not through or with institutions like the NHL or Hockey Canada. Rather, hockey research is often done surveying social media data (Allain, 2008, 2011; Dickerson, 2016; Kennedy, Silva, Coelho & Cipoli, 2019; MacDonald & Ellison, 2018), with individuals on their own time, such as in our study, using public data such as with concussions (Donaldson, Asbridge, & Cusimano, 2013) and, as noted previously, concussion research has taken a priority. Access to players and teams is granted to improve the game and win rather than engage in research on sexism, racism, and masculinity. Access to teams is often granted to researchers as a means to improve performance, with hesitancy to work with organizations for fear of revealing the 'dark side' of ice hockey.

Sexism and homophobia are, like racism, revealed through player stories and news media, as noted in Figure 2.

Figure 2.



Note: Note: Slide excerpt from Authors presentation at North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2022 (Fowler, Moore, Skuce, 2022)

The above headlines are but a small snapshot of the embeddedness of sexism in hockey culture. Long before the recent highly publicized reports about sexual violence and silencing in

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hockey culture stemming from the alleged gang-sexual assaults by members of the Canadian team at the 2003 and 2018 International Ice Hockey Federation's World Junior Championships (Leijon, 2022), journalists and academics were sounding the alarm (Curry, 1991; Gruneau & Whitson; Ingham & Dewar, 1999; Pappas et al., 2004; Robinson, 1998). Robinson (1998) states that sexism and sexual violence in hockey are a result of "men who, through a series of social and psychological experiences and rationalizations, have learned to lie to themselves about their behaviour until it becomes, in their view, normal" (p. 38). Normal. Prettyman (2003), for example, demonstrates how coaches use misogynistic slurs as motivation for players but also threaten through effemination in and out of the dressing room. Curry (1991) pointed out that the objectification of women is used as team bonding, especially in the dressing room. While arguments will be that this is a thing of the past, our recent data demonstrates otherwise, such as when one of our participants spoke about a coach who drew pubic hair around a net and told the players to "crash the net hard as if it was your girlfriend" (Fowler, Moore, Skuce, In Press); another shared his experience with a coach taking his team to a strip club (he was an "older" player on the team – 19 at the time); coaches doing "body shots off a 15-year old girl at a rookie party" and the following memory shared by a participant:

There was an incident one time where we did like a secret Santa gift for people. And somebody had impregnated somebody, and I think it was a girlfriend or somebody at the time. And the girl ended up getting an abortion. And his secret Santa gift, somebody gave him a coat hanger. And it was like, at the time everybody was laughing, and like I definitely participated in laughing, I thought as an 18 or 17-year-old, I see all these 20-year-olds laughing like oh yeah that's a good joke. And now I'm like, I've had friends that have had abortions and things like that, and I'm like that's just disgusting honestly. I... yeah, like, kind of speechless.

The data fragments above from our research are not historical – not back-in-the-day. The above coat-hanger incident happened in the past five years, for example, and yet, these incidents remain unreported and accepted. Robinson (1998) outlines in an appendix a "List of

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Incidents Compiled by the CHA's Director of Rules and Regulations," which includes incidents of physical abuse, racial slurs and sexism. Some highlights include:

- A coach of an atom team used the word "cunt" to refer to girls on the opposing, integrated team;
- A team of adolescents was shown pornographic magazines as an incentive to win hockey games. More wins, more porn;
- A novice-level coach was removed from his duties for verbally abusing seven- to nine-year-old boys, including swearing, making sexist remarks, intimidation, ridiculing, and screaming. Two months later, one of the parents who was instrumental in having the coach removed discovered that he was coaching young boys again in the same city (p. 240 – 246).

Again, the same threads of whiteness, hypermasculinity, and violence are normalized and invisible. A similar keyword search in the *Hockey Canada Action Plan* (2022b) and the *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Cromwell, 2022) keeps sexism, misogyny, and homophobia invisible. As stated by Hockey Canada, as noted in an open letter by the Canadian Women's Team, the action plan is a "step towards addressing toxic behaviours" (SportsNet, 2022b) however, without naming the outcomes of an unhealthy culture, how will we know that change has occurred?

Elitism

It is commonly accepted that the cost of hockey is beyond many families, which prompts 'fee relief' programs like the Hockey Canada Assist Fund, Jumpstart as well as provincial funds such as in Alberta, including the Calgary Flames Community Grant and Hockey Alberta member grant program (Hockey Alberta, n.d.). These funds attempt to address the financial costs of the sport but do not address the elitism which stems from the exclusiveness of the sport (Allain, 2014, 2012; Fowler, 2021, 2023; Ryba, Ronkainen, & Selänne, 2015). As previously demonstrated, the narrowing of the sport to suit cis-white-hetero men, who can afford to enter, reinforces the preferential status of the hockey identity in Canada. This elitism and focus on becoming a professional hockey player is spilling into the Canadian education system through private hockey academies and hockey academies attached to our public school system.

Schooling is not meeting the needs of these young hockey players, creating its own “separate” and exclusive system to cater to the needs of these young players (Kenway & Koh, 2015; Koh & Kenway, 2012). Moving an already exclusive system into a public system does nothing to advance inclusion in either, as this continues to reinforce the preferred identity associated with ice hockey (Hickey, 2008; Kenway & Koh, 2015; Leong, Chorney, Bradford, & Fowler, 2022; Messner, 2002). This avenue for young hockey players is supported by families who can afford the additional costs (some up to 10 000/year, see Appendix A). For players who regard this pathway as a career, schooling falls to the back burner, whereas families who prefer scholastic pursuits will encourage players to gain scholarships at post-secondary institutions (Moret & Ohl, 2019; Todd & Edwards, 2021).

The elitist pathway to further education or professional careers can come at a cost to the bodies of young players and the psychological impact of being socialized into an exclusive system at young ages. Overuse injuries are occurring at younger and younger ages, and often young players will not report injuries as a means to keep their playing time at par with others (Brunner, Bizzini, Niedermann & Maffiuletti, 2020; Kox et al., 2015; Schroeder et al., 2015). The increased focus on young players deciding on a pathway to education or a career further ensconces their socialization into the exclusive hockey culture, causing them to hide injuries and lean into the hypermasculine identity (Fowler, 2020, 2023; MacDonald, 2014; Weinstein, Smith & Wiesenthal, 1995). Socialization is the process by which individuals learn and understand their identity, language, values, beliefs, behaviours, customs – traditions are of value. Socialization is essential for developing children and youth as it establishes skills and attitudes needed to succeed in life. Thus in the exclusive world of ice hockey, socialization establishes that to be successful, to obtain scholarships or a career means one must adopt the traits that ice hockey currently awards – the ideal hypermasculine identity. Family plays a crucial role in this development, and parents must also be provoked into understanding the complexity of the current state of hockey. Gleddie (2013) interviewed PeeWee players who spoke about the time they had to devote and give up, to meet expectations placed on them by their parents. Participants spoke about the joy of being on a team and the “sacrifice” of time and having to give up other sports, friends, and activities (p. 270). This results in children

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growing up, learning, and being socialized during their developmental years in an environment that privileges the aforementioned traits as well as causes them to risk overuse injuries (Chamberlain, Hall, & Benson, 2021; Gleddie, 2013; Kenyon & McPherson, 1973; MacDonald, 2014).

Disabilities

One of the less acknowledged outcomes of hockey culture is the impact on people with disabilities. Their ability to play, even attend games, is hampered not only by a lack of access but the culture. In 2016, Mitchell Miller plead guilty to assaulting and bullying a Black disabled boy. While Miller has apologized, his continued acceptance into hockey, including the NHL, keeps winning above inclusion (Canadian Press, 2022). Logan Mailloux, charged and fined for sharing nude pictures of a woman, is also now included in the NHL (SportsNet Staff, 2022). Carson Briere was videoed pushing a female amputee's wheelchair down the stairs and, at the time of this writing, was suspended from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Mannie, 2023). However, winning and the game come first as both Miller and Mailloux sign NHL contracts (Mannie, 2023; Montreal Canadiens, 2022; NHL Bruins, 2022). When the game repeatedly comes before responding to the outcomes of an unhealthy culture, inclusion cannot be fully realized. These recent incidents send a message to young boys that you can bully, you can share private pictures and can destroy a disabled person's access to mobility and still be rewarded with a career in the NHL – players will be protected in the name of the game (Burke, 2022).

Young boys have limited opportunities to learn about alternate masculinities. Looking at the most popular television programs for boys, there are no LGBTQ2S+ lead characters, and characters with disabilities only count for 1.5% of overall characters (Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media, 2020; Reichert & Nelson, 2020). Reichert & Nelson (2020) published a boyhood index which reports that 62% of boys report hearing sexist comments or jokes at least once a week, 36% say once a day; boys aged 14 – 19 feel pressured by society to be aggressive or violent when they feel angry, and three out of four boys feel pressured to be strong; and 61% of boys between 10 – 19 feel pressured to play sports. Sport offers an opportunity to

provide representations of healthy masculinity and other forms of masculinities to assist the development of healthy boyhood and manhood – if it changes.

The rise in Sledge Hockey has been ongoing and offers an opportunity to play the game for many people with disabilities, with elevated awareness from Ryan Straschnitzki, who was a survivor of the Humboldt Bronco bus crash and is now a sledge hockey player (Graveland, 2021; Hockey Canada, 2016). Other disabilities, however, seek inclusion into the sport and USA Hockey, for example, has “opportunities” for people who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind, standing amputees, cognitive/developmental needs, and warrior hockey for veterans (USA Hockey, 2023). While separated from the main group, these leagues offer all bodies an opportunity to play the regulated game however, this is another area with limited research as there are limited opportunities for people with disabilities to play in the “regular” game. Waddell (2008) offers a brief snapshot of one player’s experience playing Junior B, who was “born without a left hand.” Stafford, however, also spoke about how he had to fit onto the team using a sense of humour about his “disability” as a means to make his team comfortable with his lack despite the coach placing him on the “penalty killing unit.” Players who do not “fit” must work harder to make their teammates comfortable such as when Brock McGillis recounts his experience playing hockey as a “closeted” (closeted as heteronormativity is considered normal) gay man. McGillis wrote a letter to his younger self warning of the implications of being socialized into a cis-hetero environment and that the “internal struggles will start to catch up and deteriorate your hockey career” (Blondeel, 2018, n.p.). Thus, having to fit into the exclusive hockey culture not only prompted the USA Disability Hockey but leagues such as the Calgary Inclusive Hockey Association (CIHA), which caters to the LGBTQ2S+ community but also others who are “looking for a more community focused/supportive hockey experience” (CIHA, 2023).

Mental Health

The focus on performance and winning has generated a wealth of research, as noted in Table 1., and is now also extending into the feasibility of training programs (Khoo, Fraser, & Orr, 2022; Lefebvre, Henderson, Salomie, Heath, & Bloom, 2022). However, an additional outcome of a hypermasculine environment such as ice hockey is poor mental health due to the threads woven into the fabric of elite hockey culture and the culture of silence. The machismo

environment and fear of effeminophobia do not allow room for boys and men to talk about mental health issues amongst their “brothers.” Akin to the fear of identifying as a gay man in a cis-hetero environment Akim Aliu had to “be invisible” (Aliu, 2020) as a Black man on a white team, and men with mental health struggles are also silenced. The silence of men speaking about mental health in hockey culture due to the pressure to conform to hypermasculinity is well documented (Allain, 2008; Alsarve, 2022; Fowler, 2021, 2023; Tjønndal, 2016; Weinstein, Smith, & Wiesenthal, 1995). Still, in the shadow of COVID-19, we are learning of the increased negative impact on mental health during the absence of organized sport demonstrating how sport impacts mental wellness (McGuine, et al., (2021). However, simply participating in sport is not a panacea. Within an unhealthy culture, we need to examine the mental health of athletes in this space. For example, racism is a determinant of health and harms mental health (Berry, Londoño Tobón, & Njoroge, 2021; Paradies et al., 2015; Williams & Etkins, 2021) and homophobia (Collier, Bos, & Sandfort, 2013; Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001; Ventriglio, et al., 2021) as well as a growing body of work on the impact of masculinity on men’s mental health.

In 2017, Corey Hirsch shared his journey of mental health and the impact of the culture of silence on his life. He spoke of “making excuses” to his team to opt out of team events, but the building pressure would not stop. The dark would not go away. When he was playing for the New York Rangers, he needed help but did not have the language to ask for help, especially in such an environment. Broadly speaking, young men are three times more likely to commit suicide than women, one of the leading causes of death for young people, and men under 45 account for 75% of deaths by suicide (Navaneelan, 2012). The rise in “excess deaths,” noticed during COVID-19, deaths beyond what is expected based on previous years, in Alberta and British Columbia in 2020 for people under the age of 45 saw a dramatic rise and specifically for men who accounted for 81% of the excess deaths (McKeen, 2021). The deaths have been tied to illicit drug use, exacerbated by the social isolation created by COVID-19 and the continued trend of men not seeking help. In 2020, Medicine Hat Alberta saw the loss of seven men who died by suicide, prompting calls to recognize that being a man is a risk factor for suicide (Fletcher, 2020). Help-seeking behaviour of men is restricted by societal notions of masculinity

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as well as the impact of living within a hypermasculine environment (Bonell, et al., 2023; Smith, Mouzon & Elliot, 2022). Corey Hirsh, could not find words, instead:

After the morning skate, I grabbed an extra stick blade from the bin and stuffed it in my bag. When I got back to my hotel, I sat on the edge of the bed in silence and took out the blade.

My plan was to break my hand and hide the injury until the next day at practice. That way, I could go down after taking a shot, and the team would send me home to recover without knowing what was really going on. In those days, the blades were wooden and heavy as hell. I smashed the blade against my left hand three or four times, as hard as I possibly could (Hirsch, 2017).

The combination of the culture of silence and hypermasculinity within the fabric of hockey culture is creating a troublesome space for all men. However, when men lack a language or the ability to dialogue about mental health, the answer is to acquiesce and go along with the hypermasculine identity. This not only causes an identity crisis, but also pushes men to stay within the narrowed space and act out violently, on the self, like Hirsch, or others such as the game between Bramalea and Hamilton, or the U11 game in Surrey, B.C.. Rises in racial, gender, and other forms of violence coupled with an inability for men with national status, like men's ice hockey players, to find alternative forms of masculinity result in the current unhealthy culture ice hockey is attempting to change. Change needs to move forward with a focus on intersectionality, as well as an ecosystems theory approach to organizational change.

Weaving New Threads

The work being undertaken by Hockey Canada and the NHL, for example, are good beginnings but needs to be research-informed and take an ecosystems approach with an intersectional lens. Research-informed programs have a higher likelihood of success, effectiveness, and impact. By leveraging existing knowledge and evidence, organizations can develop programs that are grounded in sound theory, be evidence-based, and demonstrate a commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes for their community and beyond. As Hockey Canada has a broad influence on the sport, and our understandings of masculinity, anything less

would be harmful. Grounding research findings to inform program design organizations can increase the likelihood of developing effective interventions or initiatives, allocating resources and interventions appropriately, building trust with members, prioritizing ethical concerns, and even adding new knowledge to the field by engaging in research with researchers. Responses to change have been to create lists, as noted in the NHL diversity report and the United Nations strategy for inclusion, however, this work needs to be undertaken from a holistic lens. A holistic lens means taking a comprehensive and intersectional perspective that considers the entirety of a system and its impact on society, rather than focusing on isolated parts or components – the win, the bad apple. It involves understanding the interdependencies, relationships, and interactions among various elements within a larger context. Attempts at change in sport have arisen through zero-tolerance policies for example with respect to concussions, but without a holistic, or ecosystems approach, these policies do not work, as shown with respect to concussions.

This final section will summarize the complexity of hockey culture before providing recommendations for Hockey Canada to move forward. Shifting a culture is heavy work, and cannot be done in isolation. Removing the barriers will be key in this shift as well as recognizing the reach Hockey Canada has to not only shift hockey culture, and make hockey inclusive, but shift the way Canadians understand masculinity and sport within an ecosystemic framework.

The Complex Pattern of Hockey Culture

The task of doing ethical work within hockey is considered complex, as unwritten codes of conduct circulate in a manner that does not necessarily fall within the official rules or broader set of values within an organization of the league (Pringle & Hickey, 2010). As mentioned above, the requirements to be successful in hockey are those based on tradition and have thus been normalized invisible. While pressures still mount to embody the hegemonic hypermasculine through athleticism, aggression, and skill, there are the unwritten codes that provide one with membership privilege, including fit body culture (Hakim, 2020; Monaghan & Atkinson, 2014; Whannel, 2002), objectification and conquest of women (Messner, 2002; Waling, 2019), and homosocial relationships with teammates (Haywood et al., 2017; Robidoux, 2001). Not buying into these team ideologies often leaves teammates ostracized by their team

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for not buying into team traditions, as experienced by Kyle Beach in one of the Chicago Blackhawks's sexual assault lawsuits. Kyle Beach reported being subjected to homophobia, humiliated, and harassed by teammates in front of coaches (Westhead, 2021). These unwritten rules are not solely policed by players but are also noted by organizations, coaches, and administration, as seen in Kyle Beach's lawsuit as well as with Akim Aliu, Mark Fraser, Corey Hirsch's experiences and Dougie Hamilton's inability to "fit" into a prescribed hockey culture (Ryan, 2019).

Coaches maintain an inordinate amount of power within organizations, and this power comes with its related problems, including sexual, emotional, and physical abuse (LoGuercio; SAACS, 2023; Stirling, Bridges, Cruz & Mountjoy, 2011). Coaches often are hired based on their previous experience as players and the merit of their coaching practices concerning team victories – especially former professional players. Thus, if a coach wins games, and is an excellent technical coach, there has been little to no reason to question their coaching style, even if abusive (Kirby & Demers, 2013; Rhind, Cook, & Dorsch, 2013; SAACS, 2023). Within the field of coaching are harbours of hypermasculinity and power as a coach's ability within hockey surpasses that of other professions in-regards to conformity. In a study by Kelly and Waddington (2006), they found, "that no matter how abusive or violent the coach's behaviour might be, his authority was not to be questioned and those who did question were punished, in this case being withdrawn from games" (p. 153). As a result, players embody a culture of silence associated with hegemonic hypermasculine ideals, one where they stay reticent, stay tough and do not speak about abuse or their mental health. Instead, they beat their hand with a skate guard. This has been mentioned by numerous previous, players who have only spoken out after their careers in fear of being ostracized, as well as players who write for *The Players' Tribune* or do interviews for news outlets such as W5's episode: *The Problem of Pain* (W5, 2022). Players need to feel safe and secure in sharing previous abuses from/with those in positions of power. In working to change the culture of hockey, buy-in needs to occur at all levels of the organization, and there must be direct discussions on how the culture of hegemonic hypermasculinity can be re-imagined from an organizational standpoint and using a trauma-informed approach with respect to disclosures of violence and maltreatment.

Sport-specific settings require a set of personal and relational shared outcomes. Trust, respect, communication and shared goals are fundamental elements, for example, in a coach-education program but so too should be a trauma-informed lens. A shift in sport culture and specifically in how masculinities are expressed, embraced, and paraded in Hockey Canada requires serious attention with a longitudinal approach for change that is enduring and empowering. Programmatic behavioural change may be one step to addressing various aspects of the problems. For example, in 2016, the NHL, alongside other major leagues, took steps to offer domestic violence and sexual assault training (Wawrow, 2016). The goal was to provide educational training that best supports players on how to seek help. It is, however short-sighted and indeed misunderstood to suggest that a program for change within a sport organization will stand alone without a change within a sport culture on all levels. As the discussion on sanctioned violence on-ice demonstrates, violence is a part of the culture therefore, how can domestic violence be eradicated if men are expected to be violent? There remain, however, much deeper and more nuanced approaches that will contribute to a coherent, cohesive and long-term approach to addressing the issues that currently challenge nationally organized sport associations such as Hockey Canada.

An institutional response is needed to increase player safety and for hockey to be more inclusive. Indeed, what is being considered with respect to player safety? Coach-athlete relationships for example require a substantive shift in what and how the issues in ice hockey have come to be known (Denison, Jones, & Mills, 2019). A quick response is often to institute zero-tolerance policies however these policies do not address the unequal power arrangements rooted in gender, race, class, sexuality, ableism, etc. – they do not engage with an intersectional approach (Pringle, Larsson, & Gerdin, 2019). Zero-tolerance policies emerged in the United States in the 1980s as a means to curtail the rise in an illicit drug epidemic. However, it was disbanded because of the discrepancy between the crime and the punishment (Schimmoeller, 2012; Verdugo, 2002). The practice, however, was eagerly adopted in other social institutions including schools as a means to reduce gun violence, drug offences, and bullying but what has emerged is what has been coined as the “school-to-prison pipeline” as zero-tolerance policies do nothing to address structural disparities and forms of oppression, except to elevate them as

seen here in Canada, as discussed, this is noted in the disparities of high school graduation rates of Indigenous students (Schimmoeller, 2012; Verdugo, 2002). These types of systems also do not build community or relationships within an organization and, instead, become a culture of compliance within a law-and-order ideology (Verdugo, 2002). Instead of addressing the unhealthy culture of accumulation, zero-tolerance approaches work at the surface, leaving more work to be done underneath – in the bowels to shift a culture, which includes naming the problems.

Policies require a pedagogic intervention. For example, if players, coaches, or officials are not aware of racist or sexist language, it will continue (Dennie, 2021). Training programs have arisen in Hockey Canada as a response to abuse rather than a preventative measure (Canada, 2022b). The *Speak Out!* Program came about after Sheldon Kennedy's sexual abuse was public and since this, the *Respect in Sport* programs have offered training to parents, players, and coaches (Canada, 2022b). However, these programs have not shifted the culture nor made ice hockey a completely safe space. While *Respect in Sport* has benefited the hockey community such as reduced antisocial behaviours towards opponents (Tamminen, McEwen, Kerr, & Donnelly, 2020), it clearly has not had the impact intended. The mismatch between knowledge and action is clear as noted in the Surrey B.C. U11 team's experience with racism. Training, without the alignment of policy and the ability for enforcement, will stagnate any movement toward change. Denison, et al. (2023) posit that educational programs done in isolation or as a "one-off" do not shift culture and are "insufficient to stop homophobic behaviours in male sport settings" (p. 1). Dialogue matters when igniting a culture change. Denison, et al. (2023) recommend a "captain's model" whereby captains, are trained in a train-the-trainer model and supported by coaches and officials. Captains are in the mix and have the ability to lead the team in a positive and inclusive direction with support from coaches, officials, and policy enforcement. Coaches and captains have an essential role in "establishing and reinforcing team norms," and interventions need to also include bystander intervention education to "create more supportive environments" for disclosures, addressing violence, and the outcomes of an unhealthy culture (Adhia, et al, 2023, p.8).

Another layer of complexity is the perception of the amateur and professional athlete. As McMurtry (1974) recommended, “a philosophy regarding the purpose of amateur hockey must be developed separate and apart from the criteria governing professional sport” (p. 25). When the Olympics made room for professional athletes in 1968, the line between both became and remains blurred. Young boys and girls don jerseys of their idols as they lace up their skates to play with friends and families as noted in Figure 2. When joining organization teams, they are often named after teams in the National Hockey League such as the Crowchild Hockey Association⁸ in Calgary, Alberta and the Ottawa West Golden Knights⁹, in Ontario. Logos in sport are also a site that requires change. In 2017, a seven-year-old player with the Crowchild Hockey Association refused to wear the jersey, missing her first season. She is an Indigenous girl and felt the logo and focus on stereotypical performances of Indigeneity was racist resulting in her refusal to wear the jersey – and in the denial of her ability to play with the club (Tierny, 2017). Again, a similar story to the Surrey B.C. team – the game means more than experiences of racism. The separation of the professional and the amateur needs to be addressed. Mason (1998) states that during regulated hockey growth, “Canada had been accused of professional practices for several years” however it was the founding of the International Hockey League (IHL) in 1904 that resulted in “open professionalism” in hockey (p. 5). Team names in the IHL were organic, grounded in a sense of place and community such as the “Miners”, “Coal Heavers”, and “Lock City Men”, however, these were also notably masculine in line with the Industrial Era (p. 6). During this time, players were jockeying for professional status to seek employment, however Canada “steadfastly claimed amateur status and publicly scorned professionalism” (p. 7). The introduction of the IHL, then eventually the Olympic decision in 1968 which allowed professional athletes to play, further entrenched the professional notion of ice hockey coupled with fandom’s demand for “high-calibre competition” forced Canada to consider the “merits of upholding amateurism or paying players to maintain a competitive team” (p.10). The amateur and professional line in Canadian hockey has a history of instability.

⁸ Crowchild Hockey Association, <https://www.zoominfo.com/c/crowchild-hockey-association/10044291>

⁹ Ottawa West Golden Knights, <https://www.owgk.ca/>

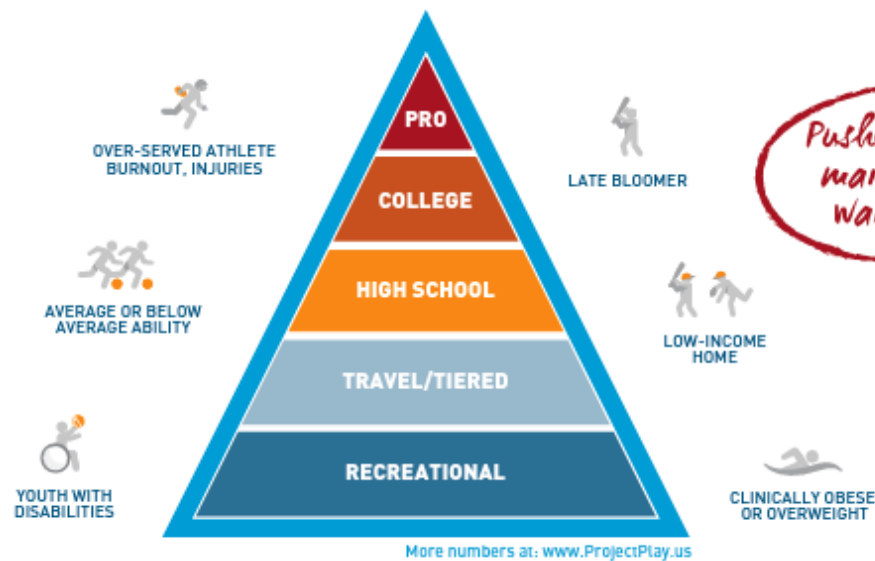
A Hockey Ecosystem

The multiplicity of hockey culture and the complexity within warrant an approach to change that continues to follow how hockey has developed. Hockey has not grown in isolation, instead, it has grown alongside colonization, nationalism, wars, and civil rights movements, and ascribed to accumulate dominance on an international stage. Thus, hockey needs to also consider its role in shaping our current understandings of masculinity, whiteness, diversity, and inclusion. Hockey's culture of accumulation has resulted in it becoming synonymous with being Canadian however, that has prescribed a specific trope of Canadian: one that is rough, tough, stoic, aggressive, and a white-cis-hetero boy or man. The impact of the narrowed professional focus of hockey culture's impact is being realized in research, media, and players' stories of exclusion and the culture of accumulation needs to be moved to one of a culture of health. In 2015, the Aspen Institute published a report, Project Play, and outlines a number of barriers also included in this review such as gender, race, and income noting that household income is the main contributor to participation in organized sport. The report provides a visual model for the current sport system as seen in Figure 3. In this model, the ecosystem is limited to those who are able to climb the pyramid, leaving many on the outside and others prone to injuries from overuse. This current model of sport does not take into account the needs of the children, but rather the needs of the institution as a means to accumulate wins, which equate to funding through the government, or sponsors.

Figure 3

A model of sport and its' barriers.

TODAY'S BROKEN MODEL PYRAMID DOES NOT MAKE ROOM FOR ALL CHILDREN



Note: From Sport for all; Play for life, (Aspen Institute, 2015, p. 7)

In the context of sports, ecosystems theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and interactions between various systems that influence an individual's participation, development, and experiences in sports. It also includes an intersectional understanding of how an individual works within an institution (Ault, et al., 2023). Participation alone in a sport does not automatically accumulate health and other benefits and intentional steps are needed to ensure the broken model in Figure 3 is no longer the norm. Ault et al. (2023) map out a frame for sport by Bronfenbrenner (1979) which posits an ecosystems approach that includes the microsystem (coaches, parents, athletes); mesosystem (interactions within the microsystem); exosystem (sport associations and governmental bodies); macrosystem (hockey culture, sport culture); and the chronosystem (change in the macrosystem over time). These systems “do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are intricately intertwined with the others” (Ault et al., 2023, p. 3). This approach follows the framework undertaken in this review which looked at levels of performance, structure, and culture to demonstrate that hockey in Canada has not formed in isolation, but as a part of a broad national fabric with a focus on accumulation (Allain, 2008; Messner, 2002).

The Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment LTD. Organization (MLSE, 2021) completed a study on youth participation in sport which identified the same issues and barriers as the Aspen Institute's report: *Sport for All; Play for Life* (Aspen Institute, 2015). *The Change the Game Report* (MLSE, 2021) echoes calls for dismantling a systemic structure that has benefited some children and youth over others and calls on sport organizations to "change the game" as the benefits of sport need to be accessible to all Canadians. Not just through access but an intentional system rebuilt on broadened understandings of the impact of colonization, nationalism, whiteness, and masculinity – and amateur athletics. Performances of a narrowed hockey identity are supported in the current structure and resulted in our current unhealthy culture. But again, this is not solely on Hockey Canada's shoulders but Hockey Canada needs to recognize and name its' role in how we got here today, name the issues, and importantly, how it can make and lead a positive change in the future.

Conclusion

Hockey has proven it can change over time. Earl Betker from Yorkton Saskatchewan was a goalie who played from 1947 to 1964, during one game, he took a puck to the face leaving him without many front teeth. This occurred before the end of the third period, prompting his coach to quickly improvise before putting Earl back in the net, covering his mouth with hockey tape including a hole so he could spit as noted in Figure 4. The game has changed. Rules have changed. Equipment has changed. Wayne Gretzky influenced the ways in which hockey is played after he set up his office behind the net and now the time is to change the focus from a hypermasculine white space to one that has roots in Black Canada, one that has roots in Indigeneity, and one that has room for People of Colour to play free of racism, room for people in the LGBTQ2S+ community to play free of homophobia, for women and girls to play free of sexism and misogyny, for people with disabilities to play, and for men and boys to play free of effeminophobia. Hockey needs to have a focus on health to encourage healthy lifestyles and return to the roots initiated by the CaHL and the game of Ricket: collaboration, community building, skill development, and a site free of racial oppression. In addition, the recommendations from the McMurtry report still are of value today, with updating and alignment with the Aspen Institutes *Project Play* and MLSE's *Changing the Game*. The review of

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the research aligns with those reports, and recommends Hockey Canada consider what it perceives as amateur; redefine what player safety means to include forms of oppression and marginalization; align rules to support a culture of inclusion and educate on forms of racism, sexism, effeminophobia, and homophobia – hear the counterstories; enforce rules (even if this means sacrificing a win); support training through a research lens in a train the trainer model and bystander training through a dialogic method; engage actively in/with research(ers) to support the shifting culture; ensure coaches, officials, and staff are certified to Hockey Canada's standards and are monitored as well as receive ongoing training; work to use its influence to educate parents, fans, and the media on the purpose of amateur hockey and reduce the language of violence; and reconsider the role of violence in amateur ice hockey.

Figure 4

Earl Betker with a 'modified' mouth guard.



Note: Used with permission (J. Betker, 2022)

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Appendix A

Note: Reprinted with permission from Leong, Chorney, Bradford, & Fowler, 2022

HOCKEY			
School Program	Program Information	Program Cost (per year)	Website
Edge School; Hockey Academy (Calgary, AB)	<p>... to build a culture of personal excellence in academics, athletic, and character</p> <p>... to develop top quality student-athletes; competing for Edge School, as well as preparing student-athletes for the next level</p>	<p>Grade 4-6 - \$17,870 (2021-22)</p> <p>Grade 7-12 - \$18,970 (2021-22)</p> <p>Additional student activity fee (\$650) and 4% annual contribution to Endowment Fund</p>	edgeschool.com/athletics/hockey
Penticton Secondary School; Okanagan Hockey School (Penticton, BC)	<p>... to create an environment that gives every student-athlete the best possible opportunity to achieve and surpass individual potential through structure, support, knowledge and experience</p> <p>... designed to provide a singular outcome/goal for all parts of the program (Academics; Strength, Conditioning, Medical; Hockey; Character, Leadership, Community)</p> <p>... to enhance participants' overall performance as people, students, and athletes</p>	<p>\$26,000 (2020-21)</p> <p>Additional fees for non-BC residents (\$8,500), international students (\$12,500), lodging (\$7,500) and travel (\$5,000).</p>	okanaganhockey.com/academy/penticton/about
Shawnigan Lake School; Hockey Program (Duncan, BC)	<p>"Spark Minds, Kindle Hearts, Forge Futures"</p> <p>... to combine a much-valued Shawnigan education with a high quality hockey experience; all the strands of a truly "complete education" are pursued, with academic excellence at the heart of everything we do</p>	<p>Range of \$31,625 to \$79,630 (2021-22) based on lodging requirement</p>	shawnigan.ca
Sir George Simpson School; Hockey Academy (St. Albert, AB)	<p>Priority 1: Development; Priority 2: Commitment to the sport of hockey and to the Academy hockey program; Priority 3: There must be a certain level of enjoyment and satisfaction for each student-athlete; Priority 4: Image</p> <p>... offers a dual-track developmental model for both elite and developmental student-athletes by challenging each student, individualizing certain lesson plans and providing personal-pace development for each player; student-athletes will be exposed to multiple coaches who work on all fundamental skills, be introduced to multiple sports and activities, and learn key life skills</p>	<p>\$2,400 (2020-21)</p>	sgs.spschools.org/our_school/programs/hockey_academy
St. George's School; Hockey Program (Vancouver, BC)	<p>"Building Fine Young Men. One Boy at a Time"</p> <p>... offers talented student-athletes a hockey program that is motivating, demanding, and transformational</p> <p>... to integrate academics and hockey so they benefit from each other; develop fine young men using hockey as a vehicle for</p>	<p>\$18,000 (2021-22)</p> <p>Additional \$8,000 for lodging</p>	stgeorges.bc.ca/senior-school/athletics/teams/hockey

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	personal growth; elevate and expand your son's natural skills and talents with innovative, professional coaching; develop each boy's sense of self-worth as a valuable member of a Hockey Program; develop strong team members that compete at their highest competitive level; and prepare student-athletes for junior and/or collegiate hockey		
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