

# University of Alberta

## Selling “The Next One”: Corporate Nationalism and the Production of Sidney Crosby

by

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## **Abstract**

Sporting celebrities have come to hold an increasingly vaunted position within contemporary society and as such, receive ever-increasing media attention. Within Canadian culture, where the sport of hockey is largely considered a mythologized component of identity, hockey players – such as the National Hockey League’s Sidney Crosby – are not only frequently represented in the daily media, but are also utilized in promotional and advertising campaigns. In this thesis, I qualitatively analyze media representations and the production of advertising featuring Sidney Crosby. Specifically, I examine the specific case of producing televised advertising campaigns featuring Crosby for sports drink manufacturer Gatorade. I also interrogate the tensions and ambiguities of contemporary conceptualizations of masculinity evidenced in media discourse surrounding Crosby. Ultimately, this study examines how sporting celebrities and discourses of corporate nationalism are produced within contemporary advertising campaigns and the role that cultural intermediaries play in the promotion of particular values and perceptions.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

With only few exceptions, the bulk of the critical research that examines advertising and sporting celebrities has been systematically biased in favour of textual analyses. While textual analyses provide important ideological readings in relation to identity politics, they cannot account for the complex and often contradictory processes of production. As Gruneau (1989) has asserted, “in the absence of detailed case studies...assessments of relationships between television sports ‘texts’ and their ‘contexts’ of production have been speculative at best” (p. 135). This study seeks to fill this void by engaging issues surrounding the production of contemporary televised advertisements featuring hockey star Sidney Crosby, arguably the most prominent contemporary Canadian sporting icon. In particular, this study aims to examine the complex discourse of corporate nationalism (Silk, Andrews & Cole, 2005) utilized in promotions that feature Crosby. Specifically, I will focus on the production of television commercials for sports drink manufacturer Gatorade, a transnational brand and corporation owned by Pepsi-QTG, the evolution of their advertising strategies and texts, and the manners in which they envision and utilize Crosby in the promotion of their products. In so doing, I evidence the importance of locating these advertisements in the conditions of their production. First, I will outline Sidney Crosby, his NHL career to date, and why he is an important individual worthy of academic examination. I will then outline the specific research questions that guide this thesis.

## **Hockey, Marketing and Sidney Crosby**

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the NHL season culminated with the Tampa Bay Lightning's defeat of the Calgary Flames in seven games to claim the epitomic symbol of Canadianness as it relates to hockey – the Stanley Cup. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the collective bargaining agreement between the NHL and its Players Association expired, resulting in the commencement of the second NHL lockout, which eventually wiped out the entire 2004-2005 season.<sup>1</sup> With only lagging negotiations to anchor NHL coverage, media outlets were forced to find new sources of hockey news. One such source was Sidney Crosby's impending NHL career. 2005 was to be Crosby's draft year, and one of the primary concerns following the cancellation of the NHL season was that the lockout would cause the draft's cancellation as well. When an agreement was reached on July 13 and ratified on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the first order of business was the draft. Unlike previous years, where teams selected largely in the reverse order of where they finished the season,<sup>2</sup> team owners successfully lobbied for an NHL-wide lottery for the first pick overall and the chance to select Sidney Crosby. This lottery (colloquially referred to as the "Sidney Crosby Sweepstakes") was a televised event, shown across Canada on The Sports Network (TSN), and television crews provided live coverage of Crosby's viewing of the event from his parents' house in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. On July 30<sup>th</sup> at the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual NHL entry draft, Crosby

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<sup>1</sup> The first, which occurred during the 1994-1995 season, lasted 104 days and resulted in the shortening of that season from 82 games to 48.

<sup>2</sup> The NHL employs a lottery system, where one of the 14 teams who did not make the playoffs may move up four positions in the draft. The team that finishes the season in last place has a 48.2% of retaining the first pick overall.



officially became the property of the Pittsburgh Penguins, and speculation of his role as the NHL's saviour began in earnest.

The significance of the lockout, its subsequent resolution, and the league's fervent promotion of Sidney Crosby is twofold. First, there were the hopes, dreams, and expectations which were heaped upon an 18-year old who had not yet played a professional hockey game but who was nonetheless expected to be the face of the NHL and perform appropriately. Crosby – touted as The Next One – was expected to become just that, and to bring to the NHL the same type of excitement as Wayne Gretzky did at the pinnacle of his career. While NHL pundits have historically made lofty predictions regarding highly touted draft picks that those individuals have not been able to live up to,<sup>3</sup> the sports media and even the NHL itself nonetheless focused significant attention on Crosby as a focal point in their rebranding strategy. What was perhaps even more significant, however, was that it was not solely Crosby's prowess as a playmaking and game-breaking player that was touted, but his appearance and personality as well. For the NHL, Crosby represented not only the potential to be "the next big thing"; he was also in many ways the antithesis of the style of play, player, and even persona that defined the pre-lockout NHL.

The pre-lockout NHL was characterized by a "clutch and grab" style of play, where slow and immobile defensemen were able to impede the movement of

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Lindros (1991), Alexandre Daigle (1993), and Vincent Lecavalier (1998) have all been touted as the "next big thing" for the NHL. The Ottawa Senators were rumored to have purposely aimed to finish last in order to select Daigle, who never panned out as a superstar. Lindros was dominant at times over the course of his career, but is best remembered for refusing to play for the Quebec Nordiques and for being continuously concussed. Lecavalier, touted by Tampa Bay Lightning owner Art Williams as "the Michael Jordan of hockey" has enjoyed a successful, but not Jordan-like, career.

quicker players by hanging off of them and allowing them no room to manoeuvre. Scoring was down, and had declined from an average of 6.40 goals per game in 1993-1994 to 5.02 ten years later in 2003-2004, the year prior to the lockout.<sup>4</sup> This lack of scoring, in particular, was cited as a major reason why hockey received very little coverage in the mainstream US media and was subsequently losing much of its American fan base, particularly in non-traditional hockey markets like Florida and California.<sup>5</sup> Following the resolution of the NHL labour dispute, the league heavily promoted the returning on-ice product as vastly different from what fans remembered. Penalty standards for obstruction were tightened, the rules disallowing two-line passes were removed, and the shoot-out was incorporated into games tied after an overtime period, all with the goal of increasing scoring, scoring chances, and exciting plays. In so doing, players who had flourished under the previous style of play – namely larger, heavier players who were able to utilize their size to encumber smaller players – struggled to adapt to the “new NHL”. Conversely, the players who benefitted the most were not only those who were smaller and faster, they also tended to be younger as well. The league’s promotional strategies in this, the post-lockout NHL, have subsequently focused on young, exciting players – Crosby, obviously, but also on players like Alexander Ovechkin, Henrik Lundqvist, Dion Phaneuf, and Patrick Kane. Accordingly, the lockout is significant not only because of the changes that

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<sup>4</sup> Ironically, the NHL lockout and the rule changes and crackdowns implemented following it, designed to increase scoring, have not really had the desired impact. After the average goals per game increased to 5.94 in 2005-06, the year immediately following the lockout, scoring dropped to 5.33 in 2006-07 and dropped again to 5.24 in 2007-08.

<sup>5</sup> Financial concerns were also a significant component of the NHL lockout, and the collective bargaining agreement between the NHL and its players included a 24% salary rollback and the implementation of a salary cap.

took place on the ice, but as a potential moment of transition and as a potential catalyst for other changes as well, including the type of player and persona promoted by the NHL.

### **The Social Significance of Sidney Crosby**

It is impossible to discuss the type of player and persona promoted in the post-lockout NHL without discussing Sidney Crosby. He, quite literally, is everywhere within the league's promotional strategies and is held up as the face of the new NHL. As Joyce (2005) asserts with regards to Crosby's ascension to this position in the NHL, "he was first touted as the next great player. If that pressure wasn't great enough, he was by July of 2005 being touted as the boy who could save a deeply troubled league" (p. xi). Crosby, as previously mentioned, was a first overall draft pick. He was also the Calder trophy<sup>6</sup> runner up in his rookie season, and the Hart trophy<sup>7</sup> winner and NHL's leading scorer in his sophomore season. Now just 21 years old, he is already in his fourth season of professional play and has made a tremendous impact in professional hockey – exactly what the NHL, broadcasters, sponsors, and fans alike had both hoped for and expected him to do.

Prior to his debut in the NHL at the beginning of the 2005-2006 NHL season, Crosby was widely considered the best player to come out of Canada in recent memory. At 15, as a rookie in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League with the Rimouski Oceanic, hockey's "Great One", Wayne Gretzky, predicted

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<sup>6</sup> The NHL's rookie of the year award. In 2005-2006, Crosby lost out on this honour to Alexander Ovechkin.

<sup>7</sup> Given to the league's most valuable player as selected by the Professional Hockey Writers' Association.

that Crosby had the talent to challenge his scoring records. In his two seasons of Major Junior play, Crosby was the Canadian Hockey League player of the year twice, was the recipient of 16 other awards (12 in his first season, 13 in his second), and was widely recognized as having transformed the Oceanic from perennial last-place finishers to championship contenders. He was selected to represent Canada at the World Junior Hockey Championships twice, and became the youngest player ever to win a World Championship scoring title in 2006. In his second season in the NHL, he led all players with 117 points, and in addition to his Hart Memorial trophy win, was also given the Lester B. Pearson award.<sup>8</sup> Crosby has also been credited with transforming the Penguins, who finished the 2005-2006 NHL season with only 22 wins, and leading them to their first playoff berth since the 2000-2001 NHL season.

As Crosby's stock as hockey's next great superstar has grown, so too has his media coverage – particularly in Canada, where hockey remains a celebrated institution. He was first interviewed at the age of nine, and first appeared on television at the age of 15 during the CBC special "Hockey Day in Canada". A full-length biography – *Sidney Crosby: Taking the Game By Storm*, was released in September 2005, prior to his first NHL season, in addition to two other, more child-oriented biographies. Following the NHL lockout and prior to the start of the 2005-2006 NHL season, Crosby appeared on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. Crosby's first season was deemed to be such spectacular news that *The Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's major newspapers, assigned reporter Shawna

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<sup>8</sup> Given to the league's most outstanding player as selected by members of the NHL Players' Association.

Richer to Pittsburgh to follow him for the entire year. She has since written a book, *The Rookie: A Season With Sidney Crosby and the New NHL*, released in October 2006, about the experience. Crosby was also featured in the October 2005 issues of both *Vanity Fair* and *Reader's Digest Canada* magazines, and the November 2005 issue of *GQ*. Since beginning his NHL career, Crosby has also been featured in *Maclean's*, *ESPN Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Men's Fitness*, among other popular magazines and in April, 2007, Crosby finished fifth in *Time* magazine voting for the 100 most influential people of the year.

Crosby's burgeoning hockey career has not only received significant media attention, but endorsements as well. Prior to his first junior hockey game, Crosby had already signed a four-year, \$150,000 endorsement deal with Sher-Wood hockey to supply his hockey sticks. Before he was drafted into the NHL, Rebook's hockey division, RBK Hockey, signed him to a five year, \$2.5 million contract – making Crosby RBK's highest paid and flagship endorser. Crosby is also Gatorade's highest paid NHL endorser, has further deals with Upper Deck, Telus Communications, and Tim Horton's and has starred in nine commercials and multiple print media campaigns for these companies. It is not just Crosby's on ice performance that is valued by these corporations, however, but also his youthful and wholesome "Canadian" image:

He's attractive because of his youthfulness, his clean image, and he's a legitimate star in his sport...you've never seen anyone like him in sport. He's a phenom in a way. Take a look at all the other major sports, and you rarely see someone come in and dominate at such an early age. But it all comes back to his clean image...it's difficult finding an athlete with a profile and reputation worthy of these million-dollar endorsement deals. If something goes offside, it's not like you can just go to the next person. There may not be a next person. (Powers, cited in Koren, 2007, p. C2)

Not only is Crosby a talented athlete, but as a likeable white male hockey player, he is also representative of the dominant conceptualization of Canadian citizenship - one, as Mackey (2002) asserts, that references culture, race, sexual preference and gender in a highly taken-for-granted fashion. In this sense, hockey imagery remains a major contributor to “discourses of Canadian national identity that privilege native-born, white men” (Adams, 2006, p. 71). Accordingly, it is not just Crosby’s on ice performance that is valued and mediated. Rather, the marketability of his athletic prowess (both demonstrated and potential) and his clean-cut, stereotypically Canadian image are considered valuable to companies both within and outside of the sport of hockey.

The vast quantity of attention and endorsement that Crosby receives is, of course, intimately related to the prominent role of hockey in Canadian culture, but also the increasing globalization and commodification of sport. As Whitson (1998) argues, the promotion of sport and the promotion of other products through sporting events and personalities were previously related but still separable activities which have now become very difficult to unbind. Though professional sport has always been a business, over time the business of sport has become increasingly larger, and one where capital is accumulated and increased through such avenues as advertising, merchandising, media rights, and overall increases in the market value of the team (Ammirante, 2006). In this sense, sport has become less about the product on the field and more about what can be made from it. Superstar athletes play a particularly integral role in this system of

accumulation. In reference to Nike's sponsorship of basketball icon Michael Jordan, Whitson (1998) has argued that:

Nike, in particular, attached its corporate persona to images of Michael Jordan, but when Jordan appeared in Nike advertisements in the early 1990s, he was adding to the global visibility of the Chicago Bulls, the NBA, and the game of basketball, as well as promoting Nike shoes. He was also, not incidentally, promoting to himself and adding to his value as a promotional icon. (p. 67)

Similarly, Sidney Crosby as he is promoted by companies such as Gatorade or RBK Hockey serves to increase the visibility of the Pittsburgh Penguins and the NHL, and also increases Crosby's visibility not only as a superstar athlete, but as a viable and desirable icon for the promotion of other products as well. Crosby's sought after and clean image is one that can be deployed to sell consumers both products and ideals related to dominant and taken for granted understandings of Canadian identity.

The manner in which Crosby is presented by the media to the viewing audience is a highly regulated process whereby the NHL, the sporting press, and his endorsers all make decisions regarding how Crosby should be shown. Accordingly, media representations of Crosby serve to legitimize particular values and ideals while simultaneously marginalizing others. Crosby's status as a Canadian hockey-playing celebrity – and the ever-increasing media attention he receives because of it – thus serves to facilitate (although never guarantees) the transmission of such representations.

### **Research Questions**

This study aims to examine the manner in which Sidney Crosby is produced and represented in contemporary advertising campaigns. More

specifically, this study asks two central questions: (1) What are the contexts and cultures of production of specific televised commercials for Gatorade that feature Crosby? And (2) what are the dominant representations of identity along the “power lines” (McDonald & Birrell, 1999) of gender and national identity that are articulated in the production of advertisements featuring Crosby and the manner in which he is represented in the media? Through semi-structured interviews with cultural intermediaries responsible for the production of advertisements featuring Sidney Crosby, critical analyses of representations in such advertisements, and newspaper, magazine, and internet searches to contextualize Crosby within the broader climate of the post-lockout NHL, this study aims, in particular, to ascertain the manner in which Crosby is represented in advertising (and how such representations are rationalized).

What follows is a qualitative analysis of the production of advertising featuring Sidney Crosby. In the second chapter, I outline the importance of studying the production of cultural products – an issue that has been largely neglected within contemporary cultural studies research. I then examine the specific case of producing televised sport content and the limited body of work that has been performed along these lines. Finally, I consider the specific case of the growing mediation and academic study of sporting celebrities and the limited body of work in this area focusing on the Canadian context, and why studying hockey playing celebrity garners a particular level of insight within Canada, a culture frequently defined by and linked to the sport of hockey. The third chapter outlines my methodology for examining the production of Sidney Crosby.



Chapter Four focuses specifically on the production of four Gatorade advertising campaigns featuring Sidney Crosby. Utilizing information garnered from interviews with Gatorade's former Canadian marketing manager and the Creative Director from Downtown Partners DDB, the firm responsible for producing three of Gatorade's Crosby advertisements, as well as pertinent newspaper analysis, I examine the relationships that constitute the practice of production, the conditions of production, and the components of the final advertising products. By analyzing Gatorade's promotional materials, greater insight is gained into the overall process of production in contemporary culture.

The fifth chapter focuses specifically on the tensions and ambiguities of contemporary conceptualizations of masculinity as evidenced through media discourse surrounding Sidney Crosby. In Canada, hockey has traditionally been conceptualized as a forum through which boys and men learn about masculinity, and the masculinity highlighted within the sport is one that lauds rough, rugged play and a capacity for violence. I argue that while popular opinion suggests that Crosby reflects transitioning masculine values and a challenge to hegemonic masculinity, this is in fact not the case, and indeed, Crosby remains a bastion for traditional masculine values, albeit within a changing climate –both within the NHL, and consumer culture.

Chapter Six concludes with some final thoughts on the findings of this thesis, as well as directions for future research. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the sociology of sport and cultural studies communities that examines how sporting celebrities and

discourses of corporate nationalism are produced within contemporary advertising campaigns and the role that cultural intermediaries play in the promotion of particular values, perceptions, and actions to the greater population as a whole.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the work that has been previously done in cultural studies and sports studies which serves to provide the framework for my own thesis. First, I will outline the importance of production studies, which have received minimal attention when compared to the multiplicity of textual analyses that have been produced by scholars. As this thesis is from a Canadian perspective, it is important to outline why, exactly, utilizing a national lens is important. Building on this, I will also give consideration to the role of the sport of hockey in the construction of Canadian identity. Finally, I will elaborate on the role of advertising, specifically, on the construction of national identity.

### **Capturing Production**

Scholars in cultural studies have argued the importance of studying cultural products. As Johnson (1986) argues, cultural studies “is about the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms we live by, or, in a rather perilous compression, perhaps a reduction, the subjective side of social relations” (p. 43). That is to say, it is important to consider the taken-for-granted notions of self and culture that are adopted within contemporary society and critically consider both how these have arisen and how they are maintained. As Hall (1996) asserts, it is “precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, (that) we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies” (p. 4). Accordingly, it is important to examine the producers and the products of a given culture in order to better

understand the manner in which discourse is produced and how specific discursive ideas are perpetuated.

Although cultural studies research acknowledges the importance of studying the products of a given culture, issues relating to cultural production have been comparatively neglected. This is problematic, as all cultural products must be produced, and failing to acknowledge or examine the context(s) of their production ensures that our understanding of culture remains incomplete. As Storey (2003) contends,

We will not understand the relations between culture and power by pretending that all the answers can be found in an analysis of the conditions of existence or by making a fetish of the “determining” role of production. However, we will not understand the relations between culture and power by pretending that conditions of existence are unimportant; it is the relationship between the two that needs to be adequately understood. (p. 54)

Studying the processes of production reveals how the structural aspects of cultural institutions serve to shape the final product (Kellner, 1995). In order to foster a broader understanding of culture, it is thus necessary to examine its processes at multiple levels and pay attention to the details of the production, distribution and consumption of commodities.

Stuart Hall (1980) first suggested a four-stage theory of communication (using Marx’s *Grundrisse* as a model) where each stage – production, circulation, distribution and reproduction – is both linked to the others and is its own distinctive moment. That is to say that while each of the moments is necessary to the circuit as a whole, no moment guarantees the next moment with which it is

articulated<sup>9</sup> (Hall, 1980). In particular, Hall's work placed emphasis upon the making of meaning outside the realm of work (Soar, 2000). Overall, this focus upon the entire process of communication serves to provide a forum for examining the production of hegemony and common sense, and how dominant understandings of the world are promoted and circulated. More specifically, Hall (1980) argues that any event must become a story before it becomes a communicative event. That is to say, meaning must be articulated to any event, and that meaning must be grounded in previously set out practices of meaning making for this to be transmitted to the masses. The production of dominant meanings, as Hall (2006) asserts, is not "a one-sided process which governs how all events will be signified. It consists of the 'work' required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definitions in which it has been connotatively signified" (p. 170). This process involves the apparatuses, relations, and practices of production, as well as the operation of codes relating to the language and discourse commonly utilized to discuss and make meaning of given symbols, ideas, and events.

Johnson (1986) has further expanded upon Hall's model and has theorized a similar circuit of production, circulation and consumption of cultural products. This circuit, Johnson argues, is comprised of four moments: production, text, readings, and lived culture, and that it is:

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<sup>9</sup> The moments are connected together (production is followed by circulation which is followed by distribution which is followed by reproduction) the presence of one does not guarantee the next. For example, just because something is produced does not guarantee it will be circulated.

A circuit of production, circulation and consumption of cultural products. Each box represents a moment in this circuit. Each moment or aspect depends upon the others and is indispensable to the whole. Each, however, is distinct and involves characteristic changes of form. It follows that if we are placed at one point of the circuit we do not necessarily see what is happening at others. The forms that have most significance for us at one point may be very different from those at another. Processes disappear in results. (p. 46)

This model has further been expanded upon by du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus (1997) in their examination of the five interrelated processes of production, representation, identity, consumption, and regulation as it related to the marketing of the Sony Walkman. These frameworks not only serve to highlight the importance of multiple moments in the life of a cultural artifact, but also demonstrate that by examining only one moment in the totality of cultural processes, it is impossible to understand the complexity of its construction and interpretation. As Kellner (1995) contends, “the system of production often determines what sort of artifacts will be produced, what structural limits there will be as to what can and cannot be said and shown, and what sort of effects the text may generate (p. 15). Production, easily the most neglected aspect of the frameworks outlined by Hall (1980), Johnson (1986), and du Gay *et al.* (1997), thus represents a key point of articulation and one that must be studied, particularly in the context of contemporary advertising campaigns.

Not surprisingly, then, the critical study of advertising is a field that has been overwhelmingly biased in favour of textual approaches (Soar, 2000). In such studies, advertisements are regarded as a “text” and then the elements of that text are broken down and critically assessed. While this method is certainly valuable and unveils much as it relates to representation and the reinforcement or

challenging of commonly held ideas, this is but one element of a much larger picture. In particular, analyzing advertisements as standalone texts does not bring into consideration the contexts and conditions of its production. As Johnson (1986) asserts, “all cultural products must be produced, but the conditions of their production cannot be inferred by scrutinizing them as ‘texts’” (p. 46).

Consequently, it is useful to consider not only advertising-as-text, but to examine more closely the conditions of production as well (Soar, 2000). This includes not only the material means of production and the organizations that were responsible for production, but also the existing cultural conventions that serve to influence and potentially shape the final form an advertisement takes (Johnson, 1986).

Accordingly, interviews with cultural intermediaries responsible for the production of advertising featuring Sidney Crosby serve to provide a broader understanding of how and why particular representations are given prominence over others.

Soar (2000) has argued that, in examining production, it is important to consider the cultural intermediaries who are responsible for the promotion of goods. This term, most commonly associated with Pierre Bourdieu, is used to describe groups of workers involved in the provision of symbolic goods and services (Nixon & du Gay, 2002). More specifically, cultural intermediaries are described as “those in media, design, fashion, advertising, and ‘para’ intellectual information occupations, whose jobs entail performing services and the production, marketing and dissemination of symbolic goods” (Featherstone, 1991, p. 19). Featherstone (1991) further contends that for cultural intermediaries,

their habitus, dispositions and lifestyle preferences are such that they identify with artists and intellectuals...they have the apparent contradictory interests of sustaining the prestige and cultural capital of these enclaves, while at the same time popularizing and making them more accessible to wider audiences. (p. 19)

These individuals are vital to consider, as it is their job to attempt to connect goods and services with particular cultural meanings and values in order to attract consumers (du Gay, 1997). Cultural intermediaries thus have the potential to impact the manner in which cultural products are read by the population at large and are actively involved in the transition of cultural products from their production to their consumption. As Nixon (1997) asserts,

The articulation of production and consumption itself constitutes a determinant moment in the circuit of culture: the moment of circulation. What is important about the moment of circulation is that it both articulates production with consumption, and draws consumption back into the process of production. (p. 181)

Given that the role of cultural intermediaries has been largely unexplored, Nixon and du Gay (2002) have argued that more work must be done in order to better understand the place held by cultural intermediaries within the occupational structure and the role that they play in economic and cultural life. It is also important to recognize that while cultural intermediaries have the potential to influence how cultural products are read, they are also subject to potential influence. Soar (2000) has argued that, when examining advertising and the promotion of goods, one must consider:

How ideas are produced, how well the processes can be explained, the influences (if any) that are at play, the investment that creatives and designers have in their own accounts of the process, and the ways in which these views may be affected by evidence of the less salutary efforts of the advertising and design communities. (p. 421)



Accordingly, in examining the role of cultural intermediaries, one must not only study the effect they may have on cultural products, but the individuals and ideals that impact and potentially constrain the manner in which such products are promoted in the first place.

Acknowledging and interrogating the role that cultural intermediaries play in the production of cultural products reflects an understanding of cultural economy. Unlike political economy, where the cultural dimensions of economic activities are commonly disregarded, cultural economy pays close attention to the meanings and values that economic activities hold for people (du Gay, 1997). As du Gay (1997) asserts,

The most important point to note about our term ‘cultural economy’ is therefore the crucial importance it allots to language, representation and meaning – to culture – for understanding the conduct of economic life and the construction of economic identities (p. 5)

Meaning has come to play an essential role in marketing and selling products to consumers. Individuals are now presented with near-identical options in nearly every category of consumer goods, and accordingly, the beliefs that they have about products – the *meaning* and *value* that has been imbued to particular products – has come to play an increasingly significant role not only in marketing, but truly, in contemporary culture as well. While the term cultural economy is one with multiple interpretations within cultural studies, for the purposes of this study I have utilized du Gay and Pryke’s (2004) definition, that is: “acting on the assumption that economics are performed and enacted by the very discourses of which they are supposedly the cause” (p. 6). One arena where the study of the role of cultural intermediaries and cultural economy can be quite fruitful, but has

received limited study is in examining the production of sport, sport-based advertising, and sporting celebrities.

### **Producing Sport**

Researchers in the sociology of sport community who have examined issues of production have typically examined issues surrounding the production of televised sport. Gruneau (1989) first examined televised sport production in his analysis of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) coverage of a World Cup downhill ski race held at Whistler Mountain in British Columbia in March 1986. For this study, Gruneau joined the CBC production crew during the event (and the lead up to it) and was given access to all facilities, meetings, and personnel associated with the programming. In so doing, Gruneau aimed to uncover and better understand the processes by which decisions are made regarding the final televised product. In his findings, Gruneau (1989) argues that

The underlying codes defining good television and the elective affinity among producers, advertisers, and race organizers led to coverage that treated the existing structures and competitive promotional culture of the modern sports/media complex as natural – an example of “common sense”. (p. 152)

Incorporating the contextualization of the production process into studies that examine media texts thus affords the researcher the opportunity to better understand factors which contribute the construction of the final product.

Similar to Gruneau's study of the CBC and the production of downhill skiing coverage, Margaret MacNeill (1996) has performed an ethnographic study of the Canadian Television Network's (CTV) production of the 1988 Winter Olympic ice hockey tournament. MacNeill (1996) asserts that it was not the

central philosophies of the Olympic charter that influenced the manner in which hockey and other Olympic sports were produced, but rather that the media were relatively free to present the material in the manner they deemed best to garner the largest market share. More specifically, regardless of whether or not team Canada was actually playing during CTV's telecasts, the producers of the event continually attempted to insert Canadian content into the broadcast in order to sell the game as inherently Canadian (MacNeill, 1996). While the on-ice product of Olympic hockey was sold as a live sporting event, the manner in which it was packaged for the at-home audience – the camera angles, close-ups, replays, and commentary – served to shape the manners in which consumers interpreted the game. Accordingly, it becomes important to question not only what is presented in the final product, but why such representations have been deemed to be those that will resonate most soundly with the viewing public. As MacNeill (1996) asserts, “both ice hockey and the way ice hockey was televised have been historically developed and culturally produced” (p. 104). Consequently, it is important to consider the manner in which historical and cultural ideals surrounding hockey and its role in Canadian culture have influenced the manner in which cultural intermediaries present the sport, and its celebrity athletes like Crosby.

As in earlier (Gruneau, 1989; MacNeill, 1996) television production studies, Silk, Slack & Amis (2000) have also performed an ethnographic study of the television production process involved in the 1995 Canada Cup of Soccer. In this study, researcher Michael Silk was immersed with the television team

producing the event and examined the various practices on which the broadcast team drew and how these played out at the production site. More specifically, the researcher's observations focused upon decision-making processes, negotiations over the content of the broadcasts, pre-production meetings, relations between production personnel, and the structure and work routines of the crew. The final broadcasted product was also analyzed in order to identify key themes and storylines. This is similar to Silk's (2001) study of the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games, which focused on the meanings that were and were not attached to the sporting product (and what was given prominence), the stories that were told over the course of the Games, and the types of cultural resources that were made available to different groups during the Games. Utilizing interviews and participant observation, the researcher analyzed the interactions between the host broadcaster, Radio Television Malaysia and Television New Zealand's *TV One* channel, focusing on the conditions that served to structure the production practices of *TV One* and the televised product created for the New Zealand audience. While *TV One*'s final product was meant to appeal to New Zealanders, the construction of this product was heavily influenced by considerations such as budgetary constraints and, in particular, the channel's reliance on Radio Television Malaysia and their broadcasting feed as a primary source. Overall, both studies evidence the impact that political, economic and cultural conditions have on cultural producers (and their products). It is impossible to understand the complexity of cultural products without considering the conditions of their production.

While the research outlined here by Gruneau (1989), MacNeill (1996) and Silk (2001) focused more specifically on the production of televised sporting performance, these studies all serve to highlight the importance of understanding the dominant work routines and labour practices within the television industry. Sporting events, or indeed, any mediated event, have undergone a process of transformation and representation by the professionals responsible for creating the final product (Silk & Amis, 2000). As Silk and Amis (2000) argue, comprehension of these processes requires “critical insight into the management of the labour practices of production, the ways in which managerial practice shapes the product, and the external pressures that interact with the strategic choices of decision makers in the production arena” (p. 268). Paying attention to the codes, ideologies and frameworks that shape and constrain the work and working environment of those within the culture industry thus serves to augment the broader understanding of the final cultural product.

Unlike the relatively sizeable body of knowledge relating to the production of televised sporting performance, research into the production of sport-related advertising is a relatively new phenomenon. Jay Scherer (2007) and Steven Jackson (2007; 2008<sub>a</sub>, 2008<sub>b</sub>) have recently performed several case studies that identify the importance of considering issues relating to the production of sport-based advertising. This body of work focuses specifically on adidas’ sponsorship of the iconic New Zealand rugby team, the All Blacks, and the manner(s) in which adidas linked its brand name to the national team through a complex discourse of corporate nationalism. These case studies evidence the

importance of examining how contemporary advertising is produced, the work that is done by cultural intermediaries, and the codes, expectations, and practices that serve to shape and potentially constrain the final advertising product. In so doing, one may then also assess and interrogate what cultural ideas and ideals are highlighted within such strategies and how this may provide a broader understanding with regards to issues of representation.

In the first of two case studies relating to the production of television commercials relating to adidas' sponsorship of the All Blacks, Scherer and Jackson (2008<sub>a</sub>) examined the production of the 1999 adidas commercial "Black". This commercial, which was allotted a budget of \$NZ20 million, was meant to link adidas to the proud history of the All Blacks following the transition from a 75-year sponsorship by local company Canterbury. This commercial articulated the adidas brand with Maori imagery intertwined with images from an international rugby match and centred on the All Blacks' pre-game performance of the Ka Mate *haka*. In so doing, Saatchi & Saatchi Wellington, the advertising agency responsible for the commercial, sought to produce a primal, scary, highly hypermasculine spectacle meant to resonate not just with fans of rugby, but to all sports fans who value the supposedly universal sporting values of courage, commitment, sacrifice and skill and an advertisement that would be attractive to adidas' company-wide global target market of 14-25 year olds (Scherer & Jackson, 2008<sub>b</sub>). In adopting the use of the Ka Mate *haka*, this advertisement also commodified Maori culture and universalized the *haka* as a symbol of New Zealand as a whole. This raised tensions with regards to the subsuming of a

Maori tradition into a generic signifier of New Zealand identity. Scherer and Jackson (2008<sub>b</sub>) argue that the risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation exists whenever culture and mythology are appropriated for the purposes of advertising, and that indeed, this arguably occurs through the very commodification of culture for the purposes of capital accumulation. The researchers utilized a modified circuit of culture as their multidimensional methodological framework guiding their analysis to articulate the interrelated moments of production, representation, and consumption. The authors performed interviews with interest groups who were directly responsible for the commercial's production, including marketing managers for adidas New Zealand and the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), and a member of the creative team at Saatchi & Saatchi, the advertising firm responsible for the advertisement. In so doing, the researchers aimed to answer questions relating to the marketing aims and objectives of key decision makers, the commercial's target market, and the manner in which producers integrated both global and local objectives. The researchers also analyzed a range of documents pertaining to the production of the advertisement, and performed a critical reading of the resulting commercial text focusing specifically on reading race and the advertising executive's conceptualization of the *haka* as a generic part of the All Blacks' identity. This study highlights the usefulness of a multimethodological framework associated with conceptualizations of a continuous circuit of culture and how such methodologies can facilitate critical and contextual analyses of the production, representation and consumption of cultural products. Further, the issues that were

brought up by local Maori – namely, that the *haka* was not a national symbol, but rather a Maori symbol co-opted and commodified by adidas – evidence that consumption cannot be guaranteed by cultural intermediaries and that consumers continue to have power in terms of resistance.

Building on this study, Scherer and Jackson (2007) also examined the production of adidas' 2000 commercial "Exsqueeze Me". In this study, the researchers aimed to evidence the evolution of adidas' branding strategies following the release of and perceived outcome of "Black". "Exsqueeze Me" was designed as a commercial response to the All Blacks "emasculating" surprise semi-final loss to the French team at the 1999 Rugby World Cup. Following this loss, local fans lambasted adidas for excessively commodifying the All Blacks, and accused the team of collectively abandoning its traditional blue collar roots in favour of a more lavish lifestyle. Essentially, the team was deemed to have become soft under the new adidas regime. The goal of the ad was to represent the strength and power of the All Blacks and to remain consistent with the dominant understandings of masculinity and heterosexuality that have historically been conceptualized as quintessentially embodied by the All Blacks and the game of rugby more generally, and to do so in a humorous and light-hearted manner in order to decrease the level of public criticism directed at both the All Blacks and at adidas.

The budget for this second marketing campaign following adidas' sponsorship takeover was significantly less than what was allotted for "Black", which forced advertising executives to think creatively of how to produce a



commercial that would nonetheless powerfully assert adidas' branded message. This resulted in the decision to incorporate not just adidas, but to bring in additional clients (Castrol and Telecom) and create a highly innovative, two minute long commercial. Further, following the All Blacks' perceived poor performance at the 1999 World Cup, adidas felt they needed to strategically and sensitively reinvent the brand to New Zealand's rabid rugby fans. As Scherer and Jackson (2007) assert, adidas wished to "exploit the tradition of the All Blacks as a vehicle for their global brand communication strategies" (p. 270) while simultaneously limiting focus on the All Blacks as the corporation felt "their brand visibility had been diminished and diluted by the All Blacks brand in their inaugural local and global campaigns" (p. 277). Accordingly, the creative team at Saatchi & Saatchi (again retained to produce this campaign) were influenced by the expectations and constraints placed upon them by their clients and produced the final product in a manner that adhered to these expectations. This case study thus demonstrates the importance of considering the contextually specific cultural, economic, institutional and technological forces at a particular historical moment (in this case, a national crisis following New Zealand's performance at the rugby World Cup) that influence and impact the manner in which cultural products are conceptualized and then consumed.

Scherer (2007) has also examined the highly innovative online advertising campaign adidas utilized in 2000. Again created by Saatchi & Saatchi, this campaign took the form of a cybercommunity, featuring an online game ("Beat Rugby"), e-commerce potential, and message boards that allowed players to

interact with one another and discuss the game, the All Blacks, and the adidas brand. Saatchi & Saatchi were again influenced by budgetary constraints and the expectation of a cutting-edge, creative marketing campaign. Similar to the case studies performed on the adidas commercials, Scherer's (2007) "Beat Rugby" case study also utilizes a multimethodological and multiperspectival framework based on a modified circuit of culture to examine production, representation and consumption of the campaign. In so doing, Scherer (2007) highlights the importance of technological conditions of production (in addition to cultural, economic, and institutional conditions), which have previously received minimal consideration, and how the interactive spectacle of "Beat Rugby" serves to further remove consumers from the context of production. Scherer (2007) also examines the power of consumer resistance, and how audience reactions can never be completely predicted or guaranteed. The Beat Rugby programmers were required to update and patch their programming over the course of the promotion due to repeated attempts to hack elements of the game, in particular the overall scoreboard. Given this, it is interesting to note that the official website of the All Blacks and New Zealand Rugby Union, [allblacks.com](http://allblacks.com), does not feature an interactive message board (Scherer & Jackson, 2008b). As Scherer and Jackson (2008b) discuss in their study of the production of [allblacks.com](http://allblacks.com), this represents a paradox between the idea of an interactive, fan-friendly, accessible website, and the reality that all forms of communication that occur on the site are constructed and carefully monitored by cultural intermediaries. Taken together, these two examples evidence how audience resistance cannot be prevented, but that it can

be limited, and in certain cases, erased from public view. Further, the work done by cultural intermediaries in the production of allblacks.com demonstrates the many steps that are taken to attempt to ensure audiences interpret and consume products in a specific fashion. The ideal situation for cultural intermediaries is one in which the audience does not resist the images and ideas presented to them, but rather, actively consumes them. Increasingly, this process includes producing associations between products and high profile icons.

### **Promotional Culture and the Canadian Context**

Associations between ideas and ideals have long been a part of advertising, but it has become a growing trend to associate celebrities with particular products or brands. These icons may be sports teams, such as the promotions crafted for adidas with reference to their sponsorship of the New Zealand All Blacks, or, products may be attached to the celebrity of a particular individual. While advertisers can utilize almost anyone or anything in the promotion of their products, celebrities have come to and continue to play a significant role in the advertising industry. As Whitson (1998) contends, constructing imaged celebrities is a promotional practice in and of itself. Among countless other examples, we are encouraged to shop at H&M by Madonna, to purchase a Ford automobile by Wayne Gretzky, and to support The Gap's Project Red by U2's Bono. Celebrities are significant public entities who are looked up to and idolized by many. Unlike the use of an anonymous promoter, utilizing celebrities in product promotion allows marketers to capitalize on that person's reputation and visibility. The consumer is not necessarily privy to the "real"

celebrity however; rather, the work of the media and advertisers in selecting and focusing attention on particular celebrities, and in framing and narrativising events that transpire involving said celebrities serves to fabricate a highly constructed image (Whannel, 2002). Accordingly, celebrities have come to play a major role in the structuring of meaning, the crystallization of ideologies, and the provision of suggestions to the masses regarding the navigation of contemporary existence (Andrews & Jackson, 2001). While advertising is, in itself, representative of the promotion of ideas relating to the broader social world, the utilization of celebrities as promotional vehicles serves to increase the pervasiveness and cultural resonance of the advertising message.

The utilization of celebrity athletes in the promotion of an ever increasing variety of products also serves to illuminate the growth of cross-marketing strategies. In Whitson's (1998) examination of circuits of promotion, he discusses cross-ownership and cross-marketing, citing the example of the synergy of sports franchise ownership by regional cable or satellite networks. In this situation, ownership of popular content (sports programming) and the means of transmission serves to ensure exclusive coverage and increased revenues. Similarly, cross-ownership has also facilitated cross-marketing campaigns such as Disney's *Mighty Ducks* movies and subsequent *Mighty Ducks* NHL team. Celebrity athletes, like Sidney Crosby, represent yet another step in this synergistic cross-marketing process. Crosby's image as a superstar NHL player is utilized to sell certain products, such as Gatorade sports drinks, Reebok clothing, and Tim Hortons coffee. His image is also utilized by the NHL to promote the

league as a whole, and by NHL subsidiaries such as the television networks Versus and NBC to promote their televised broadcasts and content. Inevitably, Crosby's use in all of these forums serve to increase his visibility and prominence within contemporary culture – thus making him an even more desirable icon. As Whitson (1998) argues, “it is the product name and the symbolic associations it carries that attract new consumers, and establish its value as a commodity-sign” (p. 68). Crosby not only promotes products, but indeed is a product himself, and one whose value as a commodity-sign is established based upon the symbolic associations it carries and accumulates over the course of its promotion.

Sporting contests are customarily structured, marketed and mediated as contests between identifiable individuals with whom the audience is to develop some kind of affective attachment (Andrews & Jackson, 2001). Instead of anonymous figures battling for sporting greatness, athletes – particularly exceptional, superstar athletes – are transformed into personalities and icons of interest. In order to garner mass audience appeal, it is important to transform the sport star from simply what they do on the field of play into something more, and to foster a public desire to know the “real” person (Whannel, 2002). In order to extend interest in athletes beyond the field, fans are increasingly given access to the personal lives of star athletes and are now privy to coverage and discussion of their families, hopes and dreams and interests – essentially, that which makes the athlete “tick” when they are not playing their sport. The superstar athlete has thus become more than just their accomplishments on the field of play – they are now icons of personality, lifestyle, and represented as an ideal to be emulated.

Athletes no longer simply play sport, but they must sell it as well. Sports marketing campaigns can thus be regarded as a symbiotic relationship between league and athlete. Sporting leagues utilize an athlete's success to market their product and gain greater brand recognition and authority. Similarly, an athlete's involvement in a marketing campaign also helps to promote the athlete themselves, and garner them greater popularity.

As the prevalence and prominence of sporting celebrities has grown within contemporary western society the academic study of individual celebrity athletes has steadily increased, and it has become a growing trend in sport studies read to such athletes as cultural texts (McDonald & Birrell, 1999). Such studies have served to highlight how the manner in which celebrity identities are represented within the media can offer insights into broader cultural issues. From an U.S. perspective, Nick Trujillo (2000) has examined print and television representations of baseball legend Nolan Ryan and how, he argues, they are illustrative of how images of male athletes reproduce hegemonic notions of masculinity in American culture. Similarly, multiple studies have been presented on Michael Jordan, his iconic status, and its cultural impact (see Andrews, 1996, 2000, 2001; Armstrong, 1996; Cole, 2001; Denzin, 1996; Dyson, 1993; Kellner, 1996; LaFeber, 2002; McDonald, 1996, 2001; McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Wilson & Sparks, 2001). In particular, consideration is given to Jordan as a highly celebrated male athlete known around the world, and how representations of him in the media intersect with traditional American notions of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality. This includes Andrews' (2001) consideration of

Michael Jordan's blackness, and how it has been masked in many circumstances under the perception of fostering greater appeal with mass audiences.

Many researchers have also examined the media attention received by British soccer player David Beckham (see Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Giardina, 2003; Harris & Clayton, 2007; Whannel, 2001; 2002). In contrast to many studies relating to Michael Jordan, studies of Beckham have also given consideration to how some mediated representations of Beckham demonstrate challenges to more traditional notions of identity and often reflect more hybrid possibilities.

Cashmore and Parker (2003) have argued that while coverage of David Beckham demonstrates all the hallmarks of his celebrity status, his identity remains both fluid and negotiable depending on the role and audience being addressed and the ends to be achieved. Cashmore and Parker (2003) have further argued that Beckham's fluid identity as presented in the contemporary media is both complex and contradictory, and serves to suggest that there is room for the media to promote more than one idealized identity construction.

While the insights garnered from the aforementioned studies certainly contribute to facilitating a broader understanding of the role mediated representations of sporting celebrities play within society, one cannot necessarily extend the results garnered across national perspectives. That is to say, notions of race, class, gender, sexuality and nationality, in addition to cultural issues, are not necessarily the same across nations; rather, they are contextually specific. Accordingly, in order to develop a broader understanding of issues as they present themselves in Canadian culture (and how they relate to those presented in other

nations) it is prudent to analyze media representations of Canadian sporting celebrities.

There have been relatively few studies that examine mediated representations of Canadian sporting celebrities. Simon Darnell and Robert Sparks (2005) have examined how the Canadian media and marketers constructed triathlete Simon Whitfield's gold medal performance at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and how this served to affirm dominant meanings of sport culture in Canada, such as prevailing against adversity, being gracious and humble in success, and embodying the wholesomeness and honesty of the prototypical "boy next door" Canadian hero. Aside from this, Steve Jackson's studies of Wayne Gretzky (1994, 2001), Ben Johnson (1998, 2004), and Donovan Bailey and Ben Johnson (2004) are the only other significant body of literature relating to sporting celebrity in a Canadian context. Jackson's work relating to Wayne Gretzky and the role of hockey in Canadian culture has examined media discourse surrounding Gretzky's marriage to Janet Jones and his trade to the Los Angeles Kings and how these events were linked to discourse regarding a Canadian identity crisis and the threat of Americanization. Jackson's research also argues for the relevance of discourse related to hockey-playing celebrities in the construction of Canadian identity. As Roy MacGregor (2006) asserts:

It is impossible to know a people until you know the game they play. To understand America, you need to know football. To understand Brazil, soccer. Rare is the country so taken with one sport as is Canada – a sport that can be said to define the country.  
(p. ix)



Examining media representations of Sidney Crosby thus presents an opportunity not only to study their cultural impact from a Canadian perspective, but its relevance is also heightened due to the historical and discursive connection between Canadian identity and the sport of hockey.

### **Advertising and the Construction of Identity**

Advertising, specifically, is an excellent medium through which to interrogate issues of identity and its construction and interpretation through the media. Advertising has long been acknowledged as an important medium through which companies have aimed to increase their product sales. From early ads that informed the consumer about particular product qualities, to more contemporary ads that now serve to also articulate brands with particular imagery, lifestyles, and beliefs, advertising has certainly evolved. In contemporary North American society, we are increasingly bombarded with advertising and commercial imagery. Flipping through a magazine, one quickly realizes that there are a greater number of advertisements than there are articles. Billboards have become a normal component of the contemporary urban landscape, adorning everything from downtown buildings, to buses, to highways. One third of every hour of cable television is typically devoted to commercials. Even the doors to bathroom stalls have become fair game for advertising. In short, advertising has become a rather pervasive component of present-day living, and it is estimated that the average person is faced with anywhere from 700 to 3,000 advertisements each day (Heath & Potter, 2004). As the prevalence of advertising has increased, its role in society has also changed. Advertising, which previously took the form of

product news bulletins, has come to foster the construction of an image around a given brand-name version of a product (Klein, 2000). The differences between two brands of cotton t-shirts, tomato soups, or hockey sticks are negligible at best, however what is different is the impression they are said to convey.

As O'Donohoe (1997) asserts, advertising is a complex signifying system, which draws on other texts and discourses. While the creation of ads often conjures up images of creative freedom, this process is in fact tightly regulated, systematic, and largely predetermined, following ideological patterns regarding how to speak about and through particular objects (Soar, 2000). That is to say, the final product of advertising is, as Grunau (1989) contends "always the result of a complex process of selection...(and) tend to express dominant ideological tendencies in capitalist societies" (p. 134-135). The articulation of advertising with particular standardized messages and meanings of and about life, coupled with its continuing expansion into an ever increasing number of environments serve to make advertising a very important component of contemporary culture. Accordingly, many scholars (see Goldman & Papson, 1996; 1999; Lury & Warde, 1997; McFall, 2002; Nava, 1997; Negus, 2002; Nixon & duGay, 2002; Scherer, 2007; Scherer & Jackson, 2007; 2008<sub>a</sub>; 2008<sub>b</sub>; Soar, 2000) have deemed the field of advertising to be worthy of, and indeed, requiring, critical analysis.

Nicolas Hayek, a senior executive at the Swiss watch company, Swatch, contended that advertising for his company was about more than just style, but also the message:

We are not just offering people a style. We are offering them a message...Emotional products are about message – a strong, exciting,

distinct, authentic message that tells people who you are and why you do what you do. ( cited in Lury & Ward, 1997, p. 94)

The message that the producers wish for consumers to associate with their brand differs from company to company. What remains the same, however, is that while all corporations wish for a particular message to be transmitted to the consumer, this outcome cannot be guaranteed. As O'Donohoe (1997) attests, meaning transfer can only be achieved by an ad's audience, not within an ad itself; it is up to the audience to "correctly" unpack an advertisers' message. It is for this very reason that the production of advertising is so important; it is during production that meaning is imbued, and care is taken to ensure that consumers will "properly" interpret the end product. In advertising, nothing goes unplanned, and nothing is left to chance. Accordingly, it becomes of particular importance to examine not only the resultant advertisement (textual analysis), but to also analyze the process of its creation – the production of advertising – examinations that have historically been neglected in critical studies of advertising.

Advertising aims to captivate the potential consumer and establish why it is that they should purchase a particular product (and how that product will improve their lives) by presenting an idealized reality that is brought to life through consumption. As Kellner (1995) argues:

Advertising "addresses" individuals and invites them to identify with certain products, images, and behaviours. Advertising provides a utopian image of a new, more attractive, more successful, prestigious "you" through the purchase of certain goods. Advertising magically offers self-transformation and a new identity, associating changes in consumer behaviour, fashion, and appearance with metamorphosis into a new person. (p. 251)

That is to say, the world as presented through advertising is meant to be seen by the consumer as an ideal reality, one that they can achieve by consuming particular products. To be a consumer is to purchase one's way to a "better life" – to engage in a lifestyle of consumption – and advertisements aim to explain (persuade) to the viewer how particular products will allow this to occur. In this sense, advertising is an economic as well as a representational practice (du Gay *et al.*, 1997). The goal of advertising a given product is not only to attempt to encourage consumers to purchase it, but also to have them associate that product with particular lifestyles, beliefs, and identifications.

### **Hockey, Canada and the Construction of Identity**

It is important to situate this critical analysis of advertising, representation, and Sidney Crosby within the context of the role and idealization of hockey in Canadian culture. Whitson and Gruneau (2006) argue that hockey has acquired a mythological standing in Canada and that the sport is strongly associated with idealized versions of what it means to be Canadian. These associations with Canada and Canadianness include the ideas that:

Hockey is our game; it expresses something distinctive about how we Canadians have come to terms with our unique northern environment and landscape; it is a graphic expression of "who we are"; the game's rough masculinity is a testament to the distinctive passion and strength of the Canadian character; we are better at it than anyone else in the world; and the National Hockey League is the pinnacle of the game – as well as a prominent Canadian institution. (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006, p. 4)

From Maurice Richard, to Bobby Orr, to Wayne Gretzky, iconic hockey players have historically held a vaunted position within Canadian culture and the collective imagination of the country's hockey fans. Saturday night is commonly

referred to as hockey night, and the theme to *Hockey Night in Canada* is colloquially referred to as Canada's second national anthem. Paul Henderson's game winning goal in the final game of the 1972 Canada/USSR Summit Series is referred to simply as "The Goal", and has been immortalized on both a postage stamp and silver coin issued by the Royal Canadian Mint. In 2004, the viewers of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) voted Don Cherry, the star of "Coach's Corner" (a *Hockey Night in Canada* staple) as the seventh greatest Canadian (Wayne Gretzky was number 10, Bobby Orr was number 19 and Maurice Richard was number 23; in total, there are 12 individuals associated with hockey on the list of the top 100). Of course, it is also vital to acknowledge that, though hockey has acquired this connection with Canadian identity, this is not a *natural* connection. Rather, the role of hockey in Canadian culture is something that has been constructed by Canadians – and indeed, by institutions and corporations – and that has been developed over a longer period of time (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006).

Customs, symbols, folk heroes, and important landmarks play a vital role in fostering awareness of societal identity (Hiller, 1986). Sports and sporting events have the ability to provide all of these to a given nation. Successful athletes are frequently transformed into idols and heroes, and sporting arenas such as Maple Leaf Gardens and Canada Olympic Park are well known landmarks with their own, special histories. Further, as Sage (1998) contends, national loyalty and patriotism are fostered through sport rituals and ceremonies that serve to link sport and the nation, and national symbols are often woven into sporting events.

Sport thus acts as a forum through which the characteristics said to compose a particular national identity may be defined.

While Canada is comprised of approximately 33.5 million people, all with different backgrounds and ideas, these individuals are grouped together as members of “Canadian society”. Such is the crux of national identity: the members of a given nation are imagined as collectively accepting the society of the state as an integral component of their personal identity (Hiller, 1986). It is assumed that, as members of a nation, the population as a whole will experience an overall sentiment of solidarity that goes beyond more empirical qualities such as shared language, religion, or blood ties (Croucher, 2003). National identity is made to seem natural, when in fact it is constructed, produced and reproduced. That is to say, no one is born imbued with feelings of nationalistic pride. Canadians are not born knowing that they are Canadian (or even what it means to be Canadian); rather, what it means to be Canadian is something that is learned through the experience of living within the country and being subjected to the ideas that are circulated within it. The nation – Canadian or otherwise – is an imagined community, wherein fraternity with fellow nationals (whom one largely does not see or know) must be actively created and ritualized (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993). National stories communicate to citizens preferred ways of being, the preferred imagining of history, and tend to reflect the most powerful economic and social groups (Houlihan, 1997; Adams, 2006). Thus, national identity is not only a constructed entity; it is constructed such that it is the ideals of dominant institutions that are promoted as the proper manner in which to

express nationalist sentiments. While there are in fact many ways to be Canadian (and many different ways that Canadians act), it is a very particular set of qualities and ideals that are promoted as representative of the national identity of all people.

Hockey is said to attract a particular type of fan. Chris Rock (cited in Spector, 2005) has attested that, “hockey is like heroin...only drug addicts do heroin. It’s not like a recreational drug...hockey is kind of the same way. Only hockey fans watch hockey” (p. S1). If it is only hockey fans that watch hockey, there are none that are conceptualized as more rabid about the game than hockey fans in Canada. Hockey is positioned as the nation’s game, and Canadians as its truest fans. Truly, the sport of hockey is more than just a game: it is considered an integral part of Canadian culture. As Dryden (1989) asserts, “hockey has become part of the Canadian imagination, an instinct, a need, an expectation passed from generation to generation, an obligation of one to the next” (p. 22). In Canada, hockey is said to “transcend sport” (Dvorchak 2005<sub>a</sub>, p. D1), and star hockey players are positioned as “national treasures” (Dvorchak 2005<sub>b</sub>, p. A1). As a significant facet of Canadian lore, the sport of hockey (and representations of it) plays a major role in the construction of what it means to be Canadian. Hockey is Canada, and the values said to be promoted in hockey are considered to be that which makes one Canadian.

Adams (2006) has argued that at elite, competitive levels, men’s hockey (the only hockey that really counts) promotes a hard, aggressive masculinity, and that this masculinity is reinforced through actions such as the celebration of

fighting, and the idolization of players who are willing to give and take the biggest hits. Similarly, in her study of the production of Olympic hockey at the 1988 Calgary Olympics, Margaret MacNeill (1996), argues that “the favored representation of ‘authentic Canadian’ hockey involved young males engaged in fast skating competition with scoring punches, rough and tough body checking, and aggressive digging for the puck in the rink corners” (p. 111). This conceptualization of hockey as a rough, rugged and masculine sport serves to demonstrate how the defining of Canada’s sport and of Canada’s national identity is a highly gendered process. This process is further complicated by issues of race, class, and sexuality. Historically, the prototypical hockey figure has always been a white, working class, appropriately masculine, heterosexual man. As Gruneau and Whitson (1993) discuss, between the late 1950s and mid 1970s, only 17% of all NHL players had finished high school, and as late as 1970, the average NHL salary was only \$24,000 – substantially lower than the current league minimum of \$500,000. This is in contrast to the contemporary game, which is played by a greater percentage of middle-to-upper class individuals, in large part due to the escalating costs associated with playing the sport of hockey. The prototypical hockey player does, however, remain a white, masculine, heterosexual man. Thus, when examining the links between hockey and the defining of Canadian national identity, it is important to give consideration to whom this process entrenches as appropriately Canadian, and who it leaves upon the fringes.



One of the most significant manners in which the links between hockey and Canadian life have been fostered is through the CBC's broadcasts of *Hockey Night in Canada*. The CBC first began broadcasting the show coast-to-coast on the radio in 1933, and in 1952, the program began its television run. *Hockey Night in Canada* has since come to be regarded as a staple of Saturday nights, and now features two games, each with at least one Canadian team, shown back-to-back. The program has spawned numerous now-famous sideshows and sequences, including Coach's Corner, The Satellite Hotstove, Behind the Mask, After Hours, and the yearly special, Hockey Day in Canada. *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcasts, which can draw upwards of three million Canadian viewers each week (Burgess, 2001), have long been viewed as an ideal venue through which to capture a national market and audience and hold an almost iconic place within Canadian culture (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993). The show has also been sponsored by major Canadian companies, including General Motors, Imperial Oil, Molson, and Labatt, and typically features advertisements meant to resonate with the "typical" hockey fan – commercials for trucks and sport utility vehicles, for beer, for men's shave gels and razors, and for the quintessentially Canadian hockey beverage, Tim Hortons coffee. Accordingly, it becomes of particular importance to consider how hockey and hockey-playing celebrity is utilized as a vehicle for advertising, what social norms and ideologies are promoted as natural components of Canadian national identity for such purposes, and the manner in which such advertisements link certain goods with being Canadian in an attempt to sell products. Further, it is important to consider the very nature of national

identity – Canadian or otherwise – as a component of advertising, given the growing prominence of global corporations who sell their products worldwide.

It has been argued that within the ever-increasing prevalence of corporate globalization, the nation, as a purveyor of distinct cultural identity, has lost its power to global uniformity. While it is certainly true that the world has become increasingly globalized, many contend that the nation remains a significant cultural institution, though its function has shifted. Silk, Andrews and Cole (2005) have asserted that the political-cultural nation of the twentieth century has been replaced by the twenty-first century conceptualization of the corporate-cultural nation, or “corporate nationalisms”:

... processes that are qualitatively distinct from those that helped to constitute the symbolic boundaries of maturing nation-states during the nineteenth century. As human civilization becomes increasingly corporatized, the nation and national culture have become principal (albeit perhaps unwilling) accomplices within this process, as global capitalism seeks to, quite literally, capitalize upon the nation as a source of collective identification and differentiation. (p. 7)

In this sense, the nation has not lost its importance as a cultural definer, but rather, its significance has become increasingly associated with corporate sensibilities.

The values, beliefs and behaviours that came to be associated with particular nation-states over the course of time are now being utilized to create cultural resonance with consumer goods and products. It is thus imperative that researchers interrogate the manners in which conceptualizations of the nation and nation-building sentiments have shifted over time, and how the nation has become a vital component of global product strategizing.

The ties between the nation and corporate sensibilities are particularly evident when one considers the case of hockey and its mythological role within Canadian culture. As Ammirante (2006) argues in his examination of the globalization of hockey and European football, the nature of sports clubs is changing from civic institution to moveable asset. In the past, teams and clubs were local institutions, sponsored by local businesses and supported and attended by local fans who could afford to attend games on a fairly regular basis. Now, however, the majority of fans within a given city cannot afford tickets to view their favourite team live, and may just as easily follow out-of-town teams and players on television, in the news media, and over the internet. Further, teams are now largely composed of players from across the world, and are sponsored by a variety of global corporations aiming to align themselves with and capitalize upon local markets. In Canada, hockey teams such as the Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens have long been iconic institutions, and the sentimental attachment that consumers have with these teams – “their” teams – is utilized to promote a wide range of products. As an example, one of the Leafs’ primary sponsors is Under Armour, an American corporation. Through their association with one of Canada’s most marketable hockey teams, this corporation gains prominence within the Canadian marketplace, and come to be associated with a certain ideal of “Canadianness”. In this sense, such corporations rely on nationalistic ideals of the past to associate their products with and to utilize to increase sales in the present.

In this chapter I have examined the previous research that serves to provide the foundation for my own study. Though it has previously received minimal attention, it is important to consider the role that production and the producers of cultural artefacts play in the construction and perpetuation of specific discursive ideas. Production, representation, consumption, and regulation are interrelated and it is only by interrogating all phases of communication that a more complete understanding of the making of culture. In particular, it is important to consider the role of cultural intermediaries in the promotion of goods, and how they aim to connect goods and services with particular cultural meanings and values in order to better attract consumers.

Increasingly, celebrities have become a key component in the structuring of meaning, ideologies and suggestions to consumers regarding products to purchase, and the more general navigation of contemporary existence. More specifically, celebrity athletes have become yet another step in the marketing process, and are now connected with an increasingly larger breadth of products both related and unrelated to sport. In advertising, where products have become increasingly difficult to differentiate from each other, the goal is to have people associate a product with particular lifestyles, beliefs, and identifications – such as the ones celebrity athletes are said to embody.

Finally, national identity – something that is made to seem natural, but is in fact constructed, produced, and reproduced – has also become a vital component of global product strategizing, a process that Silk, Andrews, and Cole (2005) refer to as corporate nationalism. Corporations have become increasingly

global, but must resonate with consumers on a local level in order to sell their products. Accordingly, products are increasingly connected with national stories in an attempt to connect with the national audience. In Canada, this has resulted in many products being associated with the sport of hockey. In the case of corporations like Gatorade, not only are they connecting to the sport of hockey to resonate with Canadian fans, but also with Sidney Crosby, a celebrity athlete in the sport of hockey, to further this connection.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This thesis utilizes a qualitative research methodology in order to examine the production of Gatorade advertising campaigns featuring Canadian hockey star Sidney Crosby. There is no singular, all encompassing definition of what qualitative research entails; rather, there are many strategies, perspectives, and methods that are considered qualitative. More broadly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality...they seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning” (p. 10). In so doing, qualitative researchers employ a variety of methodological practices, theories, and paradigms in order to best understand and interpret the cultural phenomena that are being studied. Qualitative inquiry affords the researcher the opportunity to develop a broader understanding of a given topic, without the assumption that they are searching out a singular, objective truth. Further, qualitative inquiry in sports studies, as opposed to acting solely as a research paradigm, orients the researcher to undertake examinations that take into consideration not only what is observed or present, but the issues that have potentially influenced the presence of this reality, as well. The use of a qualitative methodology for this research project thus provides an interpretive framework through which to assess how Crosby is produced and represented in contemporary advertising and the factors that serve to contextualize these representations.

This study utilizes a critical cultural studies approach to qualitative research focusing specifically on cultural production. In critical cultural studies,

one examines aspects of culture and investigates issues of oppression and domination therein. In so doing, such a perspective also serves to highlight the normative positions that serve to foster the naturalization of particular values, beliefs, and perspectives (Kellner, 1995). King (2005) asserts that the most successful research in cultural studies tends to be the most complex and intricate in its analysis of content (while simultaneously acknowledging that even that most complex research inevitably remains only a component of the total puzzle that is the study of culture). A critical cultural studies approach is also one that is multi-paradigmatic; it employs a range of methodologies in order to better understand cultural phenomena. The more perspectives that one can bring to analysis and critique, the more one can delve into the complexities and dimensions of the ideologies presented and perpetuated within the cultural product being analyzed (Kellner, 1995). Accordingly, cultural studies research is not bound within a single academic discipline, but rather is inter- (or even anti) disciplinary (Johnson, 1986).

Due to the interdisciplinarity and multiperspectival nature of critical cultural studies research, this study employs multiple methods in order to increase the depth of understanding acquired through the research. First, I examine issues relating to the production of advertisements featuring Sidney Crosby and how these impact upon representation in such ads. Second, I perform critical readings of mediated representations of Crosby, paying particular attention to the manner in which his identity is represented along the power lines of gender, and national identity. For this I have performed semi-structured interviews with advertising

producers, namely the former Canadian Marketing Manager for Gatorade and the Creative Director from the advertising firm Downtown Partners DDB, who produced three Crosby ads for Gatorade – *Sticks*, *What's Inside*, and *Narrator*. An important component of this research is its contextualization within a particular moment in the National Hockey League; namely, marketing in the post-lockout era, and the use of hockey in marketing from both a Canadian and broader league-wide (Canadian/American) perspective.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews: Capturing Production**

Analyzing advertisements as standalone texts does not bring into consideration the contexts and conditions of their production. Accordingly, it is useful to consider not only advertising-as-text, but to examine more closely the conditions of production as well (Soar, 2000). This includes not only the material means of production and the organizations that were responsible for production, but also the existing cultural conventions that serve to influence and potentially shape the final form an advertisement takes (Johnson, 1986). The interviews performed with cultural intermediaries responsible for the production of advertising featuring Sidney Crosby serve to provide a broader understanding of how and why particular representations are given prominence over others.

Interviews are useful for garnering a broader understanding of social and cultural issues that one cannot glean from textual analyses alone. In interviews,

The interviewer attempts to gain insight into the inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes that are a quintessential part of our daily lives. Interviews offer a depth of information that permits the detailed exploration of particular issues in a way not possible with other forms of data collection. (Amis, 2005, p. 105)



Consequently, the use of interviews in this study provides information regarding the production of the advertisements featuring Sidney Crosby that would otherwise be unavailable. More specifically, a semi-structured interviewing strategy was utilized in this research. Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a basic line of inquiry to be pursued with all participants while simultaneously allowing the freedom to probe beyond the answers to the prepared and standardized questions (Berg, 1998). Utilizing this approach allows the interviewer to exercise discretion with regards to what questions they feel are best to expand upon with different interviewees. While the basic structure of the interview is predetermined, the interviewer is able to steer the interview in particular directions based on the responses that the participant provides. The interview guide utilized for each interview has been provided (see Appendix A).

The interviews that I have performed were done with two individuals who played significant roles in the production of the advertising campaigns for Gatorade – Gatorade’s former Canadian marketing manager, and the Creative Director from Downtown Partners DDB, the advertising agency responsible for all of the Canadian Gatorade commercials featuring Crosby. These individuals were initially contacted by email and interviews were performed by telephone and recorded on tape. Recording interviews not only increases the accuracy of data collection, but also allows the interviewer to be more attentive (Patton, 2002). Following the culmination of the interviews, they were each transcribed verbatim. As Patton (2002) asserts, the raw data of interviews is the actual quotations spoken by interviewees; accordingly, verbatim transcription is critical.

Initially, I had hoped to garner interviews with a greater number of cultural intermediaries reflecting a broader scope of the mass mediation of Crosby. This, however, did not prove feasible. I was in contact with public relations at both Tim Hortons and Upper Deck, but neither offered any assistance in contacting individuals involved with Crosby's endorsement of these products. I was also in contact with mcgarrybowen, an advertising firm in New York that produced two ads featuring Crosby for RBK Hockey (*I Am What I Am I* and *I Am What I Am II*). Each time that I contacted the firm, I was told they could not provide me with any information or assist me in getting in contact with the cultural intermediaries who had worked on the ads. Unlike Gatorade's first Crosby ad, *Sticks*, which garnered accolades within the advertising world and was submitted for awards, the RBK ads did not receive similar attention, and numerous internet searches did not retrieve any information relating to which specific individuals at mcgarrybowen worked on the ads. Conversely, this was the manner in which I discovered who at Downtown Partners had worked on their Crosby ads for Gatorade. I had also considered conducting interviews with individuals who had been heavily involved in the mediation of Crosby – namely *Globe and Mail* reporter Shawna Richer and author Gare Joyce. Following the interviews with Gatorade's marketing manager and the Creative Director from Downtown Partners DDB, however, it was decided that I would narrow my focus to the production of Gatorade's advertisements featuring Crosby, and not the broader production of Crosby within the media.

Gatorade is not a Canadian company. Founded in 1965, the corporation is based out of Chicago, Illinois and has branched out globally. First created in the late 1960s by scientists at the University of Florida, this group sold their interest in the product to Stokely-Van Camp, who produced the product until 1983. Stokely-Van Camp was then sold to the Quaker Oats Company, which was purchased by Pepsi in 2001 – primarily so that Pepsi could acquire the Gatorade brand. Pepsi now claims to sell the product in over 80 countries worldwide, in flavours that are said to cater to the different tastes of each individual area. Gatorade is a well known product and is frequently referenced culturally, as in coaches getting Gatorade showers following big victories, and for highly successful advertising campaigns, such as “Be Like Mike” featuring Michael Jordan. Gatorade hosts three different local websites: the generic, American website, [gatorade.com](http://gatorade.com); Canada’s [gatorade.ca](http://gatorade.ca); and the most recently launched British site, [gatorade.co.uk](http://gatorade.co.uk). Gatorade’s signing of Sidney Crosby – the most lucrative contract ever offered to an NHL player – and subsequent push to heavily market him within the Canadian marketplace evidences the manner in which global corporations aim to localize themselves through corporate nationalism. Linking themselves to Crosby, and through him, to hockey, is an essential component of Gatorade’s marketing strategy – particularly in Canada. Accordingly, there is tremendous value in examining the manners in which Gatorade utilizes Crosby over the course of their cumulative advertising campaigns, and more specifically, the reasons why Gatorade management envision Crosby as a valuable commodity and product endorser.

Downtown Partners DDB closed in January of 2008. I was in contact with public relations for Gatorade to inquire as to whether they had any forwarding information for the advertising firm's creative team, which they did not. I utilized the website Canada 411 to attempt to track down any of the individuals who had worked on the ads that continued to reside in Toronto, ON. It was in this manner that I acquired the home telephone number of Downtown Partners' former Creative Director, with whom I left a message and was eventually able to set up a telephone interview.

It was similarly challenging to procure contact information for Gatorade's former marketing manager. When I initially contacted public relations at Gatorade Canada, I was informed that the marketing team had undergone significant changes since Crosby had first been signed on and that none of this former team remained. I had the name of the former marketing manager from previous internet searches for information regarding Gatorade's signing of Crosby, and inquired with public relations about this individual specifically, again with no leads. I posted an entry in my own personal blog relating to my difficulties in acquiring interview subjects and in contacting this particular individual. Days later, I received a comment in my blog from Gatorade's former marketing manager informing me of his new position with Gatorade, and that he would be more than happy to discuss Crosby with me. He left his email address, and we set up a telephone interview soon after.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to speak to Gatorade's former Canadian marketing manager and Downtown Partners' creative director, as they,

arguably, represent the most significant voices in the construction of Gatorade's Crosby advertising campaigns. I received ethics approval in August, 2008. The interviews were both conducted by phone and were each approximately 90 minutes long. Information regarding the interviews, including the interview guides utilized, is provided in Appendix A. The interviewees provided detailed responses to questions on a very broad range of topics, including the production of Gatorade's four ads – *Sticks*, *What's Inside*, *League of Clutch*, and *Narrator*. Thick description of these ads is provided in Appendix B. Other topics included the manner in which the interviewees envisioned Crosby and his marketing potential, the role of hockey in the Canadian marketplace, their perceptions of the target market, the state of the NHL, the changing landscape of contemporary advertising, and the various challenges presented over the course of Gatorade's relationship with Crosby to date. The interview guide was developed by breaking down the components of Gatorade's four ads featuring Crosby and careful consideration of topics that would serve to illuminate the representational strategies used by the corporation to market Crosby, and to utilize Crosby to increase product sales both within the Canadian marketplace and more broadly worldwide. Further, I wished to explore the dominant cultural codes and institutional contexts that set limits and pressures in terms of what can and cannot be produced by cultural intermediaries. Due to the length of the interviews and the detailed nature of the answers received, it was deemed that this data was sufficient for the purposes of this thesis. Scherer (2007) and Scherer and Jackson (2008) have outlined similar difficulties in securing a larger number of

interviewees for their studies of the New Zealand All Blacks and have also focused on the quality of information received over the quantity of interviews acquired.

Data analysis began at the culmination of the interview process. Reflection upon the interviews and the different topics discussed served as the first step in this analysis, and allowed for broad themes to be uncovered and considered in terms of their potential for understanding the data set as a whole. At first, just thinking about the broad range of topics covered was overwhelming. It became clear quite quickly, however, that there were many topics that had been touched upon more frequently than others. In particular, the connections both cultural intermediaries felt existed between hockey and selling products in Canada were a rather prominent theme. Crosby's personal attributes and how they were both marketable and potentially easily associated with the brand and the brand image were also topics repeatedly broached by both individuals.

The transcription process served as the second step in the development of insight. Typing and organizing interview material offers researchers the opportunity to immerse themselves in their data during the transition between fieldwork and full analysis (Patton, 2002). Thus, prior to "officially" commencing data analysis, initial consideration of the data will have already occurred. This process resulted in two rather substantial transcripts – 30 and 27 pages, respectively. From there, the actual process of content analysis began in earnest.

It is important to situate myself, as the researcher, within the process of analysis. In the analysis of qualitative research, the knowledge, beliefs, and past experiences of the researcher serve to frame the foundation from which analysis begins. I currently play senior women's hockey, and have been active in women's hockey community for over 12 years. I also officiate both women's and men's hockey. In addition to this, I am a regular follower of the NHL, and watch a minimum of two games per week during the playing season. I also follow numerous hockey blogs, and would generally consider myself an avid follower of the game. I do, however, believe that the sport is not without its faults, and this is one of my primary reasons for wishing to engage in research on pertinent topics surrounding the sport. More specifically, I believe that sport in general – and hockey in particular – has a very prominent male bias and is touted as an essential component of the masculinising process. In contrast, women in sport are subjected to a variety of challenges, ranging from securing legitimacy to attacks on their sexuality for excelling in an athletic environment. This latter point reflects the heteronormativity of sport; while men who excel at sport are typically praised for their prowess, women who are strong athletes – particularly in male dominated sports like hockey – commonly have their sexuality brought into question, thus reinforcing binary gender roles and identities. It is from this position as a researcher that I began the process of content analysis.

Content analysis involves “identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labelling the primary patterns in the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). For the first reading of data, the process of open coding was utilized. The central purpose of

open coding is to open inquiry widely and it is aimed at developing the coding categories to be used for analysis (Berg, 1998; Patton, 2002). This allows a wide range of themes and concepts to be uncovered and consideration can be given to how this data might be utilized in later stages of analysis. This process reflects an inductive approach to qualitative analysis whereby findings emerge from the data and one's interactions with it (Patton, 2002). In the interview with Gatorade's marketing manager, much was said regarding why Gatorade elected to utilize Crosby as a primary endorser for their product, how it was felt he connected with the brand, Crosby and masculinity, hockey and Canadian culture, why sport is a popular subject matter in advertising, the process of advertising production, the use of integrated campaigns across multiple forums (ie. television and internet), target markets, and information relating to the production of the individual ads (*Sticks*, *What's Inside*, and *Narrator*). In the interview with Downtown Partners' Creative Director, the specifics of the Creative Director job and the advertising production process were a significant focus in addition to Crosby's value as an endorser, budgetary constraints and their impact on advertising, changes in marketing and the contemporary advertising landscape, the links fostered between hockey and Canadian identity in advertising, the promotional strategies utilized in marketing Crosby, ideas about appealing to Gatorade's target markets, Crosby's involvement in the production process, and information about the individual production process for each of the Gatorade ads. These prominent themes that emerged through the process of open coding were combined with topics that I had already begun to consider during my literature review; specifically, corporate



nationalism, youth and masculinity, and the links between hockey and Canada.

From there, the broad thematic categories were narrowed and refined to shape and reflect the chosen paths of inquiry for this thesis.

### **Critical Readings and Contextual Analysis**

The critical readings performed in this study make use of critical discourse analysis. As Smith and Sparkes (2005) assert, critical discourse analysis explores how texts are made meaningful and how they contribute to the making of meaning through their dissemination in the social world. Critical discourse analysis is further described as:

...distinguished by its critical focus, its broad scope, and its overtly political agenda. It often focuses on intertextuality, namely how an individual text draws on elements and discourses of other texts. It also tries to systematically analyze language use as a social practice – actual instances of language use – in relation to the wider social practice of which the discursive practice is part. Further, the explanatory critique aims to reveal connections between language, ideology, and power. Critical discourse analysts thus aspire to expose taken-for-granted power relationships and describe the ways in which power and dominance are produced and reproduced in texts and social practice through the discourse structures of generally “unremarkable” interactions. (p. 222-223)

Accordingly, performing critical discourse analysis provides a manner through which to garner a better understanding of how the language and construction of seemingly benign social artefacts serve to reproduce particular power relationships, values, and idealized behaviours. In so doing, the use of this method of inquiry allows one to develop a better understanding of oppositional and subversive moments within these constructs which serve to challenge and complicate the dominant norm.

More specifically, this study employs critical textual sport analysis. Critical readings of sport conceptualize particular sporting events or celebrities as texts, and then offer readings of those texts. Such readings aim to provide insight into how seemingly discrete incidents occurring within the realm of sport are connected to the broader social world (McDonald & Birrell, 1999). More specifically, McDonald and Birrell (1999) argue for the use of critical sport readings to examine the complex, interrelated character of power relations constituted along the axes of ability, class, gender, race, sexuality, age, and nationality, paying careful attention to broader historically specific concerns as the context for interpretation. That is to say that ideologies, identities and meanings are constantly constructed and reconstructed over time and thus it is important to analyze not only what is evidenced in a particular cultural text, but how this relates to historically relevant events, accounts, and broader social meanings. Thus, critical sport readings are advocated for the production of alternative accounts and counter-narratives of incidents and sporting celebrities that take into account the power relations that are typically de-centered, obscured and dismissed (McDonald & Birrell, 1999).

It is important to situate the information garnered from both critical readings and the semi-structured interviews within the broader political-economic and socio-cultural context within which advertisements featuring Crosby are located. Kellner (1995) asserts that the purpose of contextualist cultural studies is to:

Read cultural texts in terms of actual struggles within contemporary culture and society, situating ideological analysis within existing

sociopolitical debates and conflicts rather than just in relation to some supposedly monolithic dominant ideology, or some model of mass culture that is simply equated with ideological manipulation or domination *per se*. (p. 103)

The ability to relate the ideological concepts and concerns raised within one cultural text to broader cultural issues serves to greatly advance understanding of the issues at hand. Without contextualization of the cultural climate within which cultural artefacts are produced and consumed, the depth of one's analysis is limited. By relating texts to the political climate and debates circulating at a given time, to texts concerned with similar themes, and to broader ideological discourses within a given culture one is better able to determine the particular ideological positions that are advanced (Kellner, 1995).

The contextual analysis that perforates this study has two major focuses. First, the role of hockey, and the NHL product in particular, in Canadian society has been considered. For this, I have examined how hockey is conceptualized in terms of being “Canada’s sport” and the identity politics inherent to this. Who (and in particular, of what gendered representation) is considered the prototypical hockey player? The prototypical Canadian? What tensions are there with regards to this articulation? How is the subversion of such norms responded to? To examine this, I have coupled media analysis with the insights garnered from semi-structured interviews with the producers of Gatorade’s commercials featuring Crosby in order to consider the manner in which Crosby's masculinity is conceptualized. More specifically, I have considered events in Crosby’s playing career – on and off the ice – and the media’s reaction to them, including in books, newspapers, magazines, during hockey programming such as “Coach’s Corner”

on CBC, and documentary videos. While race is indeed a highly pertinent topic for discussion in relation to hockey and Canadian culture, and one that certainly requires a greater deal of research and attention, masculinity became the explicit focus of my analysis due to its prominence as a theme in the interviews I conducted. Accordingly, I have examined how Crosby is represented in the popular media in terms of his masculinity, and how his supposed transgressions against traditional hockey playing masculinity have been rationalized and potentially represent broader issues within the promotion and representation of hockey.

Second, it is important to consider the role of sporting celebrity in the Canadian context. Accordingly, I discuss Crosby's role in the promotion of both the NHL and a particular representation of hockey and identity, examining how Crosby (as a Canadian hockey player) meshes and causes tensions with the stereotypical representation of hockey and hockey-playing celebrities in the Canadian context. In so doing, I have also considered the manners in which the promotion of and promotional campaigns for the NHL have changed since the lockout, the objectives that the NHL seeks to accomplish with their contemporary campaigns, and how marketing differs for the American and Canadian markets.

The foundation for my contextual analysis of the relevant issues stems from analysis of relevant material from major Canadian newspapers, hockey, sport, and political magazines, television documentaries, the internet, and books written about the "new" NHL and Sidney Crosby's impact on professional hockey. More specifically, I selected four major newspapers for analysis (*The*

*Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, National Post, and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) and performed searches for Crosby and his impact on the NHL. The former three newspapers represent Canada's major national newspapers, while the latter is Pittsburgh's major newspaper. Given that Crosby plays for the Pittsburgh Penguins, he was frequently mentioned in their local news. The period of analysis extended from May 2005 (when speculation began regarding Crosby's impending drafting to the NHL) to the Penguins Stanley Cup playoff run in May 2009. I have also examined two full-length books written about Crosby - "Sidney Crosby: Taking the Game by Storm" by Gare Joyce (2005); and "The Kid: A Season with Sidney Crosby and the New NHL" by Shawna Richer (2006) – as well as a DVD, "Sidney Crosby: On the Ice and Beyond", released by the NHL in 2008. I also ran searches on multiple advertising trade magazines, including *Advertising Age, Adweek, Brandweek, Marketing Magazine, Strategy Magazine, Adrants, and Media in Canada* in order to assess how Gatorade's ads, their producers, the NHL, and Crosby himself, were regarded by marketing experts. These magazines – which are primarily American - did not return a significant number of results, potentially highlighting the prominence (or lack thereof) of hockey within the American sporting landscape. Even within Canadian publications – *Marketing Magazine* and *Media in Canada* – there were few mentions of Crosby and the NHL. Indeed, it was Gatorade's second Crosby commercial – *What's Inside* – which received the most attention. Finally, I also examined articles about Crosby in popular magazines, including *GQ, Vanity Fair, Men's Fitness, Maclean's, Reader's Digest Canada, Men's Health, and ESPN*

*Magazine.* This allowed me to garner a broad understanding of how Crosby was portrayed within the media, and what aspects of his appearance, personality, and athletic skill were highlighted within such mediated representations.

## Chapter 4: Gatorade and the Production of Crosby

This chapter will focus on the production aspects of four advertisements featuring Sidney Crosby that were made for sport drink manufacturer Gatorade. As previously noted, since signing Crosby in 2004, Gatorade has released four commercials featuring the NHL star. Of these, three were produced by the now-defunct Canadian advertising firm Downtown Partners DDB and aired in Canada, while one was produced by Chicago-based advertising agency Element79 and has been released in both Canada and the United States. While these commercials all share the same broad, overall goal – increasing Gatorade’s market share and product sales – they vary widely in terms of the messages and methods utilized in order to achieve this goal. No two commercials are alike; in fact, the only thing that is the same across the four ads – *Sticks*, *What’s Inside*, *League of Clutch*, and *Narrator* – is the use of Sidney Crosby as their focal point. The manner in which they utilize Crosby, the strategy for each ad, and how the company and the advertising agency aimed to achieve each ad’s goals all serve to demonstrate the complicated nature of utilizing superstar athletes to endorse products. It is not enough to simply have Crosby hold a bottle of Gatorade and present it to the public; rather, each ad serves to strengthen the association between product and endorser while simultaneously entertaining a target audience in such a way that they feel compelled to keep watching, and ideally, purchase more product. Accordingly, examining Gatorade’s Crosby ads as a group provides an opportunity to examine the relationships constituting the practice of producing the commercials, the conditions of their production, the components of the final

product, and the manner in which these changed and evolved over the course of Gatorade's campaign.

In this chapter, I will first examine the relationships that constituted the practice of producing the Crosby Gatorade ads, focusing specifically on the relationships between the managerial team at Gatorade and the production team at Downtown Partners; the relationships between individuals at Downtown Partners; the relationships between Gatorade, Downtown Partners, and other outside production agents and agencies; and finally, the relationship between the two firms and Crosby himself, as well as his team of handlers. Second, I will consider some of the conditions of the ads' production; namely, the use of sport as an advertising medium; the use of celebrity; and conceptualizations of the target market(s), as well as financial, environmental, technological, and logistical considerations that ultimately shaped the final advertising text. Finally, I will explore elements of the final products. In particular, I will examine what the goal(s) of the advertisers were for the different ads, their strategies, and why they felt that their approach would best achieve these goals.

By presenting people and products in very specific fashions that are reflective of particular ideological perspectives, advertisers legitimize certain representations and constructions of individual identity and the larger social world while simultaneously marginalizing others. In this sense, the world as it is represented in advertising is not necessarily reflective of society as it is, but rather is a characterization of how the world should be according to the capitalistic logic of the company whose products are being promoted (Jackson, Andrews &



Scherer, 2005). Accordingly, as argued by Jackson, Andrews and Scherer (2005), advertising represents an important site for the analysis of power relations, cultural politics and cultural representation. By examining what is highlighted and promoted within advertising, one is better able to understand what ideological perspectives and identity formations are idealized and deemed to be culturally resonant, and what the implications of this are.

In order to examine the production of advertising, it is important to first define what, exactly, this encompasses. Soar (2000) contends that the examination of the contexts of production should include:

How ideas are produced, how well the process can be explained, the influences (if any) that are at play, the investment that creatives and designers have in their own accounts of the process, and the ways in which these views may be affected by the less salutary efforts of the advertising and design communities. (p. 421)

Similarly, in their discussion of the production of televised sport, Silk and Amis (2000) argue that,

It is crucial that we comprehend the ways sporting events are transformed, or represented, by television professionals. To do so requires a critical insight into the management of the labour processes of production, the ways in which managerial practice shapes the product, and the external pressures that interact with the strategic choices of decision makers in the production arena. (p. 269)

These two passages bring to light many of the issues that need to be considered when analyzing the production of advertising. As Silk (2001) asserts in his study of the production of the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games, these many goals of production studies can be broken down categorically, into those “relating to the active relationships that constitute the *practice* of televised sport production, the *conditions* of practice and the *components* of the product” (p.

277). While Silk focused specifically on the production of sport television and not sport-based advertising, these categories remain relevant. First, the interactions between a client company and the advertising agency it hires in order to market a product/brand have tremendous implications. The agency hired, the involvement of other production agents, negotiations with product endorsers, and the individual relationships negotiated within these affiliations, all have the potential to influence and impact the final advertising product. Second, the conditions of practice affect the shape and scope of an advertising campaign. In examining the conditions of practice, it is therefore possible to garner a broader understanding of industry standards, beliefs, and ideological boundaries. Finally, by examining the components of the final product, one is better able to understand how the former two categories have served to impact upon its construction. Consequently, examining the relationships constituting the production of advertising, the conditions of its practice, and the components of the product serves to provide a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to the construction of an ad in a particular fashion and the ideological beliefs and industry routines that constitute this process.

### **Relationships Constituting the Practice of Production**

The production of Gatorade's advertising campaigns featuring Sidney Crosby required the navigation of numerous relationships. In order to produce an ad, a company must first hire an advertising agency that will create this final product. Accordingly, the first relationship which constitutes the practice of advertising production is that between the client company and the advertising

agency – in this case, Gatorade and Downtown Partners DDB. Within the advertising agency, there are also relationships that must be navigated – there are many individuals who must come together and collaborate in order to produce the eventual final product. The third type of relationship which serves to impact the production of the ads are the ones between Gatorade, Downtown Partners, and Sidney Crosby himself, and/or Crosby’s “people”. As the creative director at Downtown Partners asserted, the number of people involved in any given advertisement can be quite substantial:

Let’s say in my case there was 20 people in the room. That’s on our side and the client’s side, at the film house there will probably be, with the director and everybody, there’s got to be for sure at least 30 people there. So that’s 50. Then you’ve got the editors and the post stuff and there’s probably another six – you know what, on average, you’re probably looking at 50-75 people on a commercial, and that depends what size commercial also.

With so many people working on an ad, it makes sense that their interactions – the relationships between the individuals involved at the different levels and stages of production – would serve to impact the final product. These relationships lay the foundation for the advertisement that is eventually shown to the public. As Gruneau (1989) argues in his work examining the production of the 1986 Whistler World Cup downhill ski race, what is demonstrated is an elective affinity between the various interest groups. That is to say, all the groups involved share a common goal: at the World Cup, this was producing an entertaining, well put-together, and exciting event; for Gatorade and its counterparts, it is creating an exciting end product that will prove popular with consumers. This is an outcome that will, ideally, increase product sales for Gatorade, win awards and accolades

for the Downtown Partners and associated production companies, and increase recognition and popularity for Crosby due to his involvement in the advertisement. Accordingly, while the groups may disagree at certain junctures in the production process, it is unlikely that any one group would make decisions that are incompatible with the interests of those they are connected with, as the negative repercussions of such decisions would also affect them in the end.

The relationship between the client company and the advertising agency is, not surprisingly, the most crucial relationship affecting the production of advertising. The process of producing an ad begins with the company's development of a strategy which they can then bring to the advertising agency.

Downtown Partners' creative director explained this process and its goals as such:

The very first step is, the client either has a strategy or they work with an agency to come up with a strategy. And the strategy is based on everything from numbers to demographics to product attributes – what are the strengths of this product, where do we see this product going, what do we want to talk about? So for example, in the very beginning, if you take a look at it, the strategy was very different when we did 'hockey sticks' because in theory, there wasn't really much of a strategy. You know, the whole will to win and all that stuff. Versus the last spot, there was a strategy – it's a science, this drink. It's about the product. So every single spot, no matter what brand you do, it has a different strategy.

Essentially, the strategy sets out the discursive expectations that the parent company has with respect to what it expects the final product to look like, and what goals it wishes to achieve. This strategy thus represents the parameters that the advertising agency must then work within to attain the company's goals. Accordingly, from the very beginning the advertising creatives do not have a carte blanche to construct any type of ad they could imagine. There are already constraints and power relations in place to ensure the final product will look a

particular way. In fact, as Lury and Warde (1997) contend, not only are the agencies not free to do whatever they please from an aesthetic standpoint, they are most often rather powerfully constrained by their clients' notions of what the proper and appropriate way is to advertise certain types of products. Further, the selection of potential avenues upon which to proceed forward is made from a relatively narrow range of options that have been deemed legitimate and appropriate through negotiations between decision-makers at the parent company (Silk & Amis, 2000). While the company's objectives influence this process, Silk and Amis (2000) argue that there are also pressures that will serve to constrain the range of options available. These may be exerted explicitly, such as the need to comply with legal regulations, or implicitly, such as the desire to remain in line with the dominant manner of framing particular issues. Thus, before the advertising agency has even begun to come up with ideas, the cultural directions that such ideas can take have already been limited.

Once the company has given the agency a strategy, the agency must then come up with a variety of ideas that fit within it. These ideas and themes are then presented to the company and a decision is made regarding which of the strategies best fits with the strategy and would provide them with the most favourable advertising outcome. Gatorade's marketing manager elaborated on this aspect of the production process:

I basically brief the team to tell them what kind of ad we're looking for...whether we want to introduce Sidney or build the functional connection or emotional connection or that kind of stuff. It's the briefing process and you try to inspire the creative team. The creative team at Downtown Partners then comes back with various ideas – a whole number of ideas – and you have to, basically, look at the ideas and evaluate them

against the brief that you wrote... You look at them and you decide which of the ideas do that and then they go back and further refine them and eventually you come up with a winner. And so, at that point, then you figure out how much the ad costs [laughs] and you make sure you have enough money to pay for it. Then you choose directors and the agency presents a few different directors to you and you come to an agreement as to which is the best director for the ad and then you're working on the script. It's a very collaborative process. As the client, your role is to brief, come up with the ideas, choose the idea that you like, come up with the ideas together and say "there it is", choose the ideas that you think is best and then...once they choose the director, you want the director around with the ad and try not to get too much in their way and let them do what they're really good at.

Again, this explanation evidences the reality that ultimate control with regards to the final product lies with the company, while the agency must be willing to work within the company's desired framework. Not only is the agency constrained with regards to the ideas they are able to create in the first place, they are also subject to the choice of direction decided upon by the company once the creative process has begun. Further, as Silk and Amis (2000) contend, uncertainty and taking chances are not often looked upon favourably by companies, and accordingly, decision makers will often lean towards ideas that mimic other campaigns that have been successful. Such actions, known as "mimetic processes" (DiMaggio & Powell, cited in Silk & Amis, 2000, p. 271) can make it difficult, but not impossible – especially in advertising, which so often pushes the bar – for more innovative or risky ideas to be given the go-ahead. While the advertising agency can certainly advocate for a particular idea they feel has promise, they do not enter this negotiation process from a position of power, and do not have many options if the company does not agree with their perspective.

While ultimately the decision of which ad idea to go ahead with lies with the company, there are a variety of influences on this decision. The agency, unsurprisingly, will act as one source of input, and will voice their preferences to the company. Another major contributing factor is the advertiser's perception of their spectators (Goldman & Papson, 1996). Goldman and Papson (1996) contend that the dilemma and challenge presented to contemporary advertisers is how to make their message resonate with consumers, particularly considering the bombardment of corporate signs that they have to negotiate. In order to have an impact, an ad needs to stand out from its counterparts in its style and deliver a message to the viewer about the cultural currency gained through association with that product. If an advertisement does not connect with the target audience, it is impossible for it to be successful. Accordingly, while a company will utilize their perceptions of the audience and past research relating to this audience to determine the best advertisement to proceed with, they will also often seek outside guidance:

In the beginning we come up with a strategy and everyone agrees to it, it gets signed off on up the ladder and at that point we have a couple weeks to work on it and we come up with creative that has to deliver to that strategy. And at that point we present whatever it is, 'x' number of spots, to the client and there's a decision made to go forward with whatever it is, two or three and then in a lot of cases they will do research, focus groups and they'll see okay, what do groups think of this spot versus this spot and then usually if things go well – sometimes they don't – there's a spot that rises to the surface and we address all the little issues with it and basically at that point they give us the green light to go ahead and go into production. (Downtown Partners' creative director)

It is not just the company and the agency's interpretations of the advertisement's goal message, target markets, selling of the product's attributes, and any other

goals they may have that are utilized to make decisions pertaining to which ideas to develop. Instead of trying to guess at the appropriate path to take, the company will try to gain direct insight from the consumers they wish to hail with their message (and subsequently have purchase their products).

Within every advertising agency, there are a variety of people who must operate as a relatively cohesive unit in order to facilitate the development of advertisements and advertising campaigns. As Downtown Partners' creative director explains, employees at an agency can be placed into three categories:

At an agency, you have the account people, they manage the client and the numbers and strategies and there's myself and the creative teams. An in some cases there's media folks and they handle all the media but those are predominantly the big ones.

While this chapter focuses primarily on the role that the creative team plays in the development of advertisements and the relationships they must navigate within that team, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that account and media people also contribute and are essential to this process. With regards to the development of ideas and potential campaigns, however, it is the creative team that must function both individually and collectively to achieve both their own and the customer's goals.

Downtown Partners' creative director explained the number of people involved in the strategizing process and the challenges this presented as such:

So there's quite a number of people involved. I think in a case like this, the combination of our side and the client's side, there probably would be...there's probably anywhere from 13-20 people in the room. And it's not easy, because everyone has to agree on things. And you go back, you argue, and there's a lot of debates and a lot of issues but at the end of the day it's...somehow everyone comes on board. The big task is to make sure that all, everyone in the room is all on board.



Undoubtedly, any time that a large number of people must come together and make collective decisions upon which they all agree, there will be clashes and debates. Individuals must concede on certain issues and points in order to ensure that the process continues to move forward. Inevitably, all individuals are not going to have the same level of input; the ideas, desires, and beliefs of particular team members are going to carry greater weight. On the creative team, it is the creative director that has the final say on all things related to the projects under their control:

A creative director manages the whole creative product in any agency. So for example in my case, it was managing a whole bunch of teams and basically making the call on everything. So I would give them guidance or say yes or no, this is what we're going in with, this is what we're presenting. On some case, I would work on the work myself, but because of the magnitude of the work and all the accounts we had about five teams under me, six teams at one point and about forty different freelancers on a yearly basis. So think of it as...the CD [creative director] role is basically the guy who runs the ship. He's responsible for all the creative product coming out of an ad agency. It's probably, if not the top, one of the top positions in an agency. Basically, I'm the guy that approves everything. From who's the director to what are the scenes we're shooting...I just happen to have creative teams in this case that were actively involved in creating and looking at various directions for Gatorade. And that's the same thing with every other, because you can't do everything, right? Like we had, at one point we were doing, I don't know, fifty, sixty, seventy commercials a year. So I can only be involved a certain extent on each one. But on a lot of them...I was at the shoots, in California when they were doing the animation, and that kind of stuff.

Accordingly, while there may indeed be 13-20 people in the room when decisions are being made, there are far fewer that hold the power to ensure that their opinions are heard, and in the end, make the final decisions. As Gatorade's marketing manager attested, the creative director has the final say, and the responsibility to ensure that "the ideas they present, that made it, are up to snuff".

Indeed, the creative director has the opportunity to utilize the ideas brought up by the creative team, but they also hold the power to go against the majority or popular consensus and choose the path they feel is most appropriate.

After the company has given the agency a strategy, the agency has utilized this to come up with potential ideas, and the company and agency have selected the idea they wish to move forward with, other production agents are added to the collaborative process. As Gatorade's marketing manager explained:

Once you settle on an idea, then you give it to a director and the director then adds to the idea and makes the idea even better. And there were lots of things [for Gatorade's second Crosby ad, *What's Inside*] that were added by the team at Motion Theory that the agency didn't come up with at all. These things are collaborative and they're layered and they get better as things go along. That's if you have a good process in place.

The key to the creation of the final product moving along well is indeed the idea of having a "good process in place". Ideally, people agree, ideas are accepted with little debate, and the product becomes better at each subsequent step and with each additional person's input. Inevitably, the process becomes much more tumultuous and difficult when there are disagreements and problems at each step.

The relationship between the company, the agency, and the celebrity endorser and their camp is critical to the process. Unlike the company or the agency, who are deeply involved in the idea stages and the ad creation process, the product endorser's camp typically has far less dedicated involvement. Their involvement, however, is vital to the process, as without their agreement with regards to the campaign's direction and the manner in which the celebrity will be presented/represented, the ad cannot proceed forward. Downtown Partners'

creative director explained Crosby's involvement in the Gatorade commercials as such:

He was very involved in the beginning, on the first one. But after that, I spoke to them on the phone, at that point, he's already, he's gotten too big already to go and meet with everybody. Like he just looks at them and they say yes or no. His guys play a huge role in that. So, he is actively involved, but, for example, once he gave us the go ahead, that's it. We just run with it and at the end he looks at it, his guys say some comments and we go back and forth and we argue and you know. And they monitor him also to make sure there isn't anything that's going to be detrimental to his career.

Accordingly, it is of vital importance that the celebrity endorser and their camp agree with the direction that is being taken. Not unlike the creative director at an agency, who has the power to make decisions that may run contrary to the popular opinion of those around them, the celebrity has the power to refuse to go ahead with the production of a particular advertising idea if they do not agree with its premise, or anything else related to the ad's development. This is similar to what Scherer and Jackson (2007) discovered with regards to negotiations between the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), the All Blacks, and ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi. As the gatekeepers to the All Blacks, the NZRU held the final say in terms of what was and was not acceptable in terms of representing the team. Accordingly, Saatchi & Saatchi was effectively required to negotiate with not one, but two clients – adidas and the NZRU. The situation is much the same with Crosby, or any other celebrity athlete; if they and their handlers do not agree with the premise or direction of an ad, they have the ability to cease its production. Consequently, while their involvement in terms of time is much less than that of the parent company or the advertising agency, the celebrity camp's input at

various stages in the development process – namely at the idea stage, and when the final product is completed – is essential. Further, throughout the entire development and production process, the parent company and the creative team must always keep in mind what they believe would and would not be acceptable to the celebrity endorser and proceed accordingly.

### **Conditions of Production**

Because you've got to remember, when you're doing a commercial, you have to think about every single thing. Who is wearing what? What are the kids wearing? So there's a lot of thought put into all that kind of stuff. So in some cases there's more meaning behind it than in other cases.  
(Downtown Partners' creative director)

There is a very high degree of planning involved in advertising. From the broadest to the most minute of details, with every aspect of every ad the attempt is made to control, manage, and mediate in order to maximize the company's satisfaction and – it is hoped – the benefits reaped from the final product. As has been previously asserted, however, in terms of getting a company's message to the consumer, the approach taken is not “anything goes”. Rather, there are codes and conventions which serve to limit the possible range of outcomes in terms of the final product. As Gruneau (1989) contends, referring to the production of sports television, “rules and conventions of production operate like an underlying grammar that structures the selective construction of images and narrative” (p. 146). The challenge in contemporary advertising is aiming to create the semblance of difference between very similar products. The volume of goods produced by any given company is vast, and they must compete against other manufacturers to sell these goods to a finite number of consumers (Lury &

Warde, 1997). Selling an image along with a product, accordingly, is envisioned as increasing the likelihood of attracting consumers to one product over another. Consequently, ideas and beliefs regarding what works best to achieve this goal in given situations – often based on circumstances which have garnered success in the past – serve to influence and govern the manner in which an ad will be produced.

Sport has long been a popular theme in advertising. It is used to sell everything from equipment actually used in sporting environments, to banks, telecommunications, clothing lines, alcoholic beverages and almost anything in between. Sport has come to serve as a highly coveted conduit of promotional culture due to the ways in which the idealized vision of sport reflects similar ideas about capitalism; there is significant emphasis placed upon “competition, efficiency, technology, and meritocracy” (Jackson, Andrews & Scherer, 2005, p. 10). That is to say, the values that are most commonly highlighted and considered attractive in sport serve to emphasize contemporary culture’s capitalist leanings. Further, as Jackson, Andrews and Scherer (2005) contend, sport’s permeability – the ability to easily and fluidly connect it with other areas of social life – only increases its cultural currency in the field of advertising. Sport is about more than its on-field product; it is also the music played in the arena, the products sold at the concessions, and its consumers’ interests in the time that they are not watching games and events. There are innumerable (and continually evolving) ways in which to connect sport with all manner of products, and its relevance in advertising only continues to increase.

Within the broad range of interpretations possible in terms of how to utilize sports to sell consumer goods, however, there are certain ideas that garner more use than others. In her study of the production of Olympic ice hockey, for example, MacNeill (1996) discovered that some codes of sport were socially preferred – individual prowess in particular – while others were ignored when the producers selected and thereby legitimized images of national sporting life. A similar sentiment regarding preferred codes in the utilization of sport in advertising can be elicited from Downtown Partners’ creative director’s comments on why sport is attractive in advertising:

Every guy can relate to it...I mean, everybody can. It’s like, when you think about it, their [Gatorade’s] line – “is it in you” – might as well put “sport – is it in you?” It’s the same thing. Every kid growing up, especially in Canada, or anywhere, I’d even say worldwide, sports is a huge part of being a guy. In fact, that’s probably everything in the early stages.

Not only is individual prowess a common, preferred theme, but a common sense understanding sport as inherently connected to masculinity, as a “guy thing” is also an idea that factors heavily into the use of sport in advertising. While indeed, companies such as Nike have begun trying to hail their female customers with more women-centered campaigns, such ads are typically created in such a fashion as to be appealing to women, but do not necessarily resonate with the experience of men. As Goldman and Papson (1999) assert, the message in female-oriented Nike ads tends to revolve around staying in good physical condition and this being a lifelong activity, whereas the message in ads geared towards men most often involves “mastery, achievement, and being a savvy fan” (p. 121). Consequently, the traditional manner in which sport is presented in advertising,

which Downtown Partners' creative director alluded to above, is envisioned more as a manner to attract men to certain products than a way to attract women – or all people equally, for that matter. Because of this, traditional sport-based advertising has typically been utilized to sell products that are envisioned by companies as more masculine, or of greater appeal to men, which are issues that I will address in the next chapter.

The overall popularity of sport is another reason why it is a desirable theme in advertising. The following two quotes from Gatorade's marketing manager evidence two manners in which the popularity of sport is viewed as an asset upon which advertising can capitalize:

Essentially, sport is the longest running reality television show in history. Doesn't matter which sport you're talking about. The plot lines are always new. The competition is always riveting. Players can identify with the athletes in the sport and if they played the sport as a youth and there's a dream that exists and it's planted from a very, very young age, and even if they weren't good enough to make it, they can still connect with the sport and their love for the sport makes them follow the sport even if they're years removed from playing it. It's real. It's not a soap opera, it's not a fake reality TV show. It's not a series – a dramatic series – it's real drama.

The other most significant thing, I think, in today's unique and changing media universe is that it doesn't matter, when it comes to TV numbers and how they're dropping for Thursday night drama and comedy shows or news programs or whatever the other television shows that you're comparing them to are. Sports ratings tend to stay consistent, and in fact, compared against all other programming, are growing, because other programming is declining whereas sports stays consistent. There's something important to a sports fan to watch the game as it happens, as opposed to watching it taped. You want to watch the game live and as an advertiser, it's extremely appealing to know that you can connect with that fan who's watching the game live and your message can cut through to them. So yeah, there's a whole lot of reasons why sports – not just today, but for a long, long time – will be gaining in importance in the overall marketplace and why marketers are going to continue to connect with it.

The first passage evidences how sport is conceptualized by advertisers in distinctly cultural terms that resonate strongly with consumers. Consumers – especially men – are envisioned as having grown up with sport as an element of their lives; that they have typically grown up both watching and playing such games, and that accordingly, seeing those images then associated with particular products gives them a point of resonance and attachment with those products. Further, in sport there are no actors and there is no script; what unfolds before the viewer/consumer is considered to be the utmost in real-life drama, full of passion and competition, victory and defeat.

The second quote from Gatorade's marketing manager explains why advertising spots (not necessarily sport-based) during sporting events are highly coveted. Unlike viewership for traditional television programming, such as dramas and sitcoms, which is declining due to technological advancements (like personal video recorders and online viewing) and the ever-increasing number of channels and programming options available, the audience for sporting events has remained remarkably consistent. Accordingly, it is assumed that by advertising during sporting events, companies can continue to hit a comparatively large audience. Not only this, but as Whitson (1998) asserts, professional sports broadcasts – such as Hockey Night in Canada – often have great success in attracting a national audience, thus providing major corporations with the opportunity to have their ads seen not only by a larger audience, but a broader one as well. Further to this, utilizing the history and tradition of sport as a foundation provides advertisers and the corporations they represent with a significant point of



access to a highly lucrative consumer base with a high level of disposable income (Jackson, Andrews & Scherer, 2004). Finally, based on studies and assumptions regarding the demographics of the sporting audience, it is also believed that advertising can be targeted at specific people and have it resonate with that audience in such a way that it will increase consumption. In Canada, where the sport of hockey is considered a cornerstone of national identity, its audience largely remains conceptualized as masculine and white (Adams, 2006). Consequently, not only can advertisers capture an engaged audience through sport, but they can target that advertising to a standardized conceptualization of its audience and rely upon traditional notions of how to reach those consumers.

It is not just sport in general that is utilized in order to market and sell consumer goods; rather, the talent and celebrityhood of particular, superstar athletes is also exploited in order to foster greater levels of association and resonance. Gruneau (1989) has asserted that contemporary culture is fascinated by celebrities and glamorous lifestyles, and that because of this it is not surprising that sport entertainment has adopted a position which centres upon individual performers and personalities. Consequently, as Kellner (2001) contends, superstars now “commodify themselves from head to foot, selling their various body parts and images to the highest corporate bidders, imploding their sports images into spectacles of advertising” (p. 42). Indeed, the celebrity factor of high calibre athletes has been commodified, transformed into an object that can then be utilized to endorse other consumer products (Denzin, 2001). Downtown Partners’

creative director explained his take on the changing nature of celebrity and endorsement:

I would say that there is a shift, because, if you go back years ago, sports figures were sports figures always. And this is my opinion, so it's very subjective, and who knows. But I just find that with society in general, everybody starts to take on different roles. All of the sudden, sports figures are actors, actors all of the sudden start taking on different roles, they become fashion models, they become singers, more than just acting. And it's the same thing with the sports celebrities, they put them into these roles like Vanity Fair and they make them look like models. I question whether they should, but you know at that point it really just is building the Crosby brand. That's all they're doing. I don't necessarily agree with that, but that's a subjective comment. You gotta remember at the end of the day it is a business and it's a huge business for these guys. That's what a lot of people fail to realize. And it's marketing and it's getting that face out there all the time.

Celebrity athletes – truly, celebrities in general – become more prominent celebrities by ensuring that their image gets out to the public in as many ways and through as many media as possible. Similarly, the more popular a celebrity becomes, the more coveted they are in terms of the endorsement of products and attaching their image to causes and goods. This demonstrates the manner in which celebrities have become both a product and a process in the quest for capital accumulation (Andrews & Jackson, 2001). They are a product of the media, but they are now also a significant component of the process of promoting and selling goods to consumers. As Whitson (1998) asserts, “the construction of imaged celebrities is a promotional practice in itself and, when successful, it confers benefits on all partners in the exercise” (p. 67). While skill is a fundamental component of this process, it is not the only factor – emotions, attitude, and persona, as well as marketing also factor significantly into the equation. Athletes can no longer be regarded simply as individuals who excel in

the sporting environment; rather, it has now become expected that superstar athletes will complement their on-field excellence with additional forays into other promotional avenues, serving to augment their own personal profile and simultaneously, that of all the products they represent.

Sidney Crosby, specifically, has become a highly coveted celebrity endorser and has acted as such from the very beginning of his career. He is described as someone with a very marketable image:

His personality is very self-effacing for a guy with that amount of talent, so people feel he's not out of reach...to an advertiser that's great because he's so low risk and so high return...if you're promoting a wholesome image, he's the kind of guy you want. (Ritchie, cited in Zelkovich, 2006, p. E7)

Crosby is considered low-risk precisely because while he is a highly talented athlete, his non-threatening demeanour makes him appear very approachable and affable – an image that is perceived as very desirable and marketable in advertising. While there are many superstar athletes, there are relatively few that are seen to have the right combination of talent, personality, and good behaviour. Crosby is simultaneously described as polite and wholesome off the ice, and outspoken and ultra-competitive on it (Brunt, 2005; Joyce, 2005). It is this duality, the ability to be constructed in one fashion during play and remain wholesome when not engaged in sport, that makes an athlete like Crosby so marketable. His on-ice performance engages the greater public, and his affable personality attracts them and resonates with dominant cultural values. I will explore these issues in greater detail in the next chapter; however it is important to mention here that this ability to relate to athletes who endorse products is judged

to be of particular importance for marketing success. Gatorade's marketing manager also referenced Crosby's marketing appeal:

We've done research on our advertising and we know that it connects with consumers because of Sidney...he had a factor of recognition that was so huge, early in his career...basically, after his first year in the NHL, when we were running our *Sticks* ad and we showed him – it was one of his first commercials. He had done a Reebok commercial, but the *Sticks* ad that we did was a lot more focus on him because he had his helmet off and he was just walking around as a guy...and he was already the most recognized athlete in the country.

Consumers do not want to take their shopping advice from people they do not admire or respect and adherence to that which is commonly valued by the majority of the members of a given society ensures greater resonance between what athletes are selling and whether people wish to buy it. Utilizing an athlete like Crosby, with a factor of recognition that is so high, and who embodies characteristics that are envisioned as connecting widely with consumers, is viewed as an essential aspect of successful advertising.

Target markets – the individuals a company believes are most likely to purchase their product, or the goal group of people they want an ad to resonate with – are a key concept in advertising and certainly affect its production. Obviously, there are many assumptions that must be made when companies are conceptualizing their target markets. Not only are there commonly no individuals on the production team that actually fit within that target market, but what is constructed is a singular definition of what it means to be part of a given group; all individuals in that group are envisioned as the same/similar, not as unique and free-thinking. Downtown Partners' creative director made reference to the challenge of having to think like the target group:

That's...when you think about it, is a very big point in advertising in general, and that's one of the biggest...I wouldn't say struggles, but the biggest challenges being in my position as a creative director in an agency is to see that and to look at spots when I get them in front of me, and to say well, I'm not the target group, it doesn't really matter what I think – it's what does a seventeen year old think? Or what does that target group think? And that's a huge thing.

His Dad even called me about that, he said I don't know if I like that and I said well, in all fairness, I don't think you should even like it because you're not the target group. He goes, you know, it's really busy and fast paced and I said yeah, and you go and you talk to you know, sixteen, seventeen year olds out there, what do they do? They're on MuchMusic, video games, and their minds can pick up stuff that you and I can't. And that's what this spot was. And the target group loved it. Because it is, it's like a video game in his head.

This challenge of trying to visualize in cultural terms and capture the desired target market is one of the biggest goals – and struggles – in advertising.

Speaking specifically about Gatorade, their target market is described as “the young, like 16 year olds, 20-22 or something like that, 25...some even younger” (Downtown Partners' creative director). Accordingly, part of the company's strategy for hailing this younger audience is a belief that younger players will resonate better with them – certainly a factor when the company elected to utilize Crosby in its commercials (Gatorade marketing manger). This target market is similar to that of other major corporations that work with sport and target sport-savvy consumers. In their work on adidas and the company's sponsorship of the iconic New Zealand rugby team, the All Blacks, Scherer (2007) and Scherer and Jackson (2007; 2008<sub>a</sub>; 2008<sub>b</sub>) discuss the company-wide global target market of 14-25 year olds, and in particular, male, sports-loving in this age group. Like adidas, Gatorade and Downtown Partners operate within an institutional framework of knowledge and make assumptions regarding what type of cultural

imagery and representational strategies will best resonate with this target group. The creative team must step outside of their own positions – as middle-aged, middle class cultural intermediaries – and instead make their decisions based upon their assumptions about the target group.

While the ultimate goal for companies with their advertising campaigns is to have their ads resonate with their target market, it is also important to ensure that campaigns will achieve this affect with the stated target market across different environments. Downtown Partners' creative director explained this concept further:

Gatorade is also a good example of trying to keep it very generic. Because when you're doing a spot across the country you have to make sure that everybody can relate to it everywhere. So, for example, if you take a look at *Sticks*, there's nothing in there that says it's Toronto, it could be anywhere. Small town...we intentionally went out of the way with the little houses, street hockey...so that's a big key when you're working on any of these kind of national commercials. Somebody watching it in Timbuktu is going to relate to it as opposed to saying "oh yeah, it's one of those boys in Toronto".

Undoubtedly, this also reflects a particular vision of what it means to reside in Canada – namely, to live in middle class neighbourhoods where children are able to play street hockey out in front of their houses. While this does not reflect the lived reality of all Canadians, it is indeed congruent with Gatorade's targeting of consumers with the income to consistently purchase their products. Gatorade thus aims to control numerous components of their ads in order to ensure that their advertisements will appeal to consumers within the desired target market despite differences in circumstance and/or cultural factors. That is to say, a company hopes that their ads will speak to consumers in the same way, for example, in both

large cities and small towns, and will alter their ads in ways they feel will best achieve this goal. This is similar to what Scherer and Jackson (2007) describe in their discussion of adidas' first commercials about the All Blacks. Similar to Canada's relationship to hockey, New Zealanders are passionate about the sport of rugby, and it is very much linked to the construction of national identity. Accordingly, following the termination of the team's 75-year association with local company Canterbury, adidas had to ensure that, despite being a global company, they were able to "articulate [their] understanding and respect for the historical legacy of the All Blacks" (Scherer & Jackson, 2007, p. 269) to the New Zealand public. Such advertisements needed to resonate with *all* of the New Zealand public – not solely the rural or urban population, or richer or poorer individuals. For both adidas and for Gatorade with their Crosby ads, an essential component to securing a successful campaign is remaining as generic as possible so as to appellate with the largest number of consumers.

While every company would undoubtedly love an unlimited budget, financial considerations factor into the majority of the decisions they must make with regards to the manner in which to approach advertising. In general, there are two very important financial decisions that must be made and will dictate the type of advertisement that can be produced. The first is how much to spend on product endorsers; the second is the budget for the advertising campaign. Both Downtown Partners' creative director and Gatorade's marketing manager discussed signing Crosby and the amount of money that it cost Gatorade:

I think they were very lucky they signed him on because I guarantee you, had they waited another year, I don't think they would have touched him.

I think it would have been financially out of the question. I can't get into the numbers – nor do I really know them to this extent right now – but I guarantee you that he's unobtainable now. (Downtown Partners' creative director)

He was also going to be more money than we'd ever paid an athlete in Canada before – which again, is kind of remarkable when you consider he hadn't played an NHL game. We were going to be, essentially, getting into a multi-year agreement with an unproven player at the NHL level. (Gatorade marketing manager)

Evidently, Gatorade felt that the money they paid Crosby to secure his endorsement would serve to provide them with a larger return than what they initially invested. Further, as Downtown Partners' creative director asserts, Crosby's play over the last three years in the NHL, in addition to his endorsement deals with other high profile corporations, and his exposure in a wide variety of mass media publications has served to increase his asking price for signing on with a company. Downtown Partners' creative director attests that this same cost-benefit analysis will inevitably occur once Crosby's contract with Gatorade expires:

Once that contract expires they will analyze it and then it's going to be a numbers game where they'll go "okay, so, what is our return?" I'm sure that they're obviously going to have to up the ante, but the biggest question is, at that point...is it lucrative for them to pay that kind of money for a guy like that. Or have they really used him for all that it's worth. And is there somebody else up and coming?

While Gatorade has constantly asserted and affirmed Crosby's strengths as an athlete and as an endorser, in the end, it is whether he will continue to have the potential to make Gatorade money that will serve as the deciding factor as to whether or not the company renews his contract. While Crosby is a "Gatorade athlete", the company will utilize him in every possible fashion they can in order



to increase their brand's cultural capital. At the end of his contract, however, what he has done for the company previously has no bearing on the negotiation process if it is felt that he cannot provide equal or greater benefits to them for his cost. Jackson (2001) has written about Wayne Gretzky – Canada's iconic hockey player – and his trade from the Edmonton Oilers to the Los Angeles Kings in 1988, a trade in which the most significant component was a payment of \$15 million. While this event certainly brought forth issues of national identity and Americanization, what it also made evident was the reality that even Canada's most famous hockey player was a commodity to be bought and sold for the interest of the bottom line. The message – both about Gretzky and in this discussion of Crosby's role with Gatorade – is that in industry, and in promotional culture, everything is a commodity (Wernick, 1991). If there is somebody who would cost the company less and perform comparably to Crosby as an endorser, it is most likely that Gatorade would abandon its relationship with Crosby – no matter how profitable it was previously.

Budget concerns also come into play when considering individual advertising campaigns. As Gatorade's marketing manager candidly explained when discussing the advertising production process, "...eventually, you come up with a winner. And at that point, you figure out how much the ad costs and you make sure you have enough money to pay for it". Undoubtedly, however, budgetary concerns are brought to light even earlier in the production process; if a company will only spend a certain amount and no more on an ad, this will constrain the ideas that can even be considered during the idea-generating

process. The company must come up with a budget, and then work to ensure that the ad they select to produce falls within the parameters of that budget.

Accordingly, this may affect aspects of the ad such as where it is produced, the number of people who work on it, which endorser they select, and the special effects that are employed. A larger budget can truly mean that the sky is the limit, whereas a smaller one may require both the company and the agency to be creative about how to move forward. Scherer and Jackson (2007; 2008<sub>a</sub>; 2008<sub>b</sub>) discuss how the budget given to Saatchi & Saatchi for their inaugural campaigns was in excess of \$NZ20 million, but that this was significantly reduced for adidas' subsequent campaign. In having reduced the budget, adidas required the creative team to approach the production process in a very different manner. Instead of aiming to develop "a technologically sophisticated and entertaining commercial spectacle" (Scherer & Jackson, 2008<sub>a</sub>, p. 512), the goal became to "come up with something that would grab public interest without costing too much" (Scherer & Jackson, 2007, p. 278). Similarly, Silk (2001) has discussed the budgetary restrictions imposed on New Zealand TV (NZTV) at the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games and how these affected the manner in which the station was able to show the games, especially in comparison to the flashier and more expensive coverage produced by counterparts such as Australia's Channel 9. This is very similar to the decisions Gatorade must make with regards to the production of their advertisements, particularly for the Canadian audience. While Crosby is an important endorser, and hockey is hugely important to the sale of Gatorade in Canada, the national market is much smaller compared to both the

population and product sales that come from countries like the United States. Accordingly, while Gatorade undoubtedly wants to showcase their product in Canada in innovative, exciting fashions, they aim to do so in a manner that is cost-effective.

The challenges of cost-effectiveness have only increased with continued technological advancements. Truly, the television landscape has changed over the course of even the last ten years. Whereas previously viewers had a more limited number of television channels to choose from, with the advent of satellite and digital cable the number of channels available has skyrocketed. Accordingly, companies have to make far more difficult decisions regarding on what channels and at what times to run their ads in order to hit their desired markets. The advent of Personal Video Recorders (PVRs) and online streaming has also presented a challenge to the advertising industry, as both technologies have made it far easier for individuals to avoid watching commercials altogether. The continued proliferation of the internet, web 2.0, and other interactive online components have also forced advertisers to grow, change, and adapt. As Downtown Partners' creative director explains:

It [technology] presents a lot of challenges now. Like, ever since they got PVR (Personal Video Recorders), the consumer's in control a lot. That's part of it. The internet has made the young target group even more internet savvy and they spend a lot more time watching that than they do television. And all the online stuff has really resonated and is really growing at high paces. So I think TV commercials in general and advertising in general is starting to go in completely different areas now. That's a big challenge for companies and agencies, to make sure you can still go in and hit that target group because it's not easy now. It's not like you're running one spot and everybody's going to see it. Well, a lot of those young kids, they're not like us. They didn't grow up on TV. They're now spending more time on computers and that's why it's very,

very important now, most everything we do now, centres around, you know, digital and online.

Gatorade's marketing manager confirmed that the company did not really develop an online presence until 2005, and that this is something that has become more and more of a focus which each passing year. As Scherer (2007) asserts, computer literate sports fans – referred to as “jeeks” – are becoming an increasingly important niche market for corporations selling sports-based goods. Accordingly, accompanying online content was created for all of the Gatorade ads featuring Crosby, including a major, interactive world for *What's Inside* which featured games, photographs, and information about both Crosby and Gatorade's thirst quenching products. It is becoming more and more of a requirement in contemporary advertising to be able to adapt to the ever-changing technological landscape to ensure success and relevance in attracting and resonating with consumers.

### **Components of the Product**

Having outlined various conditions of production, I now turn to a discussion of the resulting components of the product. *Sticks*, the first advertisement featuring Crosby as a Gatorade endorser, was released in April of 2006<sup>10</sup>. Released midway through Crosby's rookie season (and the first following

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<sup>10</sup> The ad begins with a group of children standing in between two hockey nets on a tree-lined street with their hockey sticks sitting in a pile beside them, about to be separated into teams for a street hockey game. As the children are doing this, Sidney Crosby comes walking along the sidewalk with a hockey bag slung over his shoulders. As he hears the children call out that they are about to make teams, he veers off the sidewalk and over to them, where he casually proceeds to drop his stick into the pile and declare that “he's in”. At this point, the upbeat music created specifically for the commercial begins to play and all sorts of people start to make their way towards the street hockey game. From other random individuals who live in the neighbourhood, to individuals sprinting from all parts of town, climbing over fences and other obstacles to get there, everyone wants to play. Even the Hanson brothers (from the cult classic hockey movie,

the NHL lockout), it is a light, fun commercial. Gatorade – a product geared towards ameliorating athletic performance through proper hydration – is only really given a cursory mention and is not directly related to anything that is happening. At most, 10 seconds of the minute-long spot focus specifically on Crosby having anything at all to do with Gatorade – in the beginning, when he shows up to the street hockey game drinking out of a Gatorade bottle, and at the end, when he is skating and blue Gatorade-tinged sweat is running down his face. While at first this may seem counter-intuitive, Downtown Partners’ creative director described the goals of *Sticks* as such:

At the end of the day what they want to achieve is the numbers going up, product sales, that’s for sure – but in this case, it was really a lot more...this was an image ad. It was more associating Sidney, bringing him out in a light that links him to Gatorade as a product. And I think, in our case, it was really more of the Canadiana thing, making that link to him and Canadian hockey. So that’s sort of what they wanted. But everybody knew it was an image ad.

The goal for *Sticks* was less about telling the public that Sidney Crosby drinks Gatorade and that’s what makes him perform so amazingly and more about creating positive associations between Gatorade, Crosby, and the Canadian public. While Gatorade has previously signed Canadian NHL stars to market the brand (goaltender José Theodore and power forward Todd Bertuzzi), the results of

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“Slapshot”) and players from Crosby’s former junior team, the Rimouski Oceanic, show up. A mystery player, wearing a Russian jersey with the name “K33PT0K” is also present, and has a stand-off of sorts with Crosby. These images arise distinctly from Canadiana and reference Canadian popular culture and reflect what is considered to be important in the minds of cultural intermediaries. The pile of sticks grows and grows, and sticks continue to be passed through the crowd and thrown onto the pile that is now so large it is taller than all the soon-to-be participants. The shot then changes to one of Crosby alone on the ice, sprinting forwards before halting in a spray of snow, blue sweat dripping down his face and falling to the ice. Gatorade’s now famous tagline “is IT in you?” flashes across the screen before the shot cuts back to the street, where Crosby has gotten his stick from the pile and is stickhandling a tennis ball down the street, sprinting away from the crowd that is now chasing him.

such associations have not been particularly good. Theodore, the winner of the 2002 Vezina and Hart Trophies (top goaltender and most valuable player) has struggled to regain a position as an elite NHL goaltender since those victories. Similarly, Bertuzzi has been much maligned since his 2004 hit on Steve Moore. Consequently, the endorsement deals with both athletes did not really serve to augment Gatorade's image within the Canadian marketplace and may have, in fact, been detrimental to it. Crosby thus represented an opportunity to fill this void:

When it came to the sports that Canadians were most interested in – hockey – it was a big gap in the portfolio and so Sidney Crosby was a player that we thought would be a very interesting player to approach in light of this need that Gatorade had to make itself more relevant in the Canadian marketplace. (Gatorade marketing manager)

Scherer and Jackson (2007) discuss how, when adidas took over as a sponsor of the All Blacks, they wished to exploit the tradition of the team to communicate their brand message. Rugby is to New Zealand what hockey is to Canada; not only is the sport recognized as a national pastime, but people follow it fervently. Accordingly, for adidas in New Zealand, creating positive associations between New Zealand's national sport and its products was a key to gaining ground in that market. For Gatorade, Crosby represented a similar opportunity: to tap into the Canadian marketplace by associating itself with a player whom they hoped would become Canada's next big thing. This is the very idea of corporate nationalism; a transnational corporation inventing a tradition and a link between that tradition and their product where there previously was none. Gatorade is not a product with a natural connection to Canada, or to hockey: it is a product originally

invented in Florida to assist in keeping University of Florida Gators football players hydrated during grueling practices, which is now marketed and sold around the world. In order to increase the odds of success in the Canadian market, it is logical that Gatorade would aim to associate itself with Canada's biggest sport and a superstar athlete connected to it.

Similarly, it was prudent not only to sign a new Canadian star, but also create a commercial that was very much tied into the myths and lore that surround hockey and its place within Canadian culture:

Gatorade – which was originally a US brand – because of this association with Sidney and hockey in Canada all of the sudden has become ownable for Canadian hockey. And I think that it's huge for them because you've got so many kids playing hockey and Gatorade is associated with the NHL – in fact, that was our big push going in – that all of the sudden it is tied in more with the NHL. (Downtown Partners' creative director)

As many have argued, hockey is one of the few elements of Canadian culture that is almost universally regarded as quintessentially Canadian. As Gatorade's marketing manager asserted, "some might argue it's [hockey] the only facet of Canadian national identity other than Tim Horton's coffee". With *Sticks*, Gatorade attempted to connect with hockey on a variety of levels: with Crosby, as a burgeoning NHL superstar; by including a segment of Crosby on the ice; and, most importantly, by centering the commercial around a game of pick up street hockey, often considered the most "pure" form of Canadian hockey outside of pond hockey. While not an original strategy – beer company Labatt released a commercial entitled *Street Hockey* for its Blue line of beer in 1998 to much critical and public acclaim – creating positive links between a product line and

pick up hockey has evidently been viewed as an ideal manner in which to make headway into the Canadian marketplace.

Another element that cannot be ignored with regards to *Sticks* is the fact that it was released just following the NHL lockout that wiped out a year of play. As Gatorade's marketing manager explained, the feel of the ad and how it was utilized to introduce Crosby to the public reflected how Gatorade envisioned Crosby's role, post-lockout:

There was also an element at the time that worked really well for Sidney, and that was the strike – or the lockout, excuse me...depending on who you're talking to. The lockout really had a negative impact on the game itself...but Sidney was new, Sidney didn't have any of that old baggage and as a result, he could only be associated with positive things about the game. A younger, exciting player with potential and none of the old baggage is why we went in that direction.

Not only did Gatorade wish to market themselves to the Canadian public with a new athlete that did not carry the same baggage Theodore and Bertuzzi did, but utilizing Crosby also held the advantage that he was in no way connected to the NHL pre-lockout. This is very similar to what Scherer and Jackson (2007) evidence regarding the 2000 adidas ad *Exsqueeze Me*, which was produced following the All Blacks' poor performance in the 1999 World Cup. This ad aimed to use "humour and light-heartedness to sooth the intense public criticism being directed at the All Blacks and adidas" (Scherer & Jackson, 2007, p. 274). In both the case of adidas and Gatorade, the companies hoped to shift the manner in which they utilized their sporting subject matter in order to transform the public's opinion of this association. For adidas, this meant transforming the lens with which they regarded the rugged, violent, and hypermasculine world of rugby.



In Gatorade's case, they hinged their re-entrance into the Canadian marketplace on a young player with no previous associations with the NHL and a fun and light-hearted look at hockey outside the problematized realm of the now-returning professional league.

The second commercial released by Gatorade featuring Crosby, *What's Inside*, began airing in March of 2007. Unlike *Sticks*, which is relatively easy to follow, *What's Inside* is a highly visual, complex ad. The commercial begins in Mellon Arena, where the Penguins, Crosby's NHL team, play. Crosby is lining up for a face-off just outside the opposing team's blue line. After the puck is dropped and play begins, the shot transitions from a typical hockey broadcast, and player numbers and other information begin appearing around the players. The viewer is then taken into what appears to be a submarine, the game they were just watching unfolding on a simulated rink that several men are watching intensely, computers and equipment surrounding them. This command centre also features a large variety of signs – including pictures of Crosby as a child and as an NHLer, giant penguins walking about, and miniature zambonis flooding the floor. A man on an intercom informs the workers that “we've got the puck. Sirens ring out as a man announces that “we're going for a breakaway”, and what follows is a barrage of different images. As the commercial progresses, we are shown the “nerve centre” of the ship, where a man is poring over photos of the opposing goaltender and players. He informs everyone that a target has been acquired – glove side. The shot returns to the ice surface, where Crosby shoots and scores, glove side. Following his celebration, the men inform the viewer that “we've got to hydrate”,

at which point the shot switches back to Crosby, finished his celebration of his goal, and now drinking from a bottle of Gatorade, yellow beads of sweat dripping down his face. The customary “is IT in you?” tagline finishes off the commercial, with a link to [www.gatorade.ca](http://www.gatorade.ca) on the end screen as well.

This commercial is definitely a departure from the simplicity of *Sticks*. Whereas Gatorade’s initial foray into advertising using Crosby had a very simple premise – introduce Crosby, play into the hockey/Canada lore – *What’s Inside* represents something completely new. First, as both Downtown Partners’ creative director and Gatorade’s marketing manager assert, there was a need to exceed what they felt was accomplished in *Sticks*:

We had a standard that we had to exceed with what *Sticks* did, you know, we had to ramp it up another notch...there was also something in play that we wanted to make sure that we were the best advertiser with Sidney too...it’s sort of a friendly rivalry...you want to demonstrate that you can put the best work out. (Gatorade marketing manager)

Well, the challenge with everything is that you always want to try and do something fresh and different...we said, come on...what could we do that’s a little bit fresh or a little bit different and we said, hey, maybe we should look at a spot like this where you get inside his head and what makes this guy tick in a very cool way. (Downtown Partners’ creative director)

Not only is there a need to sell the link between product, company and endorser, but also an awareness of the institutional pressure to build upon what one has previously accomplished. With *Sticks*, Gatorade had set the bar very high; with *What’s Inside* they felt they had to not only meet that bar, but exceed it. A simplistic ad simply wouldn’t resonate with what the public had come to expect. Further, other companies – Reebok, Tim Horton’s, and Telus – had also put out advertisements utilizing Crosby. In so doing, they had created the potential for

Gatorade's work with Crosby to get "lost in the crowd" if it didn't stand out. Accordingly, both Gatorade and Downtown Partners had a vested interest in exceeding what they had accomplished with *Sticks*. For Downtown Partners, doing so served to enhance, as Scherer and Jackson (2007) argued in reference to Saatchi and Saatchi's work for adidas and the All Blacks, "their status and creative reputation in relation to the intense competition for clients and the 'ultimate accolades in the world of advertising'" (p. 279). For Gatorade, if they utilized Crosby in a less than interesting and innovative way, the possibility existed that he would be associated more with his other endorsers than with Gatorade. Not only this, but as Nava (1997) attests, promoting a company's corporate image to its rivals, clients, and employees is as important in advertising as selling products to the consumer.

A second goal that Gatorade wished to achieve with *What's Inside* was a stronger link to the product. As previously stated, Gatorade is not the focal point of *Sticks*; street hockey, the love of the game, and Sidney Crosby are. As Gatorade's marketing manager asserted, "we definitely wanted to bring product into the mix much more, we wanted to show, you know, how Sidney's fueled by Gatorade". While *What's Inside* still does not put Gatorade and the product's characteristics completely to the forefront, the links between the sports drink and Crosby's performance are much more evident than previously.

If you look at the copy on that ad, it gave us the opportunity to address the product in a much harder way. With dehydrate and all that stuff, it's not just fun and games and the way that spot's structured, there's a reason. He's got to hydrate, which really, it's an opportunity to bring out the attributes of the product a lot more. (Downtown Partners' creative director)

While the link to the product is arguably stronger in *What's Inside* compared to *Sticks*, they maintain a very similar narrative pattern. In *Sticks*, there is no direct connection between Crosby (and his performance) and the Gatorade thirst quenching product. In the one on-ice segment, Crosby is dripping with Gatorade-coloured sweat, but unless one has previous knowledge of the product and other advertising spots for it in which this occurs, that this is evidence of Crosby being “fueled by Gatorade” is not necessarily clear. Further, the simple fact that Crosby sweats Gatorade does not indicate that the product accelerates Crosby’s performance. Similarly, in *What's Inside*, the entire “story” unfolds before a connection is made between the events that are unfolding and the Gatorade thirst quenching product. The benefits of the product are not made clear from the beginning of the advertising spot; rather, the goal seems to be to entertain first and foremost, and then remind the viewer that not only can Gatorade resonate with its target audience by being entertaining, but it can also hydrate them as well.

As Gatorade’s marketing manager attests, it is not only important to entertain the viewer, but to entertain them in a manner that can also be linked to the brand.

*What's Inside* was meant to go a lot deeper on how Gatorade worked and gave people the opportunity to get into a fantasy world and ultimately drive up people’s perceptions of how functional this stuff was, how scientific it was, how technical.

It is hoped that, because the commercial immerses the viewer in a highly scientific and technical environment, these same ideas will be linked to the product. While it is not overtly made evident that this environment is a Gatorade

environment, there are clues meant to trigger this association for the viewer. There are tubes filled with green liquid and floating orange lightning bolts dispersed throughout the “submarine”, workers run down a corridor constructed of hockey boards and glass advertising Gatorade, and strands of DNA coloured green flash across the screen at various points in the commercial. Instead of constantly reminding and reasserting to the viewer that the commercial is all about Gatorade, the viewer is left to uncover hints within the fantasy world that has been constructed that serve to lead them to this conclusion. Gatorade’s marketing manager explained that *What’s Inside* allowed Gatorade to “have a player like Sidney expand your imagination on the game and take you to a different world, but with Gatorade in that world”. Through Crosby, and through Gatorade, the viewer is able to enter a world they would otherwise have never had access to.

The decision to produce a complicated ad was actually quite fitting for a variety of reasons. Not only did doing so provide the company an opportunity to improve upon what they had done with *Sticks*, and to compete with other companies who also utilized Crosby as an endorser, but it allowed them to demonstrate that Crosby himself, is not a simple athlete. Rather, Gatorade wished to capitalize on the idea that every day that Crosby is at the rink, excelling is the result of a complicated series of events leading up to that moment.

Every one play that you make is not just what you think of at that particular moment, but that it’s everything that leads up to that. It’s where you played your minor hockey, it’s how you trained as a youth, it’s the time that you spent in the gym, it’s understanding what your body can do through repetition, through practice. It’s your teammates, it’s your character, it’s just a lot of things that lead into that one moment where

you're going to, ultimately, make a decision as to where you're going to put the puck on the goalie. You know, whether you're going to go high, or you're going to go five hole on the goalie or if you think you can deke him. There's not just one thing that makes you make that decision. There's a lot of things leading up to it and that was a theme that I think came through in that ad. (Gatorade marketing manager)

During this postmodern ad, time and space are compressed and viewers are given a variety of looks into moments from Crosby's past. Pictures of him as a child, with his father and playing hockey, hang amidst pictures from the present in the main room of the submarine. At one point in the commercial, the viewer is taken through a series of segments which scroll up and off the screen in quick succession. In the first segment, Crosby shoots pucks at a clothes dryer with spider legs, which refers back to Crosby's childhood and the manner in which he used to practice his shot in his family's basement. In another segment, a young Crosby sits on an ottoman in the centre of a room, wearing a white hockey jersey and taping a stick, surrounded by hundreds of pictures and the ones that are in focus show Crosby as a child. A segment of a room completely filled with Penguins refers to his NHL team in Pittsburgh. A segment featuring a frozen river and a lighthouse pays homage to the east coast of Canada, where Crosby hails from. Later on in the ad, we are shown a boiler room with smokestacks shaped like Stanley Cups – referencing Crosby's ultimate goal of hosting the league's heralded championship trophy. There are also huge stacks of weight machine weights moving up and down in the boiler room, indicating Crosby's highly publicized dedication to his training, both on and off the ice. All these moments demonstrate that Crosby's career as a player began long before he stepped on the ice for the Pittsburgh Penguins. There are millions of events, big

and small, that have led up to the present moment – something Gatorade not only acknowledges, but positions its product as a major component of this, as well.

Demonstrating the complex nature of an elite athlete like Sidney Crosby is not the only result of a commercial constructed in the fashion of *What's Inside*. In contemporary culture, special effects and explosive imagery have also come to be associated with good advertising product (Scherer & Jackson, 2007). As Goldman and Papson (1996) assert, style has become a key aspect of product promotion in a time where there is no clear way of differentiating products, or even their parent companies' strategies from each other. Accordingly, technical adjustments, such as “never-seen-before colour tint, fonts that mutate, split screens, quick cuts, wild new colours, no depth of field” (Goldman & Papson, 1996, p. 26) become yet another way to differentiate one product from another. In this sense, products have become so similar to each other that a consumer's decision to purchase one product over another can come down to which ad had more technical acumen and style.

A complex advertisement like *What's Inside*, serves, ideally, to encourage the audience to sit up and pay attention, preferably each time the commercial is on. As Downtown Partners' creative director asserted regarding the Gatorade commercials:

We cut it in such a way that it doesn't give everything away...there's a million different things – there are things in there that even now I still don't see...the target group relates to that.

As the creative director attests, the ads are purposefully constructed utilizing a large number of images. Each time a person watches *What's Inside*, it's entirely

likely that they will catch a glimpse of an image they have not previously seen, or add another piece to the puzzle that is the meaning(s) of the ad. Such a strategy is not only beneficial in terms of reaching Gatorade's young target audience, but for capturing the attention of any audience – as the creative director argued, “the more there is, and the more intrigue there is in some of these spots, the more longevity it has”. *What's Inside*, however, was very much constructed with the younger consumer in mind.

As in *Sticks*, Gatorade's perceptions of their target market are very important to the end product of the commercial. Similar to *Sticks*, the commercial is targeted at a younger audience. Gatorade's marketing manager described their target market as “teen competitors between the ages of 15 and 24...bullseye 17-18”. Further, he asserted the following regarding manner in which this younger generation of viewers is conceptualized:

We know that target, you know, the young target, the video game generation, NHL from EA Sports, you know...it's just the emergence of really cool special effects in movies and things like that. These sort of cultural influences all came into play.

Essentially, the target market, as Gatorade sees it, is engaged when what they are presented with is highly visually stimulating. They can be difficult to reach because they want to be wowed, excited, and entertained. Further, they can also be difficult to reach because they have more they want to do than simply watch television. In particular, the internet has taken away a lot of the typical teen television target audience:

Essentially, when you consider it, the target watch much less TV in general, but they're online. Some are online all day. So if you want to reach them, it's a very important channel to reach them. It's clearly a



much smaller audience because it's very particular, but if you can successfully get something that connects online, then you have a message that...not only do you have something that reaches them, but they can play with it and, you know, experience it, and connect with it for twenty minutes at a time. On television, you're lucky if you get thirty seconds, and you're lucky if you get twenty seconds of that thirty. (Gatorade marketing manager)

Accordingly, *What's Inside* is Gatorade Canada's first real foray into the world of integrated marketing campaigns. While *Sticks* featured a very small online component (fans could throw hockey sticks onto an online pile, which were entered into a draw to win autographed merchandise), *What's Inside* featured more full online capabilities. In addition to information about the product and about Crosby, website users were also able to delve into many of the segments featured in the commercial. Users could shoot pucks at the spider-legged dryer and look at pictures hanging in the room where Crosby sat. These segments, which were given very little time in the commercial, are the focal points of the online content. They provide the consumer with a chance to actually immerse themselves within the world brought to life during the television commercial and to engage with this world. As Gatorade's marketing manager asserts:

The online achieves different things. You don't build awareness online, you build engagement and you build deeper relationships with it. And you know that ultimately when you ask questions about, you know, how involved Gatorade is with the NHL and how Gatorade hydrates you and blah, blah, blah, you just get into deeper questions and a level of commitment that are much higher. And that is a combination of the television but more, I think, the online, because it just allows you to go deeper on that medium.

As an integrated campaign, *What's Inside* demonstrates that in order to appeal to the "new generation" of teenage consumers, advertising must rely on more than simply the traditional avenues of getting their messages across. As Scherer

(2007) evidenced in his discussion of adidas' online "Beat Rugby" campaign, new media technologies carry significant currency in contemporary culture and tapping into this well provides companies with an opportunity to distinguish themselves with consumers as cool and with the times. Simple is not viewed as a pathway to success. Instead, everything must be bigger, more technologically advanced, and offer greater opportunities for a personal connection to occur.

*Narrator*, Gatorade Canada's third commercial featuring Crosby, was released in March of 2008. Unlike its predecessors in *Sticks* and *What's Inside*, there is no story to watch unfold. Crosby remains a focal point, but unlike the first two commercials, this one is almost completely product driven, using images of Crosby to drive home how drinking Gatorade can improve one's performance. The commercial begins with Crosby on a darkened sheet of ice, as if he has arrived at the rink before the lights are even turned on. Over the course of the commercial, the viewer is shown graphs, charts, x-rays, individual cells and neurons, and various mathematical equations interspersed with shots of Crosby skating and stickhandling, demonstrating the science behind taking his game to higher and higher levels. Crosby is also shown off the ice, running on a treadmill while hooked up to various devices and being monitored by several technicians. These segments are followed up by highlights of Crosby scoring goals in situations that average players would not have been able to – beating out defensemen and dekeing the goalie, breaking through the checks of two defenders and shooting as he falls, and scoring while sliding on his knees. From there, the shot returns to Crosby working out off the ice, pedalling on a recumbent bicycle,

and skating through the pylons once again on the ice. The end of the commercial is, as always Gatorade's tagline "is it in you", which disappears only to be replaced by a shot of Crosby who fires a slapshot at the camera. The puck "hits" the camera directly, and the orange lightning bolt on it becomes the only thing on the screen.

*Narrator* is an interesting commercial precisely because it is the ad Gatorade did not want to make when they first began utilizing Crosby. When asked about *Sticks*, Gatorade's marketing manager stated:

There were people that felt we should basically have Sidney drink Gatorade and score a goal and that's the commercial...there was some resistance to this concept because they didn't think it went far enough to show the efficacy of the product.

While *Narrator* isn't as simplistic as Crosby drinking some Gatorade and then heading onto the ice to score a goal, this is, essentially, the premise of the ad. Crosby trains, Crosby drinks Gatorade so that he can train and play harder, Crosby scores goals, Crosby trains more. As the narrator of the commercial asserts, "it means when a bazillion cells in his body are screaming uncle, Crosby drinks Gatorade." Or, put another way, without Gatorade, Crosby would not be able to perform at the same level. What complicates the ad is Gatorade's affirmation and use of Crosby's well-documented commitment to his training regimes and inserting Gatorade into this. It goes without saying that, even if he didn't drink Gatorade, Crosby would still train and would still be a very talented hockey player. With Gatorade, however, he is able to train even harder and perform even better, or so this commercial would have the viewer believe.

When asked about the direction taken in *Narrator*, Downtown Partners' creative director replied with the following:

When we targeted, every approach that we took from the very beginning was all sort of around what's in Sidney's head and the whole Canadiana thing. It's only recently – the last spot we did – where we started getting a lot more scientific, that it's more product focused. It wasn't about the image anymore, it was more about hey, it's a science. This isn't just a drink for the sake of being a drink, there's a reason for it, because of the molecules and all that stuff. That was a strategic decision. We had already done the image in many areas and I think at that point it became alright, what do we do for the product because I don't think people really know the merits and attributes of what Gatorade can offer.

According to the creative director, it became acceptable to produce a “drink Gatorade, score a goal” type of ad because they had already achieved the desired image-based outcomes with *Sticks* and *What's Inside*. Gatorade had already established the fun, feel good, link to Canada/hockey mythology ad with *Sticks*, and had done the video game, fantasy realm, highly integrated to appeal to the younger demographic ad with *What's Inside*. Each ad had taken a slightly greater focus on the product; in this sense, *Narrator* simply represented the next step. Further, the imagery utilized is still very much “Crosby” – many of the reasons why he was considered an attractive endorser to Gatorade in the first place mesh with the tone of this commercial. Gatorade's marketing manager asserted that Crosby appealed to Gatorade as an endorser and fit with the brand because:

[It's his] dedication to sport and commitment to always improving and getting better...Crosby is sort of relentless in his intensity when it comes to practice and always looking to improve his game. Weight trains like a madman in the off-season and he always works on his skill set during the season and the brand values are basically to train and have the intensity in practice as well as having it in the game. Gatorade, being all about the will to win and “is it in you”, the tagline people have been exposed to for almost a decade now...he's an intense competitor...playing as aggressively and intensely as he can be.

*Narrator* utilizes this description of Crosby. From showing him at the rink when the sun is barely up, to skating both before and after the arena lights have been turned off, to running on the treadmill and cycling on the recumbent, this ad aims to demonstrate how much time Crosby spends focusing on his game and constantly improving. In this sense, while the commercial can be interpreted as “Crosby drinks Gatorade and scores a goal”, for viewers with a more intimate knowledge of Crosby, the ad becomes about how Gatorade can assist him and catalyze increased performance during the hard work he already pushes himself to perform.

Producing a product-focused ad that keeps the viewer engaged and entertained is a challenge. While the scientific aspects of Gatorade as a sport drink are indeed important, learning about keeping one’s electrolytes balanced and proper hydration is not exactly entertaining. Unlike *Sticks*, there are no sentiments of feel good Canadiana to attract and keep audiences, and no video game-esque fantasy realm like in *What’s Inside* in which to immerse the viewer. Instead, Gatorade must appeal to its target audience while simultaneously informing them about the benefits that Gatorade can provide them with over all other products. Downtown Partners’ creative director acknowledged this challenge and explained some of the representational strategies with which the creative team aimed to combat this:

Yes it is [a challenge]. And that’s the reason why, at the end of the day, we tried to make it still cool looking. The way we cut it and the way we shot it because a lot of that information is pretty boring to them. So that was a big challenge because it was a real fine line between trying to relate to them and giving them information that’s pretty technical. It’s hard. It’s

a real fine line and that's what you never know, whether that's going to work out or not.

Accordingly, in order to make the relatively dry information regarding Gatorade as a product appealing to the target audience, the commercial is cut in such a fashion that it incorporates very fast cuts, slow motion, different camera lenses (such as the x-ray shots), and a very wide variety of images. Rather than producing a linear commercial built on the product's strengths, what was instead created was a jumble of images joined together based upon their similarities and relation to Crosby, overlaid with narration informing the viewer of the more technical aspects of Gatorade and how it benefits athletes like Crosby – and by extension, all athletes willing and needing to put their time in to succeed.

While the manner in which *Narrator* was cut was meant to increase the level of appeal it garnered with Gatorade's target market, the manner in which the company envisions its target market also served to increase belief that a product-driven ad would nonetheless be successful. While Gatorade is a beverage that is drunk by all sorts of people, the company conceptualizes its product as one made specifically for athletes; accordingly, there is an expectation that viewers who have experienced and wish to continue to experience success in their athletic endeavours will be able to relate to the scenes of Crosby working out both on and off the ice to better himself physically. This is similar to what Goldman and Papson (1999) describe in relation to Nike and their promotional strategies. Even though a significant portion of both company's sales are to non-athletes, both frame their advertisements around are in touch with the challenges and intricacies

of high performance sport and what that means to athletes. Gatorade's marketing manager describes this target audience as such:

We definitely know that the audience plays sports as much as they watch sports, they love the game, but there's a difference between the type of sports psychograph that Molson goes for – it's all about buddies and you know, the team and following your team and being the ultimate fan – and what Gatorade tries to do is connect. Gatorade would rather connect with a fan that plays a sport as much or more than they watch it. They want them to watch it, but it's more about active participation. And that's a difference with the Gatorade target than the typical beer sports fan target.

Gatorade believes that, because their target audience is athletic, such product-focused ads will have a greater degree of success than a similar ad produced for a beer company like Molson or Labatt. Canadian ads for such companies, which also utilize hockey as a manner through which to reach the Canadian fan, rely almost exclusively upon fandom and associating their product with that fandom as a promotion strategy. Gatorade believes that utilizing imagery of an athlete like Crosby and his training regimes will be enough to resonate with athlete/fans and make a product driven ad as successful as the image driven ads that preceded it.

*League of Clutch* is the only Gatorade ad featuring Sidney Crosby to date that was produced by a US agency and for US as well as Canadian audiences. Accordingly, it provides a very interesting look at the manner in which Crosby is utilized by Gatorade outside of Canada and how the goals for ads which feature him change on either side of the border. Unlike in Canada, where Crosby is Gatorade's marquee professional athlete, in the US Crosby is one in a stable of athletes that includes high profile names from Major League Baseball, the

National Football League, the National Basketball Association, Major League Soccer, beach volleyball, women's soccer, and paralympic sports<sup>11</sup>.

While there is one ad that features Sidney Crosby, *League of Clutch* is actually a series of ads focusing on the “clutch” moments of Gatorade athlete. In addition to the Crosby commercial, Gatorade has produced three other ads – one featuring NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson, another featuring the NFL's Eli Manning, and a third focusing on Kevin Garnett of the NBA. The League of Clutch series has its own website apart from Gatorade.com ([www.leagueofclutch.com](http://www.leagueofclutch.com)) which highlights the clutch moments of several other Gatorade athletes: Derek Jeter; Misty Mae-Traenor and Kerri Walsh; Abby Wambach; Landon Donovan; Maria Sharapova; Peyton Manning; and Dwayne Wade. Unlike Crosby's Canadian ads, which are all one off ads, each with individualized goals attached to them, Crosby's *League of Clutch* ad is meant to fit within the framework of the overall *League of Clutch* marketing plan.

*League of Clutch*, as a broad spectrum marketing plan, very much fits with the American sporting model. Unlike Canada, where, as Gatorade's marketing manager asserts, “hockey will always be the number one sport for Canadians to follow...There's hockey and then there's everything else”, the American sporting landscape is far more varied. While baseball is referred to as America's national

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<sup>11</sup> GATORADE ATHLETES (listed on Gatorade.ca): Vince Carter, Sidney Crosby, Derek Jeter, Jimmie Johnson, Matt Kenseth, Peyton Manning, Yao Ming, Ryan Newman, Mark Prior and Dwayne Wade

GATORADE ATHLETES (listed on Gatorade.com): Matt Kenseth, Ryan Newman, Jimmie Johnson, Kevin Durant, Kevin Garnett, Michael Jordan, Dwayne Wade, Sidney Crosby, Derek Jeter, Maria Sharapova, Peyton Manning, Eli Manning, John MacLean, Kerri Walsh, Misty May-Treanor, Mia Hamm, Landon Donovan, Kristine Lilly, Abby Wambach



pastime, football garners some of the largest audiences both in stadium and on television, and basketball has gained a significant following. NASCAR, golf, and soccer, among other sports also garner attention. Consequently, rather than focusing on only one sport (and thus, potentially only one segment of their target market), Gatorade in the USA aims to produce many different ads which focus on a variety of sports and the high profile athletes within them. Accordingly, Crosby is one in a crowd, as opposed to the primary (or even only) focus. As Gatorade's marketing manager explains:

He's not front row centre, without a doubt, in the US, but the US business has now made Sidney a part of their team of athletes. He's done commercials with the US business as well, he gets profiled on the web, but he's one of a number of athletes, whereas in Canada he is the focus.

Gatorade, similar to what Goldman and Papson (1999) uncover with regards to Nike, utilizes Crosby as an access point to a particular segment of the market. He is but one element of their overall celebrity endorsement platform. Whereas in the US there are a variety of sports that fans follow with extreme interest, in Canada, it is really only hockey that is envisioned by marketers as the sport that is followed passionately by fans and as a guaranteed seller.

Hockey, in particular, will always be the number one sport for Canadians to follow. Even, you know, national team hockey, not just NHL hockey, that's something that Canadians are increasingly becoming more fervent about. The World Juniors has gone from being a tournament that obviously got people interested at Christmastime every year to now, especially when they're in Canada, getting sold out tournaments basically every game – not just the Canadian games, but every game, months in advance, and TV ratings that are always in the top 10 programs for the year in sports, and often in the top five and starting to approach, basically, top programming, period...Even junior hockey – 50 franchises in Canada and growing...you're just going to see hockey, I think, in Canada, continue to grow and become the most important sport...There's hockey and then there's everything else. (Gatorade marketing manager)

When thought of in this manner, it makes more sense for Gatorade to place all their focus on Crosby within Canada, but comparatively little on him outside of it. The attention that Crosby receives from Gatorade on either side of the border is relative to his perceived popularity and the popularity of hockey in general.

While *League of Clutch* has been shown both in the United States and in Canada, none of the commercials featuring Crosby that were produced for Gatorade Canada have been shown in the United States. There are several reasons for this. The first is that a commercial such as *Sticks* would not resonate with Americans in the same way it does for Canadians:

When you think back to the first spot we did with him, we had a number of spots when I went out and presented and the one that I pushed for was this one, with the hockey sticks because it's very much Canadiana when you think about it. Every kid grows up knowing that's how you pick teams, with the hockey sticks. And Canadians can relate to it and I know for a fact, you know, that spot would never run in the US as much as they talked about it because most people would never associate with it. One, because you know, hockey's a Canadian sport, but two, because those are things that unless you're Canadian, on a mass level, a lot of people wouldn't even know that. (Downtown Partners' creative director)

In this sense, while Gatorade Canada and Gatorade USA sell the exact same products, the manner in which they market those products to their consumers is very different. The company wishes to associate the product with events, mythology and memories that their audience will react positively to. For Americans, an ad like *Sticks* is likely to have very little impact, as street hockey and this mythologized manner of drawing teams is not something that many Americans have experienced.

A second reason why the Gatorade Canada ads have not run in the United States is purely financial. While the Canadian segment of Gatorade paid to have the ad produced, in order to put the commercials on television in the US, the American division of Gatorade would have had to pay for additional rights to the ad, and additional royalties to the actors who were featured in it. As Gatorade Canada's marketing manager attested, this was not an expense the American side could justify.

They basically were only Canadian commercials, so...um, we really felt that we were going to get *What's Inside* on TV in the States, but ultimately the US Gatorade team couldn't afford to, uh – this is going to sound funny, but – they couldn't afford to put it on air in the US because the rights that they would have to pay all the talent and the actors in the ad were more than they had budgeted. I mean...they already make eight commercials a year and they really liked the ad and really wanted to run it but it would have cost them another quarter of a million dollars so they just didn't have that money lying around that they felt it was the best bet.

*What's Inside*, which still utilizes Canadiana embedded within the larger fantastical environment of the commercial, is nonetheless a commercial that could have been successful in the American marketplace. The video game-esque features of it and the manner in which the commercial was cut is conceptualized as elements that could resonate with the target market on either side of the border. While *What's Inside* could theoretically have done well on American television, when examining the financial costs of doing this against the perceived benefits from showing the commercial, it was decided that the other eight commercials the American side of the company were already utilizing could fulfill a similar purpose.

Similar to Gatorade's marketing manager's assessment of *What's Inside* and the potential to utilize the commercial in the American marketplace, Downtown Partners' creative director similarly suggested *Narrator* was a commercial that could potentially run successfully in the US.

No, I think it has to do with...go back to the Canadian strategy...hockey. That particular one, the science one would run in the US. I don't know whether they would ever do it, but in theory it could. The hockey one, I don't think it would be as effective there. But certainly that one could be.

Essentially, what is argued is that commercial that have less to do with hockey and require more precise knowledge about the game, its history, and traditions associated with it, would do well in the American marketplace. Instead of hockey being presented in a manner deemed to be as Canadians envision it, to run ads featuring hockey and Crosby in the United States is to present the game in a manner that Americans could understand.

In this chapter I have utilized Gatorade's use of Sidney Crosby in promotional materials in Canada and the United States to provide greater insight into the production of advertising in contemporary culture. As outlined by Soar (2000) and Silk and Amis (2000), this chapter has examined the contexts of advertising production, focusing specifically on the case of Gatorade's four campaigns featuring Sidney Crosby, by considering the relationships constituting the practice of televised sport production, the conditions of the practice, and the components of the product. The relationships that constitute the practice of production serve to shape, and in many ways constrain, what may be produced. While Downtown Partners was responsible for producing *Sticks*, *What's Inside*, and *Narrator* for Gatorade, the relationship between agency and client was not the

only one navigated. Indeed, while both groups were required to work together in order to accomplish the finished product, Crosby and his handlers were also a significant component of this process. While Crosby, or any celebrity endorser is not responsible for generating ad ideas, without their agreement, ideas cannot proceed forward. The conditions of production also represent a significant factor in the production of advertising, and provide the parameters in which the final product must fit. Dominant ideologies, codes, and conventions serve to limit the range of possibilities for any advertising campaign, as do commonly held beliefs and ideologies regarding target markets. Finally, budgetary restrictions serve to limit what it is realistically possible to produce; a large corporation – such as Gatorade – will inevitably have more capital at their disposal than a small business (though being a large corporation does not guarantee a large budget), and a smaller budget ad may require concessions to be made. Finally, an analysis of the resulting components of Gatorade's ads revealed the company's evolving goals over the course of Crosby's product endorsement, and how companies aim to – or in some cases, feel required to – build on what they have done previously. Whereas the goal in *Sticks* was simply to create a positive association between Gatorade, street hockey, and Sidney Crosby, its success resulted in the company feeling the need to surpass this with *What's Inside*. Accordingly, the simplistic overtures of *Sticks* were replaced by the technology and grandeur of *What's Inside*, while the goals continued to be about connecting Gatorade with hockey, and with Crosby. In a departure from the first two ads, *Narrator* represented a desire to evidence the scientific nature of Gatorade's product, and in doing so, be

less about Crosby and his star power and more about the product and its advantages. Lastly, *League of Clutch* evidences how the goals within different markets – in this case, in the United States compared to Canada – affect the finished product. Unlike the Canadian-made ads, *League of Clutch* fits Crosby to the Gatorade mold, where he is but one in a stable of stellar celebrity athletes.

Overall, what is evidenced in this chapter is the evolution of advertising production. Advertising is no longer about simply informing the public about products; rather it is a constantly evolving medium wherein its producers aim to hail consumers by imbuing their ads with particular stylistic elements and meanings. Within this system, celebrity athletes like Crosby come to serve as symbols upon which corporations can hang their own significations in the quest to achieve greater product recognition and market share among consumers.

## **Chapter 5: Sidney Crosby and Changing Conceptualizations of Masculinity**

This chapter examines issues surrounding the construction of Sidney Crosby's masculinity in contemporary media representations and in the production of recent Gatorade advertising campaigns. More specifically, drawing from interviews with Gatorade's marketing manager and the creative director from Downtown Partners, I interrogate how understandings of masculinity and celebrity, and the emergence of the so-called "metrosexual" athlete in popular consumer culture have influenced the production of Sidney Crosby and related media. While contradictory displays of masculinity have arguably always been present within the traditional construction of masculinity, it is star players who have subscribed to these tenets that have typically received attention and accolades. Crosby, however, as a superstar and a player who is counted upon to increase the league's popularity, is also a highly visible athlete who arguably makes tensions and contradictions in traditional masculinity very evident.

In what follows, I will outline hegemonic masculinity and its prevalence in contemporary sociology of sport studies, and more specifically within the sport of hockey and Canadian identity. I will then examine the manner in which Crosby is represented in advertisements and promotional materials and how Crosby and his actions have been conceptualized and interpreted by the media. In particular, I will address how cultural fears of a so-called "crisis of masculinity" and the increasing media attention superstar athletes garner have combined to create an environment where the actions and behaviours of athletes like Crosby are given greater attention than ever before. Overall, this chapter examines Sidney

Crosby's masculinity in light of potential transformations in the construction of normative masculinity, interrogates how these transformations have been responded to, and aims to understand what this means in terms of the dominant discourse related to masculinity in contemporary Western society.

### **Hockey, Canada and the Construction of Masculinities**

Antonio Gramsci first used the term hegemony to denote the predominance of one social class over all others in a way that represents not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world upon the subordinated such that this ideology is accepted as common sense and natural (Pringle, 2005). It is from Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony that Connell (1987) first came to formulate the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is the normative masculinity of a particular culture; while only a minority of men may actually enact it, hegemonic masculinity is considered to be the privileged fashion through which to demonstrate one's manhood (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The characteristics which the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity serve to promote are represented by dominant institutions as serving the interests of all people in society when they in fact serve to alienate at best, many, and at worst, most (Baker, 1997). This conceptualization of hegemony and of hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, however, but is subject to contestation and change over time (Whannel, 2002). Hegemonic masculinity is also subject to regional and cultural differences, and thus its construction and composition will vary depending on the context that is examined. The consideration of a particular



masculine presentation as hegemonic requires that all other masculinities remain subordinate to this representation. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) contend, “whatever the empirical diversity of masculinities, the contestation for hegemony implies that gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top” (p. 845). Accordingly, in a system of masculine hegemony, while there may be multiple masculine presentations that may appear to be acceptable and even desirable<sup>12</sup>, there is but one norm, or as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) assert, one masculinity that “present(s) a claim to be *the* way for men to think and live” (p. 845).

The above assertion is not without its problems. As Miller (1998a) challenges, we must consider how one accounts for individual masculine performances that could be interpreted as hegemonic and marginal at the same time. Indeed, as Miller (1998b) questions:

Can hegemonic masculinity allow for theoretical diversity and historical change, and for those times when men are not being men, when their activities might be understood as discontinuous, conflicted and ordinary, rather than interconnected, functional and dominant – when nothing they do relates to the overall domination of women or their own self formation as a gendered group? (p. 433)

What must be recognized, however, as Connell (1995) has asserted, is that masculinities do not fit neatly within categorizations and typologies; rather, they are constantly evolving. Accordingly, it is reductionary to contend that a masculine performance that falls within multiple categories is indicative of the shortcomings and limitations of hegemonic theory. Instead, it becomes important

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<sup>12</sup> Connell (1995) has theorized that, rather than existing in a duality, there are four broad categories of masculinities – hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized. Connell (2005) has also cautioned against utilizing these categorizations as a typology and has stressed that men’s identities are relational and constantly changing over time and context.

to begin examining hegemony in a more multi-faceted manner: rather than continuing to examine solely the manners in which behaviours align with historical and traditional definitions of hegemonic masculinity, we must also assess how this definition has changed over time, the reasons and catalysts for such changes, other emerging masculinities and the contexts of their conceptualization, and, perhaps most importantly, the complicated nature of defining masculinity. As Williams (1977) asserts, “the reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive” (p. 112-113). Accordingly, in this chapter I argue it is most important to not shy away from conflicting masculine performances as they relate to traditional definitions of hegemonic masculinity, but to utilize such potential transitory moments as particularly salient sites for analysis.

Rather than simply assuming that the power of ruling groups is all-encompassing and thus requires those subjected to its power to accept the given ideology, it is important to instead examine how particular perceptions and beliefs about gender are embedded into certain environments, and the ways in which such constructions are both accepted and questioned. As Williams (1977) argues:

A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis. Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of

hegemony the concepts of counter hegemony and alternative hegemony, which are real and persistent elements of practice. (p. 112)

In this sense, hegemony is more than a system of binary oppositions. Hegemony is fluid; it often takes on the appearance of a binary system when analyzed, but this does not reflect the nature of the theory, but rather its application. What is needed is greater attention to the processes of counter and alternative hegemony and the manners in which they serve to influence, disrupt, and potentially challenge traditional notions. Rather than simply categorizing behaviours as, for example, simply confirming to or challenging the hegemonic norm, we need to pay close attention to the processes that have led to this outcome.

One of the most important aspects of hegemonic masculinity is consensus. While the hegemonic norm may adopt aspects of other masculinities, its position as hegemonic requires that its dominance remain naturalized. Accordingly, it must be asked – within contemporary culture, does this type of consensus occur? In contemporary Canadian society, what qualifies as *the* ideal masculinity? What qualities must one possess, and what persona must all desire in order to achieve the pinnacle of masculinity? While there are indeed values and behaviours that seem to be normalized as appropriately masculine, it would prove challenging indeed to construct the perfectly hegemonic man based on the mediated representations and discourses that are validated and denounced on a daily basis.

In order to maintain a hegemonic conceptualization of masculinity, it must constantly be represented as the ideal, and beyond this, as a completely “natural” extension of manhood. It is argued that this occurs primarily through the production of and increased emphasis on so-called exemplars of masculinity –

such as professional sports stars – who become icons of what is to be desired and achieved (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Whannel, 2002). This is a subject of frequent discussion in contemporary North American society, and particularly within the sociology of sport (see Baker, 1997; Connell, 1987; 1995; 2001; 2002; 2003; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Darnell & Sparks, 2005; Kimmel, 2004; McDonald, 2001; McKay, Messner & Sabo, 2000; Pringle, 2005; Rose and Friedman, 1997; Whannel, 2002). As Burstyn (1999) asserts,

The rites of men condition the rights of men, and hence the culture of sport influences broader political consciousness and capabilities. The rites of sport create value-bearing mythologies around particular kinds of heroic figures: large strong, often violent, record-setting champions. (p. 22).

More specifically, sports programming and advertising on television may be viewed as a vehicle for the utopic imagining – and reification – of hegemonic ideals of the masculine (Rose and Friedman, 1997). The pervasiveness of such dominant imagery is further entrenched when the cohesiveness of such masculine messages is maintained across media. That is to say, the masculine themes in, for example, sports coverage, are also well aligned with the idealized masculinity propagated through other media, such as action movies and television shows (Darnell & Sparks, 2005). This standardization of messages across media thus serves to further entrench the supposed naturalness of such constructions. Through the actions of these idols of masculinity, boys and men not only come to understand the appropriate way to look and behave, but come to view this presentation as the true form of what it means to be a true man.

Sport has long been considered a breeding ground and a proving ground for masculinity. In a culture where there is less social currency attached to physical prowess, sport remains a central site in the production of masculinity (Whitson, 1990). Further, as Kidd (1990) asserts, sports are “an extremely fertile field for the reassertion and legitimation of male power and privilege” (p. 32). That is to say that through the process of engaging in sport, boys and men are expected to learn to become a particular type of man. Whitson (1990) elaborates on this, contending that specific socialization practices for men occur through sport, including the practice of “patterns of empowerment, habits, and self-expectations of domination” (p. 22). While there are many sports that have historically been regarded as male preserves, in Canada it is undoubtedly hockey that has acted as the primary sport/training ground for men and boys.

Gruneau and Whitson (1993) have argued that a rugged, hypermasculine presentation is foundational to ice hockey and has evolved as an integral part of the stereotypical conceptualization of hockey:

...organized hockey developed as a distinctly masculine subculture, a game played (at the organized level) almost exclusively by men and boys, and a game whose dominant practices and values have been those of a very specific model of aggressive masculinity. At its best this model of masculinity defines the real man as a decent person of few words, but with a powerful sense of his own abilities and the toughness and physical competence to handle any difficulties that might arise; a man that people respect and look up to but don't dare cross; a man who generally respects the rules that govern social life, but knows how to work outside them if necessary...for generations of Canadian boys a slightly meaner version of that same image was represented by skilled but tough hockey players, the archetype of them being Gordie Howe. (p. 191)

This construction of hockey as a rough, rugged and masculine sport and idolization of players who demonstrate not only skill but a capacity for violence

serves to demonstrate how the defining of Canada's sport and of Canada's national identity is a highly gendered process. Not only are contemporary conceptualizations of hockey and Canada bound up in historical notions of the game and how it should be played, but this also reflects a traditionalized notion of sport for men. Body contact sports, in particular, have been naturalized as a way of performing masculinity and have become important masculinizing practices "in which the capacity to dominate is honored and physical power confers social power" (Whitson, 1994, p. 367). In body contact sports such as hockey, physicality and the ability to use one's body to subdue and rise above one's opponent remain essential qualities, and the men who play these sports learn that successful men rise to such challenges.

There are many Canadian sport scholars (see Adams, 2006; Gruneau & Whitson, 1993; Robidoux, 1997; 2003; Robidoux & Trudel, 2006; Whitson & Gruneau, 2006) who have examined hockey's role in Canadian culture, and how masculinity is implicated in this process. In so doing, what is constantly evidenced and reinforced is that, despite cultural shifts in values that have been made outside of sport, hockey has remained relatively insulated from such changes (Robidoux & Trudel, 2006). Robidoux and Trudel (2006) further contend that issues of masculinity in Canadian hockey are further complicated by the connection emphasized between Canada and hockey, and how the game's aggressive nature is connoted to the ideal of the Canadian sportsman. Without this aspect of hockey, it is argued, not only would the game no longer be as masculine, but the sport would no longer be Canadian.

Not only is the defining of Canadian hockey a highly gendered process, but it is further complicated by issues of race, class, and sexuality (as the prototypical and historical hockey figure has always been a white, middle-to-upper class, appropriately heterosexual masculine man). As Adams (2006) asserts, “if hockey is life in Canada, then life in Canada remains decidedly masculine and white” (p. 71). Accordingly, when examining the links between hockey, masculinity and Canadian national identity, it is important to give consideration to whom this process entrenches as appropriately Canadian/masculine, and who it leaves upon the fringes. When considering Crosby, it is thus integral to examine how he has been – and continues to be – “appropriately” masculinized through hockey.

### **Sporting Celebrities and Metrosexuality**

In the 1990s, discussion of a “crisis” of masculinity began to gain cultural currency – both within the mainstream media and culture and from academics. In the popular media, topics like “The Prejudice Against Men” (Marin, 1991, cited in Malin, 2005) and “The Trouble With Male Bashing” (Stillman, 1994, cited in Malin, 2005) garnered attention, while academics (see Connell, 1993; Faludi, 1999; Halberstam, 1998; Kimmel, 1996; Messner, 1993) examined how this crisis might challenge traditional masculine values and make evident alternative views of masculinity (Malin, 2005). This crisis stemmed from arguments levied regarding identity politics, including discussion of race, class, gender, and sexuality, which also served to disrupt traditional notions of masculinity and the idea of a naturalized manner of appropriate manhood (Malin, 2005).

Accordingly, that which had previously remained unchallenged and had been envisioned as simply natural – masculinity – was unveiled and, in many cases unwillingly, recognized in culture as a performance like any other. As Malin (2005) contends, the discourse of masculinity that began in the 1990s served to work against the traditional invisibility of masculinity by making it a topic of discussion and critique. More recently, in the 2000s, the discussion of masculinity has continued to be complicated, including by the conceptualization of metrosexuality – men who display traditional masculine traits such as strength and fitness, but who employ aesthetic routines that would traditionally be associated with femininity (Harris & Clayton, 2007<sub>b</sub>). As more interest, research, and critique is levied upon masculinity as a performance and construction, a vast array of representations and meanings have been discovered.

Discussion of metrosexuality has evolved over time from previous incarnations that deviated from the so-called standardized masculine norm. As Edwards (2006) asserts, these transitions have been particularly visible in the imagery and content presented in men's magazines. In the 1980s, several new magazines (such as *Arena* and *GQ*) were launched, and represented a departure from men's interest magazines, providing the original foray into men's lifestyle magazines. It is in such magazines that the "New Man" began gaining prominence. According to Edwards (2006), the New Man was a dualistic phenomenon, about nurturing and caring on one side, and narcissism and grooming on the other. The image of the New Man represented a more pro-feminist stance, combined with the increased commodification of the male body



in a manner similar to how the female body had historically been treated.

Masculinity became something that could be affirmed and reaffirmed through the products one purchased. The iconography of the New Man, however, began to lose its relevance in the 1990s, at the height of the so-called crisis of masculinity. This brought about a resurgence of more “traditional” masculine values, and accordingly, the arrival of the “New Lad”

According to Edwards (2006), the New Lad developed with the launch of *Loaded* magazine in 1994. Unlike the more sensitive and caring New Man, the New Lad was a return to the valuation of sex, sports, and drinking, and male-only spaces such as pubs, pornography, and in the UK, football (Edwards, 2006). New Lad ideals have remained prominent throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, and can certainly be seen in men’s magazines such as *Maxim* and *FHM*, as well as in hybrid interest/lifestyle magazines such as *Men’s Health*. Edwards (2006) argues that the New Lad has succeeded where the New Man failed because “it reconstructed personal consumption and grooming as acceptable parts of working class masculinities” (p. 42). The New Lad cares about personal hygiene and fashion, but in a “masculine” way. As Whannel (2001) indicates, “sharp and stylish means Hugo Boss – a little flash but in the solidly ‘masculine’ tradition of the sharp suit” (p. 141). While men are able to be more fashionable and well groomed, they are expected to do so without transgressing the boundaries of New Laddism. Men such as David Beckham, however, cross these lines, and, as Whannel (2001) argues, enter into the realm of the post New Lad man. It is here

that scholars have taken up discussions of metrosexuality in contemporary culture.

So-called metrosexual athletes have become a topic of increasing interest in recent years within the sociology of sport community. Many scholars have examined the manner in which athletes such as soccer star David Beckham (see Cashmore, 2004; Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Clayton & Harris, 2004; Harris & Clayton, 2007<sub>a</sub>; Whannel, 2002) and Welsh rugby star Gavin Henson (see Harris & Clayton, 2007<sub>b</sub>) have transcended the more prototypical expectations placed upon high performance athletes in traditionally hypermasculine sporting environments and the implications of such performances. Beckham and Henson represent but two high profile professional athletes that can be regarded as “metrosexual” athletes; other examples include New Zealand rugby player Dan Carter, who also works as an underwear model for Jockey, and was rated the 11<sup>th</sup> sexiest man in the world by US television station E! in 2008, and NHL player Sean Avery, who spent the 2008 summer off-season working as an intern for *Vogue*. Indeed, many have suggested that Sidney Crosby, too, is yet another icon of metrosexuality. While athletes like Avery and Crosby have begun to be perceived through this metrosexual lens, there have been no studies done on the emergence of the metrosexual athlete from either a Canadian or North American context. Certainly, such athletes are gaining considerable attention across the sporting world, and much of this attention is due to the perceived challenge these athletes make to traditional masculine norms and what exactly this means with regards to the gender order. Historically, sports heroes have not been known as

fashion-savvy men renowned as much for their good looks as their sporting prowess. Rather, they have been known and held up as hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity.

While Crosby, as he is constructed by the media, in many ways serves as a vehicle through which a traditional, hypermasculine hegemonic masculinity is promoted and perpetuated, this presentation is not without complications. In exploring the vast array of mediated representations of Crosby, what is discovered is not a masculine identity that consistently features the same traits and behaviours, but rather a complicated set of often conflicting characteristics. The manner in which Crosby is presented reinforces certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, while also evidencing other traits which may be classified as emergent, or as counter or alternatively hegemonic. Further, both behaviours that are typically constructed as hegemonic and those conceptualized as marginal are celebrated and contested by the media and by hockey fans alike in reaction to Crosby's mediated identity. As Kellner (1995) asserts, it is important to look at media culture in the context of existing socio-political debates – in this case, changing notions of masculinity. These mediated representations of Crosby demonstrate a heightened awareness surrounding masculine performances in contemporary culture, and the manner in which these performances are interpreted and rationalized serves as an important moment of analysis with respect to the landscape of masculinity and the gender order.

## **Context: Crosby and Conflicting Notions of Masculinity**

Crosby is described as classically Canadian in the sense that he is a clean-cut, well-spoken, polite young man, the kind mothers would be happy to see their daughters come home with – or, as Richer (2005) put it, “teenage girls and their mothers can adore him equally for different reasons, and brothers and fathers can worship his hockey skills” (p. A1). He has also been regarded as the NHL’s saviour<sup>13</sup> and has gotten rampant media attention befitting of this title. In hockey – and particularly in Canadian hockey – there is a stereotypical conceptualization of masculinity that the players have traditionally been expected to conform to. It is important to question the manners in which Crosby adheres to and challenges these traditional notions of masculinity, and how this impacts upon the construction and expectations of Canadian masculinity.

From the very beginning, Crosby has been promoted by the NHL in a vastly different way than the stereotypical hockey player. With Crosby, there have been no Gordie Howe hat tricks<sup>14</sup>, broken noses, or lost teeth; instead, focus has been placed upon his major endorsement deals, fashion line, bee-stung lips, and stylish pin-striped suits. Unlike stars players who became well known and were highlighted for their aggression, it was Crosby’s wholesome image that was first considered marketable. As Joyce (2005) asserts, “he [Crosby] was the epitome of wholesomeness, well-scrubbed, fresh-faced, self-effacing, painfully polite...maybe bland and wholesome was exactly the image that would work for Crosby” (p. 183-184). This sentiment was echoed by Gatorade’s marketing

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<sup>13</sup> *Maclean’s* magazine published an article in May, 2005 entitled “Can Sidney Crosby Save the NHL?”

<sup>14</sup> A goal, an assist and a fight.

manager who argued that the fact that Crosby was a “good kid” was a huge factor in the company’s decision to sign him:

As a kid, you know, he’s kind of like, mothers would love to have their kids act like Sidney...you know, mothers that aren’t even into hockey that just feel that he’s a great example of...a person that I would like my family and my friends to be like.

Indeed, this wholesome image, coupled with his attractiveness (as showcased in his shirtless spreads in both *Vanity Fair* and *GQ*), in addition to his high level of proficiency and skill on the ice, were catalysts to the NHL’s conceptualization of Sidney Crosby, next great hockey superstar.

While it would be a struggle to find someone who would disagree that Crosby is an exceptional on-ice talent, there is no consensus when it comes to Crosby’s persona – both on and off the ice. He is conceptualized as competitive and passionate; in her book on Crosby’s first season in the NHL, Richer (2006) contends that Crosby’s arguments with referees on the ice are a testament to his intensity, a sentiment that was echoed by Gatorade’s marketing manager. Meanwhile, there are also many who regard this behaviour as whining, and view Crosby as nothing more than a crybaby<sup>15</sup>. He is obviously well-liked by a wide range of fans, and similarly, some love to hate him<sup>16</sup>. Further, in terms of

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<sup>15</sup> “Cryby” has become a popular Crosby nickname. During the opening round of the 2009 Stanley Cup Playoffs, the website Philly Phaithful (<http://www.phillyphaithful.com>) began selling Cryin’ Crosby t-shirts with the slogan “You Can’t Spell Crosby Without C-R-Y” endorsed by Flyers goaltender Martin Biron.

<sup>16</sup> Some people, for example, argue that he is gay, and utilize nicknames such as “Cindy Gaysby” to illustrate this (and simultaneously link homosexuality to feminization, both of which are regarded negatively). Others like Crosby because they find him attractive – a well known (and vulgar) sign held up by a female fan at a game during his rookie season read “Put it in my five hole Sidney!”; a more PG example held up (also by a female fan) at a Penguins/Canucks game in his sophomore year read “I’d give a kidney to make out with Sidney”. Many appreciate his skills on the ice; others argue that the NHL pads Crosby’s statistics by crediting him with unearned second assists. There is no consensus among fans regarding how to conceptualize Crosby.

representations of masculinity, there is no internal consistency in terms of how Crosby is presented. In one moment, he may be shown upholding the tenets of hegemonic masculinity, and the next in direct contravention of them. Even more interestingly, with most stories involving Crosby, the manner in which he is regarded and interpreted depends entirely on the manner in which the events are recounted. The following are two such examples – one which upholds traditional notions of masculinity in hockey, and another which *could* challenge it.

At the 2005 World Junior Hockey Championships (WJHC) – in Grand Forks, North Dakota, it was Russian Alexander Ovechkin garnering significant attention<sup>17</sup>. In that game, Crosby made what Joyce (2005) attests was the most important play of the game: he knocked Ovechkin out of the game with a devastating check:

The safe play would have been to lock up Ovechkin, a play that most two-way first-line forwards would have made – Steve Yzerman, say, or Mike Modano. Not Crosby. Though he was giving away four inches in height and at least 25 pounds, Crosby didn't hesitate to lay hip and shoulder into the big Russian forward...He [Ovechkin] would show up at the press conference after the game with his right arm in a sling. Crosby had managed to separate Ovechkin's shoulder...Crosby didn't score in the final, but make no mistake – he made the most important play in the game. A gutty, reckless but completely legal open-ice body check. (p. 163)

Canada won the game by a score of 6-1. All-star forwards Ryan Getzlaf and Jeff Carter had three points apiece to lead the Canadian effort, and yet it was a bodycheck by Crosby and the injury it produced that Joyce celebrated as a game-

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<sup>17</sup> The gold medal game featured Russia and Canada – a classic match-up, its significance only elevated due to the presence of the two superstars-in-waiting. 19 years old to Crosby's 17, Ovechkin had benefited from his experience playing in the previous two WJHC tournaments, while Crosby had been given only limited ice time in one previous tournament. Ovechkin was considered to be the best player in the tournament, while Crosby was arguably not even the best player on a star-studded Canadian team (the WJHC is a tournament that is perennially dominated by 20-year old players). Ovechkin is now Crosby's biggest rival in the NHL.

winning play. While it is typically Crosby's ability to make flashy plays, tape-to-tape passes, and score timely goals that is highlighted, here he was celebrated for his ability to "do what it takes" to secure victory for his team and his nation. Had the event been recounted by a Russian writer (or in a book not dedicated exclusively to Crosby) it is entirely possible, and even likely, that this event would not have received this type of attention. In reality, Crosby is not known as a physical player; physical play, however, is highlighted in this example, reflecting the importance of violent play to masculine performance. Hockey violence, as defined by Robidoux and Trudel (2006) can be divided into two categories: relatively legitimate and relatively illegitimate, and within these two categories, another four sub-categories: brutal body contact and borderline violence (legitimate) and quasi-criminal violence and criminal violence (illegitimate). Utilizing these categories, Crosby's hit would be classified as brutal body contact; violence that conforms to the official rules of hockey, and is more or less accepted.

The second example is a story from the culmination of the same tournament. The players on the Canadian Junior team had all been given their red jerseys – worn during their gold medal winning game – to keep, and Crosby had packed his in his hockey bag along with the rest of his equipment. Somewhere in between Grand Forks and Rimouski, however, the jersey had gone missing from his luggage. As Joyce (2005) recounted, "newspaper photos and video footage spread cross-country showing Crosby fighting back tears" (p. 167). Joyce (2005) then continues on to conceptualize and rationalize Crosby's tears in a variety of

fashions, including as evidence of his youth, and that he would not be alone in displaying such a reaction:

But when Crosby was red-eyed, talking about the lost sweater, it should have reminded everyone that this was still a boy at the centre of a man-sized world of money, expectations and responsibilities. (p. 168)

Some might find it hard to believe that a 17-year-old would have been torn up over a lost hockey sweater. But I just thought back to the damp eyes and utter silence on the bus after the Canadian under-18s lost to the U.S. in Piestany, and Crosby's distress after the second loss to the Czechs at that tournament. Would those players on that bus have cried if they had lost their gold medals or their Canada sweaters? Maybe some would have sucked it up or sworn, but others would have broke down just like Crosby. (p. 169)

In the world of hegemonic masculinity, men keep their emotions in check, and are certainly not red-eyed when discussing their personal affairs or admit to calling home to their parents in tears. Because this is a behaviour that falls outside of the masculine norm, it is important to discuss it, to rationalize the behaviour.

Accordingly, Joyce argues that Crosby's actions are neither problematic, nor are they anything but understandable given the circumstances. He affirms that other players may perhaps have dealt with such a loss in a different way – such as by masking their emotions, or reacting with anger and swearing – but that there was nothing problematic about the way Crosby reacted. Of course, what is highlighted in Joyce's comments is just how young Crosby is – that many other 17 and 18 year old boys would have responded to the loss of a prized possession in exactly the same way. What this brings into question, then, is whether such a response would be acceptable if Crosby was a seasoned veteran, one who had learned the ways of the game and the appropriate manner in which to express (or not express, as the case may be) the emotion associated with the loss of his jersey.



When one considers professional sport, how frequently do viewers witness masculine athletic icons shedding tears? Perhaps a brief glimpse in the exultation of victory or the agony of defeat following a championship match, but otherwise, men are explicitly taught within sport that such emotional outbursts demonstrate their weakness, and are not appropriate. For Canadians, and Canadian boys in particular, hockey acts as a training ground for masculinity. While it is not necessarily acceptable that Crosby cried following his jersey's loss, it is understood, to a degree, because he is young and thus still undergoing such training. In highlighting this example, Joyce not only rationalizes Crosby's potentially "unmasculine" behaviour, but positions it as a reminder about appropriate masculine action, therefore reinforcing masculine hegemony.

Crosby's reaction to his lost jersey, and the aforementioned story of Crosby's shoulder-separating bodycheck on Ovechkin, are but two examples of the tensions and ambiguities that Crosby embodies with regards to the conceptualization and portrayal of an appropriately masculine persona. Indeed, what is illustrated are the potential conflicts that exist in attempting to lay out what, exactly, it means to be an appropriately masculine man in the contemporary NHL. This will be examined in greater detail by exploring the manners in which Crosby is promoted and how they differ from more traditional ideas about hockey, and more specifically, Canadian hockey and the masculine aura that surrounds it.

### Violence

As illustrated in Joyce's reaction to Crosby's injurious bodycheck on Alexander Ovechkin at the 2005 World Junior tournament, physical force is a lauded aspect of high calibre hockey. Strength, physicality, and a capacity for violence have long been considered hallmarks of masculinity and necessary qualities for a successful hockey player to display. Professional hockey players – particularly Canadians – have come through a system where physical toughness is not only a respected aspect of the game, but one that is required, and where the willingness to fight is simply a mark of character (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993). Big hits and big fights are constantly given a similar degree of attention as incredible passes and beautiful goals. Toughness is a lauded quality, and violence is deemed a necessary component of a true game of hockey.

Sport helps its male participants learn that a capacity for violence is a part of masculinity and not only legitimates the use of physical force, but also asserts the use of force as being a *necessary* action under certain circumstances. Often, the violent action deemed necessary is to engage another in a physical altercation – a willingness and desire to fight is frequently considered a hallmark of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2004). The sport of hockey is no exception to such assertions, and in fact, for many fans hockey fights are the ultimate in excitement and one of the best parts of the game. While Crosby is known as a consummate competitor with an aggressive style, fighting is not regarded as a component of his game. As Crosby himself asserted:

Trust me, there's been probably a number of times I would have loved to do that (fight), but in the best interest of the team and the best interest of me, I don't think it's the right thing to do...if I hurt a hand or a shoulder, to be off the ice is not worth doing that. You can still play tough and not

fight. I like to think I play a pretty tough game – not go out there and try to fight every guy, but you can still play tough. You can still finish your hits and maybe you'll finish a hit when a guy doesn't expect it...as for dropping the gloves, it's not something I really plan on doing...but you never know. (Crosby, cited in Anderson, 2006, p. C11)

During his third season, however, Crosby finally found himself in his first NHL fight. On December 20, 2007, after being hit into the boards by Boston Bruins defenseman Andrew Ference, the two dropped the gloves in a short fight that received much attention<sup>18</sup>.

Of the many potential topics that could have been broached in the 2008 DVD *Sidney Crosby: On the Ice and Beyond*, this fight inevitably received attention. In direct contrast to Crosby's earlier comments regarding his desire to fight, former teammate Ryan Malone asserted that Crosby frequently talked about players on the opposing team he could fight and that it was something that had been on his mind. Interestingly, Crosby's reaction to his fight did not indicate that it was something he thought about, and in fact, he emphasized that, while it was something that had happened, it was not a performance that he intended to repeat in the near future. After a reporter inquired as to what Crosby would do if Ference was looking for more in the teams' next meeting, Crosby responded, with

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<sup>18</sup> Crosby has since been involved in two more fights, both of which were controversial. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, in a game against the Atlanta Thrashers, Crosby jumped into a skirmish and began throwing punches at Boris Valabik, who was already being held up by Penguins player Kris Letang. It appears that Crosby lands a blow to Valabik's face, followed by a second punch to his groin. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, Crosby dropped his gloves against Florida Panthers player Brett McLean directly off a face-off. McLean was immediately thrown to the ice by Crosby and was not able to get back to his feet. Crosby pulled McLean's jersey over his head and was able to land several punches before the linesmen broke them up. Following this altercation, it was argued that Crosby had not given his opponent the opportunity to engage in a fair fight. Finally, on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, in a game against the Boston Bruins, Crosby had a near-altercation with Bruins player Marc Savard. Savard taunted Crosby following a goal, at which point Crosby challenged him to fight. Savard refused, citing the visor that Crosby wore as the reason he would not engage. Crosby returned to his bench and got the team's trainer to remove his visor for him, and challenged Savard again – at which point, Savard again refused.

a laugh, that “if he is...I won’t be” (Crosby, cited in Lepik, 2008). He also re-asserted his belief that fighting was not a role he was meant to play on his team, and that it would be far too easy for him to get injured while doing so – something that would hurt his team far more than Crosby declining to fight another player.

The contrast between Crosby’s public comments regarding the possibility of him fighting again, and Malone’s assertions about Crosby frequently discussing fighting with his teammates certainly tell what could be regarded as two conflicting stories. Another manner in which this situation can be read, however, is as evidence of the many roles that Crosby is required to play. Crosby is a vital component of the NHL’s marketing strategies, of which the primary focus is garnering greater attention in US markets. One of the many difficulties that marketers have had in selling the US on hockey is the perceived “brutality” and violence of the game. Accordingly, leveraging a star like Crosby in such a market actually becomes easier and potentially more lucrative if he is not a player who emphasizes the more brutal and violent aspects of his game. This more passive public persona, however, has the potential to be problematic for Crosby on the ice and in the dressing room. As Gruneau and Whiston (1993) contend, “hockey players have to negotiate a space for themselves on the ice, or they will be constantly roughed up...to win space and respect the player must show both opponents and teammates that he will not be pushed around” (p. 183).

Accordingly, in order to win his space on the ice and respect of his teammates, it makes sense for Crosby to uphold a more normative stance and patterns of discussion with his teammates. Crosby may report to the media that he will not

be looking for a rematch with Ference, and he may indeed never drop the gloves with him again, but this does not mean that behind closed doors with his peer group Crosby is not making disparaging comments about Ference and other NHL players in the name of fitting in and ‘just being one of the guys’. The Crosby consumers are presented with and Crosby’s behaviour when the cameras are off are not necessarily one and the same. Rather, each is indeed a performance geared towards the accomplishment of different goals.

Even though Crosby’s first fight did not occur until his third NHL season, and despite his own assertions that he did not intend to drop the gloves with any degree of regularity, NHL Radio sportscaster Bill Clement argued that it was occasions like Crosby’s first fight that really demonstrated his captaincy, would endear him to his teammates, and would prove that he doesn’t need protection – as he could provide it for himself (Clement, cited in Lepik, 2008). This stands in direct contrast to comments made by Crosby’s co-combatant, Andrew Ference regarding how he viewed a player like Crosby compared to one like Calgary Flames’ captain Jarome Iginla.

Ference: Jarome, in my books, is a better hockey player than Crosby because he does those things. He will fight, he will lay his body on the line and take the hit and not complain if someone hits him and stuff like that. The superstars of the league should have to do that because they’re hockey players, they’re not ice-skating princesses. Hockey is an emotional game. You have to stand up for yourself. You have to stand up for your actions. If you punch somebody in the face, then you should fight, that’s the way hockey is supposed to be.

David Amber: So are you saying Crosby is a little soft?

Ference: Well, he’s not Jarome. (Ference, cited in Amber, 2008)

The reactions to Crosby’s first fight demonstrate the many ways in which such an incident can be interpreted depending on one’s individual perspective. Based

upon Crosby's own comments and those by Clement, one could argue that he feels his masculinity is proven through his competitive nature and his star-appeal – not through his brutality. In this sense, he is constructed as above such actions, and secure in himself and his role that he does not feel required to fight. If, as Kimmel (2004) asserts, it is the fear of being perceived as not a real man that keeps men exaggerating all the traditional rules of masculinity, Crosby's situation would then illustrate that proving one's masculinity requires a different set of performances for different men. Finally, the reality of Ference's comments regarding Crosby in comparison to Iginla would seem to indicate that some players – and indeed, many men (and women) – believe that a capacity for violence makes one a better hockey player, and indeed, a better man.

#### Resisting Change? Sidney Crosby and Don Cherry

When speaking about hockey and the traditional propensity and promotion of violence, particularly in the form of big hits and hockey fights, for most Canadians, it is Don Cherry that comes to mind. While Sidney Crosby arguably represents the NHL's future, Don Cherry remains an anchor to the league's traditionalist roots<sup>19</sup>. Deeply conservative and xenophobic, Cherry is well known for extolling his views on everything from hockey to politics (and the politics of hockey) and has been frequently mired in controversy because of it<sup>20</sup>. Beyond

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<sup>19</sup> Cherry, who coached the Boston Bruins and Colorado Rockies in the 1970s, was hired by the CBC in 1981. Following a brief stint as a colour commentator, Cherry has been a mainstay on *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcasts with his "Coach's Corner" segment, which airs during the first intermission.

<sup>20</sup> Following a 2004 comment regarding the use of visors in the NHL, and how it was only "Europeans and French guys" (frequently on the receiving end of Cherry's ire) who wore them, the CBC imposed a seven second delay on his segment. Cherry has also repeatedly spoken out regarding his support of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and of Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. In 2003, Cherry spoke out regarding Montreal Canadiens fans booing the

this, Cherry is arguably most famous for his steadfast reinforcement of traditional Canadian masculinity. Cherry is also well known for appreciating gritty players with the ability to score, but an even greater ability to play the physical game and encourages his young fans to emulate this style of play. Cherry's yearly video series – now in its 20<sup>th</sup> season – was previously titled “Don Cherry's Rock ‘em Sock ‘em”<sup>21</sup> – which provides a fairly decent indication as to what aspects of the game Cherry most readily follows. While, as Gruneau and Whitson (1993) argue, Cherry has become a caricature to many, his opinions still resonate with, and often represent a significant percentage of Canadian hockey fans. Gruneau and Whitson describe these fans as “‘ordinary Canadians’, mostly male, and often with an active connection to the Canadian hockey subculture” (p. 281). That people do indeed relate to Cherry was demonstrated when he was voted the seventh greatest Canadian in a CBC contest<sup>22</sup>. As a constant presence and, as many would argue, an institution on Canada's flagship hockey broadcast, Cherry continues to influence the game and fans' opinions and perceptions of it. In an

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American national anthem in protest of the US-led war against Iraq, apologizing to the US on behalf of Canadians and asserting that “years of pride went down the drain” due to the fans' behaviour. Cherry's tirade continued, and he slammed the Canadian government for its “lack of support to our American friends”. CBC spokesperson Ruth-Ellen Soles responded to Cherry's outburst by stating that “The CBC does not feel *Hockey Night in Canada* is the appropriate place for discussion on the war in Iraq” (Canadian Press, 2003). Cherry, however, has continued to make his support of the troops well known. One such example is November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the night of the “Tickets for Troops” promotion in Edmonton, Alberta, Cherry wore a desert cadpat jacket and a red and white striped Royal Military College scarf during *Coach's Corner*. Cherry thanked General Hillier for giving him the jacket, and stated that he was wearing it “in honour of all our soldiers in Afghanistan” and avowed his support for the events taking place in Edmonton. Despite the assertions by the CBC that its hockey broadcasts are not the ideal forum for discussions relating to the war, Cherry continues to utilize *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcasts to make evident his support of the troops on a near-weekly basis.

<sup>21</sup> The title of Cherry's video series was changed to simply “Don Cherry's” following the 10 year anniversary edition, but has been changed back to “Rock ‘Em Sock ‘Em” for the 20<sup>th</sup> edition.

<sup>22</sup> Cherry finished ahead of Sir John A MacDonald (8) and Alexander Graham Bell (9) and Wayne Gretzky (10) in the top 10 finishers.

era where other media institutions are embracing – or at the very least, utilizing to their advantage – more fluid representations of hockey, Cherry’s stalwart traditionalism provides an interesting point of analysis. Since Crosby’s time with the Rimouski Oceanic, Crosby has been a frequent topic on Coach’s Corner. While Cherry has acknowledged Crosby’s skills, he has also frequently derided him for behaviours and actions Cherry does not feel are appropriate.

Don Cherry’s critiques of Crosby in fact began while Crosby was in his first year of Junior hockey with the Rimouski Oceanic. During a game against the Quebec Remparts, Crosby set up behind the opposing team’s net, lifted the puck onto his stick, and jammed it behind the goalie for a goal as if he was shooting a lacrosse ball. The manner in which Crosby had scored, and the manner in which the 16-year old had celebrated it, drew Cherry’s ire; Cherry felt that it was inappropriate for the young star to slide on his knees in celebration, and to have attempted the move in the first place:

I like the kid...but this is a hot dog move...the Quebec Remparts are going to remember that the next time they play. He’s gonna get hurt. They’re gonna grab the mustard and put it all over him. (Cherry, cited in Joyce, 2005, p. 117)

The following week, after receiving a significant number of negative responses to his dressing down of Crosby, Cherry elaborated on his position, arguing that he had criticized Crosby in order to warn him about the implications of his actions. Cherry contended that while Crosby could get away with such actions in the Quebec Junior League, it would not be tolerated in any other junior or professional league, and aired a clip of Detroit Red Wing Brendan Shanahan stating that he would be “looking to take the head off” a player who acted as



Crosby had in the Remparts game (Shanahan, cited in Joyce, 2005, p. 118). What Crosby did was not against the formal rules of hockey – had the goal been, it would have been called back, and if the celebration had been excessive, he would have received a minor penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct. What occurred, however, went against another set of rules that has long governed men’s participation in hockey: the so-called “code”<sup>23</sup>. For people like Cherry, to go against the code is a serious infraction, and accordingly, is worthy of much attention.

Adherence to, and continued belief in the reinforcement of the code, can be considered in terms of renewed interest in “traditional values”, as a heightened preoccupation with mythic and masculine heroism (McDonald, 2001).

Undoubtedly, much has changed in the sport of hockey – and indeed, in contemporary culture – since the inception of the professional game in the late nineteenth century. The game has spread, and individuals from varying backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures have taken the sport up, marking this too as a facet of their Canadian identity. The women’s game has also grown steadily, and Canada boasts over 69,000 women registered with Hockey Canada (Hockey Canada, 2008). Though organized hockey developed as a distinctly masculine subculture – and a realm of upper class, white men more specifically – this dominance has slowly come to be challenged. Whitson and Gruneau (1993)

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<sup>23</sup> Historically, this unwritten set of rules is considered to be sacred and to be adhered to above and beyond the more formal rules of play. O’Connor (2006) describes the code as “a near-holy covenant among players that should never, ever be broken” (p. S3). Largely, the code serves to represent a particular representation of idealized masculinity that individuals are expected to adhere to unquestioningly; it is the backbone of hegemonic masculinity as illustrated in hockey. The code condones particular actions and is not spoken of unless it is broken. When it is broken, the culprit is expected to be punished for their transgression, typically with violence.

contend that these changes are indicative and representative of changes occurring in contemporary culture:

The ultimate threat, the threat that produces a recalcitrance to change, is the perceived threat to the maleness of the game, and beyond this to the place of traditional masculinity in a changing economic, cultural, and gender order. (p. 192)

Accordingly, changes to the sport of hockey extend further than just the rink; challenges to rugged, old-time hockey reflect the process of change in culture as a whole, where men are viewed as losing power and dominance as women make gains. The same men who follow Coach's Corner and Don Cherry on a weekly basis are often the very men who are experiencing a challenge to their dominance and feel threatened by this.

The code, as evidenced through the sport of hockey, is also representative of old-time masculine values that are arguably losing relevancy within contemporary culture<sup>24</sup>. It is expected that young boys will learn the rules – the appropriate way to act – through their immersion in realms like the ranks of minor hockey, and that these traditional values will be upheld, because real men – as defined by individuals like Cherry – unquestioningly uphold the code.

Accordingly, for men like Cherry, it is necessary to give transgressions against the code significant attention in order to maintain masculinity as they know it and as they would like to keep it. In this sense, Crosby receives significant attention for his supposed code transgressions because of his popularity and the potential number of people whom his actions could affect if left unchecked, and also

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<sup>24</sup> CBC commentator and former NHL General Manager Mike Milbury recently raised concerns during several Hockey Night in Canada broadcasts about the so-called "Pansification" of hockey. On January 29<sup>th</sup> 2009, Egale Canada filed a complaint with the CBC regarding the comments.

because of his youth and the idea that he can still be moulded into an appropriately masculine man as defined by traditionalist values.

### Appearance

Hockey players have not traditionally been subject to scrutiny as it relates to appearance. Unlike competitors in sports such as basketball or soccer – where much of the body is exposed by one’s uniform – hockey equipment ensures maximal coverage of the entire body. This inability to view the body has resulted in difficulty both identifying and identifying *with* NHL players. Following the lockout – which only served to increase the fans’ sentiments of alienation – the NHL seems to have made identification a priority. Crosby himself has asserted that, “it’s good for hockey if you can get it out there in a different way” (*Globe and Mail*, 2005, p. R7). For the NHL, one of the new, different ways of promoting their on-ice product is by highlighting the appearance of its players off the ice. At the forefront of this movement is Sidney Crosby.

At the beginning of the 2005-2006 NHL season, Crosby was featured in both *Vanity Fair* and *GQ* magazines. In *Vanity Fair*, Crosby was featured wearing dark denim blue jeans, slung low on his hips, with the band of his underwear peeking out above a black leather belt. His torso is bare except for a faded denim shirt, which is slung over his shoulders, and Crosby grasps this just below his pecs. He stares straight ahead, his expression relatively stoic, but potentially aggressive. In *GQ*, Crosby is similarly shirtless, but is featured this

time in lower body hockey equipment and a pair of flip flops. Unlike the photograph taken for *Vanity Fair*, *GQ* highlights Crosby's musculature, and droplets of water bead on his shoulders and chest. His facial expression is almost neutral, but at the same time inviting and alluring. He sits, slightly reclined, one arm casually resting on the top of the bench, the other resting on a stick positioned between his legs. The articles that accompany both sets of photographs are quite similar; they provide the reader with basic background information about Crosby and the expectations that have been placed upon him to be the next great superstar in the NHL. The size and content of these articles (both are less than a page long) serves to illustrate that it is not only what is said about Crosby that is important; rather, his appearance is also meant to attract readership and attention from men and women.

With the image in *Vanity Fair*, it would seem that the goal is to get the magazine's primarily female readership to not only view Crosby as strong, but as attractive as well. The images in *GQ* – a magazine which caters to a male audience, and has historically been regarded as more of a New Man magazine, as opposed to the New Lad imagery and articles presented in other magazines like *Loaded* and *Maxim*<sup>25</sup> – also undoubtedly present Crosby in a manner that can be read as attractive. Reading these photographs as evidence of Crosby's appropriately masculine body, however, is a notion that is certainly complicated by his semi-nudity and his body positioning. In *GQ* in particular, one must question whether the manner in which Crosby's body is presented is one that is meant to elicit the desire to emulate him, or simply to desire him. Connell (2001)

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<sup>25</sup> *GQ* is also well known for having a rather substantial following amongst gay men.

has argued that masculinity is defined as not-femininity, as the feminine's polar opposite. According to this argument, masculine pursuits and feminine pursuits are considered separate entities – the masculine and the feminine are meant to be regarded in completely different fashions. As Edwards (2006) argues, however,

Masculinities now are not so much something possessed as an identity as something marketed, bought – and sold – in men's lifestyle magazines, style programmes like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and across the world of visual media culture more generally (p. 43).

In the photographs of *Vanity Fair* and *GQ*, Crosby's body is objectified and sexualised in much the same fashion as female bodies have historically been.

While Crosby's body as represented in these magazines is certainly unmistakably male, the reader is presented with the opportunity to scrutinize Crosby's body in the same fashion as the female body typically has been. It is not only Crosby, however, who is presented in such a fashion. Rather, it has become a growing trend within visual media culture more broadly, and in the marketing of professional sport more specifically, to highlight the musculature and appearance of celebrity athletes, and to transform their lives off the playing field into a similarly mediated event as their on field performances. While some may view Crosby's presence in magazines such as *GQ* and *Vanity Fair* as a departure from masculinity, it also reflects the increasing commodification of all aspects of everyday life. As Harris and Clayton (2007) suggest in their analysis of rugby player Gavin Henson and his so-called metrosexual behaviours, such athletes are a hybridity of style and consumerism and traditional masculine sporting values. That Crosby is presented in a manner such to appear fashionable, or even sexually attractive, does not occur at the expense of his masculinity, but rather separately

from it, or as an addition to it. While his body indeed receives greater focus than has historically been levied through traditional representations of hockey playing masculinity, Crosby's attractive (and still masculine) body can also simply be regarded as another commodity to be sold.

In August, 2007, Reebok further commodified its signature hockey player and officially released a Sidney Crosby clothing line called "RBK SC87". While Crosby had signed on with Reebok prior to his rookie season and had been utilized to market the company's on-ice equipment and off-ice apparel, this marked the launch of Crosby off-ice wear, as well as a signature training shoe<sup>26</sup>. While many NHL players have signature playing equipment – sticks, in particular – not many can lay claim to a clothing line being sold at major Canadian retailers. As the Canadian Press (2007) attests, "it's hard to imagine any other current hockey player being able to pull such a thing off, but Crosby has shown during two years in the NHL that he's far from any other hockey player"<sup>27</sup>. In a rather significant departure from traditional images of sweaty, gap-toothed hockey players, Crosby is now not only posing shirtless in magazines, but now he is also discussing and deciding what colours and cuts of clothing are fashionable and will make both him and his fans look good. It is important to examine how this

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<sup>26</sup> The line, which includes the typical range of t-shirts, sweatshirts, and hats found in most sporting goods stores, also features clothing designed especially for women, including a pink baby tee which reads "I (heart) Crosby".

<sup>27</sup> Ironically, Dallas Stars winger Sean Avery, known throughout the league for his agitating style of play, is better known off the ice for his love of fashion and for spending the 2008 off-season interning at *Vogue* magazine. Avery's summer at *Vogue* prompted New Line Cinema to commission a screenplay related to his "double-life" as a highly physical hockey player and fashionista. Avery has also confirmed that he is constantly asked about his sexuality because of his ties to the world of fashion.

meshes with traditional notions of players known for big shots and hits, and not the latest trends.

One element that is important to consider is that, while Crosby is the face of this new Reebok fashion line, he was not its creator. When Crosby explained his involvement in the clothing line, he stated:

We'd [Crosby and his family] go over designs. It was funny because I was getting these prints and designs sent to me at home. I'd be with my parents and we'd be discussing what's in style, what's out of style... It was the last thing I'd imagine myself doing. But we had fun with it, talking about colours. (Crosby, cited in DiManno, 2007)

Realistically, Crosby's involvement with the Reebok fashion line was most likely akin to his involvement in his commercials; it is important for the parent company to ensure that he and his camp are happy with what is being produced, but he is certainly not orchestrating the entire process. Expressing a preference for a black t-shirt over a blue one, or for one logo over another option are not the same as designing those same clothing pieces and elements. In this sense, Crosby's involvement in his fashion line is not really a true departure from what it means to be a hockey player; he is selling training shoes and t-shirts, not leather pants and fishnet shirts. It does not reflect a potentially un-masculine love of fashion, but rather an appreciation of business.

Reebok's SC87 clothing line is truly not that surprising a development when one considers the ever increasing commodification of contemporary culture. Recreational players young and old have long sought to purchase the same equipment as their professional counterparts. Recently, the growing trend with hockey in Canada has been to commodify off-ice training as well. In 2005, Nike

introduced the Nike Hockey Training Program, which offered drills, tips, and suggestions for players seeking to improve their on ice performance through off ice training. This program has only continued to grow, and Nike has created an entire line of off-ice products and apparel for players to utilize, and a series of print and televised advertisements featuring NHL players and the Canadian World Junior hockey program. Nike's work in this area has evidenced a highly lucrative and previously untapped market, and given this, it is not surprising that Reebok would want to follow suit. The Crosby product line offers Reebok the opportunity to capture the off-ice training market, but also to take things one step further; players are offered the opportunity to train like Crosby, and wear what he wears while he trains, and are also able to wear what he wears when he is done training. Crosby's clothing line does not reflect a desire on Crosby's part to be more involved in the world of fashion; it offers Reebok the opportunity to attach his name to another set of products. The commodification of Crosby – and masculinity in general – as something to be bought and sold, and utilized to increase the consumerism of Canadians, men, and hockey fans alike, is not only reflected in analyzing content featuring Crosby, but in the very manner in which such campaigns are produced and the manner in which he is framed such to hail to a particular image of the desired consumer.

### **Producing Crosby/Producing Masculinity**

The representation, interpretation and contextualization of Crosby's masculinity are also interesting from a production standpoint. The manner in which masculinity is conceptualized by the individuals responsible for producing



advertising campaigns featuring Crosby serves to evidence the manner in which cultural intermediaries – with the ability to influence the perceptions of the general public – view masculinity, whether these perceptions have changed over time, and the type of masculinity they feel Crosby embodies and how this is useful for selling products. Further, their responses also provide insight into the manners in which the cultural intermediaries acknowledge potential differences between representations of masculinity through Crosby and more historically prototypical sporting icons – and more specifically, hockey-playing icons – and how they rationalize these differences and how they impact upon Crosby, and potentially, the companies that he represents. It is also important to consider who, exactly, these cultural intermediaries are: both Gatorade’s marketing manager and Downtown Partners’ creative director are white Canadian men who are both knowledgeable about hockey, and about Crosby. Because of this, both have their own set of taken-for-granted cultural understandings about hockey and its connections to Canadian identity and culture. As Nixon (1997) asserts, it is important to consider the kinds of gender, racial, and cultural identities that are sanctioned within the creative industry. Subsequently, it is also imperative to assess how these sanctioned scripts then filter down into the produced product. As MacNeill (1996) asserted in her study of the production of ice hockey at the 1988 Olympics, choices with regards to what to show, when, and how to present this material was largely done based upon convention, and that crew members had been socialized to continue presenting the game in a traditional manner. This is also reflected in the traditional notions of masculinity evidenced in both

Gatorade's marketing manager and Downtown Partners' creative director's comments regarding Crosby and the manner in which they have chosen to represent him in advertising campaigns.

When asked about Crosby and his Reebok fashion line, Downtown Partners' creative director asserted that inserting Crosby into such new and previously uncharted waters reflects the business aspects of his career:

When you start doing all those other things, at that point it's a business thing too. Like these guys aren't stupid, right? They're starting to market him in all these other areas and, let's face it, at the end of the day this is what they have to be very careful with because with his fame and his stardom there's so many opportunities that are lucrative. They're not stupid either, and it's a fine line at this point – just how much do you want to milk this guy. So when you start doing things like the *Vanity Fair* and all that other stuff, with that is going to come a lot of criticism – both positive and negative. And I think that's what he's encountering.

These comments evidence several things. First, is the acknowledgement that the decision to pose in magazines or attach his name to a fashion line does not necessarily reflect Crosby's interest in such pursuits; rather, it is an opportunity to utilize such promotions to increase consumer recognition of Crosby, in turn increasing his value as a product endorser, celebrity icon, and brand. The creative director's assertions also bring to light the potential repercussions of expanding Crosby's media exposure and product endorsement – namely that the public, and in particular, traditional hockey fans, may react either positively or negatively to what they see. By expanding the number of products that Crosby endorses, or the avenues through which Crosby is presented to the public, the risk certainly exists to have consumers grow tired of him, or to view him as nothing more than a corporate shell. Crosby himself acknowledged that his RBK clothing line was a

departure from what is typically expected from a hockey player and that there was indeed potential risk involved with attaching his name to a variety of different products:

It was something I was comfortable with and more than happy to partner up with them and do," explained Crosby. "It doesn't mean I'm going to go and do everything there is else out there to do. This is just something that's a pretty easy fit. (Crosby, cited in Canadian Press, 2007)

Accordingly, while a fashion line is not "traditional" hockey player fare, Crosby and his handlers feel that the products available mesh well with his on ice persona and reflect his life and style as a hockey player quite well. As previously asserted, the primary objective is to increase Crosby's marketability and product sales above anything else. This reflects the increasing integration of sport into commodity culture, and, as Whitson (1998) argues, the refashioning of the kinds of identifications that fans are encouraged to make with teams and players. The more exposure that fans and consumers are given to Crosby, the more familiar they become with him and ideally, the greater the amount of interest that is built for him. Whereas previously fans may have only seen their favorite sports stars during games and mentioned in media recaps, celebrity athletes have been more greatly immersed into consumer culture and continue to enter more and more avenues of the promotional circuit.

One of the observations made by Gatorade's marketing manager was that the post-lockout NHL seems to be undergoing a youth movement of sorts and that this has brought about some changes in terms of the manner in which the league is perceived/represented.

If you look at some of the other players in the league – I don't know, Ovechkin? He's sort of boyish and loves the game in a similar but different way than Sidney does...a little bit more, even...if you consider that Sidney's passionate, Ovechkin may be even more passionate, but he's also more flair. It's just a youth movement in the league going on right now...I don't know that it's more masculine, it's just a lot of really good young players...so it might just be a shift in age there, rather than a shift in being less masculine.

Again, what is highlighted is not that the NHL is becoming more or less masculine, but rather that the league is becoming younger<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, what is interesting is that the increased attention received by younger NHL players is utilized as a rationalization for any potential shifts in the perception of masculinity. Gatorade's marketing manager went on to explain how younger players are regarded when compared to their older counterparts:

I think that players as individuals are judged on their own merits, but younger players tend not to be as "Neanderthal masculine", if you will, as some of the players in their early and mid-thirties tend to be. I guess if I was to draw a comparison, it would be Bertuzzi. Now, before the hit, he was seen as very physical, tough but extremely talented, but definitely on the masculine and more, you know, Neanderthalish, if you will, type of player. And now, yeah, Sidney is obviously a lot more...a lot different. He's younger. And doesn't, you know, communicate those things.

Gatorade's marketing manager is very careful to ensure he does not argue that Crosby and young players like him are less masculine than the players that have come before him. Instead, he classifies them as "different" and associates these differences with the shifting age of superstar players in the NHL. This would

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<sup>28</sup> One example of this NHL "youth movement" is with the captaincy of NHL teams. Arguably, this example begins with Crosby who, despite criticism from pundits like Cherry, was given the captaincy of the Pittsburgh Penguins on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007 at 19 years, 9 months, making him the youngest captain ever in the NHL. During the 2007-2008 season, following the trading of former captain, 36-year old Adam Foote, 23-year old Rick Nash took over the vacated post. Over the course of the 2008 off-season, 23-year old Mike Richards and 20-year old Jonathan Toews were bestowed with the captaincies of the Philadelphia Flyers and the Chicago Blackhawks respectively. Young players are consistently taking on larger, more prominent roles with their teams.

seem to reflect the reality that masculinity, as a performance, is something that men – and in this case, hockey playing men – learn to perform appropriately over time and with training. In this sense, it is not that players such as Crosby are less masculine, but rather that they are still learning what it means to be appropriately masculine within the NHL. Further, as Gatorade’s marketing manager alludes to, greater attention is being placed on current young NHL players than there has been in the past. Accordingly, the media and NHL fans are more privy to this masculine educational process than they have been previously. Instead of being able to play a more background, secondary role to older, more established superstar players, the NHL’s youth are now being thrust into the spotlight at a younger age. This is not to say that they cannot grow into the very same roles that those older players have performed; rather, consumers are simply more privy to the process of transition from young to established NHL player.

The youthful masculinity demonstrated by up-and-coming NHL players may also prove to be advantageous to the NHL from a marketing perspective. As Gatorade’s marketing manager asserts, while more rugged NHL players have traditionally resonated well with Canadian audiences, this type of player does not necessarily perform well with audiences across all markets:

Canadians, when it comes to how they view hockey players, they view hockey players clearly as strong male figures, definitely intense, but at the same time also easily able to connect with, generally nice guys. A lot of Americans view hockey players as Neanderthals. [laughs] There’s a negative connotation that goes with hockey players for Americans that don’t understand the game. Sidney, in fact, works a little stronger for the American audience than he does in the Canadian audience because he’s a tough hockey player, but he’s definitely not a goon. He’s not an over-the-top masculine icon, although clearly he’s had a lot of coverage in magazines like *GQ* and other style magazines, but I don’t think anyone

looks at Sidney as, you know, being chiselled out of the side of a mountain type of Clint Eastwood masculinity. He's still young. I think he carries that to his advantage today. I think as he gets a little bit older and even fills out more, he might start pushing the more masculine end of things, I guess, as a player, but right now I don't think he pushes that.

As previously asserted, one of the NHL's major goals is increased market share within the US. Accordingly, the league is willing to make many changes in order to appeal to this demographic. As Gatorade's marketing manager suggests, one such change may be in the manner in which players are represented. Given that hockey is, at best, a regionalized sport within the US, it can certainly be argued that in a majority of markets, the individuals the league targets to become fans do not have baseline knowledge about hockey. As a game that can be difficult for beginners to follow, the personalities of the individual players become increasingly important for reaching out to fans. An approachable, more affable player has greater potential to resonate with new fans, and for a league trying to increase market share, this is essential. Again, so-called changes witnessed with regards to the performance of masculinity as illustrated through Crosby (and other youthful NHL players) may reflect commercial and consumerist needs, rather than shifts in normative masculine performance. If it is the impression of cultural intermediaries that, to sell hockey in the US market, they need to focus less on the game itself and more on the particular players who play it – and the attractive qualities they display – then this will influence the type of advertising product that is produced. It is also important to note that Crosby, and many other youthful, Canadian players, are used to sell the game not only within Canada, but in the US as well. This reflects, as Giardina (2001) contends in his discussion of tennis

player Martina Hingis, fluidity and mobility on the part of celebrity athletes in acting as “flexible citizens” (p. 207). That is to say, while Crosby is Canadian, this is not necessarily the sole defining aspect of his identity. Instead, specific personality characteristics are emphasized or de-emphasized depending upon the target audience and perceptions about the identity markers that resonate best with them.

What is particularly interesting about the use of Crosby’s youth as rationalization for his behaviours is the commonly held belief that as he gets older, he will inevitably display more traditional masculine traits. When asked about Crosby’s masculinity and his ability to act as a masculine icon, Downtown Partners’ creative director linked Crosby’s youth to physical immaturity and that this would inevitably change as he got older:

But I think, in terms of his masculinity, he’s not a really big guy compared to some of the other guys and I think he stood up really well. And he’s only going to get better. Because he’s younger and the more he gets older and the more he’s going to get mature, he’s going to get tougher.

Gatorade’s marketing manager similarly asserted that when Crosby fills out more physically, he might start pushing the more “masculine” end of things. Both individuals argue that the kind of masculinity presented by Crosby is directly related to his age, and that as a younger player he is not necessarily required or expected to present his masculinity in the same fashion as older, more established players. As Gatorade’s marketing manager attests, Crosby “filling out” may contribute to changing his masculine presence. In many ways, this is rather ironic, given that Crosby is already praised for his physical conditioning and the time and effort he devotes to his workouts, and that many pundits already laud

him for his tree trunk legs and stocky lower body. When Crosby graced the cover of *Men's Fitness* magazine in 2008, dressed in lower body hockey equipment, hockey gloves, and a tight-fitting technical t-shirt, his upper body musculature, including well defined pectorals and abdominals were what was highlighted. In this sense, Crosby is already a rather imposing physical specimen, yet his youthful smile, his demeanour, and his general approachability are such that he still remains a rather unimposing figure. It is also particularly interesting that Gatorade's marketing manager believes that as Crosby ages and gains maturity, he will get tougher. First, there is the question of what, exactly, becoming "tougher" means – will Crosby make more bodychecks, or get in more fights? Or does this assertion simply reflect a belief that with age, Crosby will begin assuming a more rugged, prototypical hockey-playing masculinity? If this is the case, it bears considering what reactions it will elicit if, even as Crosby ages, he remains the same affable player.

One of the biggest differences between a player like Crosby and other celebrity athletes considered to push the boundaries of traditional athletic masculinity is that, unlike players like David Beckham or Gavin Henson, the media attention that has been given to issues such as Crosby's appearance has not been written in such a fashion to deem it as transgressive. For example, in Shawna Richer's book, *The Kid*, there is a photograph of Crosby on the ice, hunched over as if waiting for a face-off. He is exhaling from his mouth in such a fashion that his lips are, essentially, puckered. The caption underneath the photo reads "these bee stung lips make the girls crazy from Halifax to Hershey". It is



written as it is nothing more than a statement of fact. *Toronto Star* reporter Rosie DiManno (2006) similarly reported on Crosby's appearance – particularly his selection of well-tailored suits – throughout his rookie season. Even when Crosby's fashion line was introduced, he did not receive flak for this from the media. For Crosby, his appearance, fashion sense, or connections to the clothing industry have never resulted in ire or negative feedback from the mainstream media. This can be contrasted with other athletes, such as rugby player Gavin Henson, whom Harris and Clayton (2007) have argued has received negative media attention for the attention he pays to his clothing and appearance whenever his performances on the pitch are less than excellent or his team is not winning. When Henson struggles, his masculinity is called into question. In contrast, Downtown Partners' creative director asserted that criticism levied against Crosby is based on hockey and hockey alone.

When he takes criticism, it's based on hockey. So a lot of people, I don't think, equate it to the product even though he represents the product. And at that point it's really constructive criticism by Cherry based on the sport itself. But if you think about it, what you have to be careful with any sports personality is if it goes beyond hockey criticism...it's really speculative on a client's part no matter which celebrity you have and that's why their guys are very, very careful when they do their homework to make sure because...it's one thing to have sports criticism, who cares about that? But it's another thing if it goes beyond and that's why you have to be very careful with any kind of personality.

Even though Crosby is regarded as well dressed and physically attractive and even has his own fashion line, he does not receive the type of criticism that Henson, or soccer star David Beckham do. Unlike the case of players like Henson and Beckham, where the media highlight and often question the manners in which their masculine performance differs from the norm, in Crosby's case, the

media downplay and rationalize the manners in which he could be viewed as challenging traditional masculinity. Instead, the so-called differences Crosby displays are attributed to his youth or are deemed to reflect contemporary marketing strategies and selling hockey in the post-lockout NHL.

In this chapter I have examined the manner in which Crosby is represented in the media and how this relates to masculinity. Unlike a celebrity athlete like David Beckham or Gavin Henson, who are well known for their love of fashion, dedication to their personal appearance and celebrity relationships in addition to their high level of performance on the playing field, the supposed challenges that Crosby makes to a more traditional hegemonic masculinity as illustrated through professional hockey are not as overstated. He is not a fashionista, or overly concerned with his physical appearance. To date, there have been no rumours of relationships between him and any women, celebrity or otherwise. What Crosby is, is a young, affable, and incredibly talented professional hockey player. Beyond this, what is unique about Crosby is that the masculinity he presents is not radically different from that which has been traditionally valued in Canadian hockey.

The manners in which Crosby can be seen to transgress against this traditional typology can be associated with his youth, or more commonly, with the growing commodification of professional sport and the athletes who play it. NHL hockey is a business, and Crosby is further associated with many major corporations, including Gatorade and Reebok. Selling the game, and selling Crosby requires that certain concessions be made and Crosby is represented

accordingly in order to cater to the widest possible demographic and to create the largest possible appeal. Crosby is not a post New Lad man (Whannel, 2001), as David Beckham is described, or as Harris and Clayton (2007) assert that Gavin Henson is. Representations of Crosby similarly do not embody New Laddism, or even a return to New Man ideals. What is most reflected through representations of Crosby is, as Connell (1995; 2005) asserts, that there are multiple masculinities, and that men's identities are constantly changing over time and context. The primary change that Crosby reflects is that, in contemporary culture, masculinity is no longer solely about behaviours, but about commodification and consumerism as well.

## Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks

The importance of studying cultural products within the field of cultural studies has been well documented. More specifically, the study of cultural products which have great relevance within a particular social realm offers the opportunity to examine the manner in which discursive identities are produced, reified, and reinforced. Within the field of advertising, it is of particular importance to examine the work of cultural intermediaries, and how they interpret the social world and articulate this within the cultural products that they produce.

In this thesis, I have examined the manner in which Sidney Crosby is produced and represented in contemporary advertising campaigns. Academic research in this area has typically relied on textual analyses and critical readings. While this thesis employs such methods, I have also performed interviews with cultural intermediaries responsible for the production of Sidney Crosby. This has served to offer an additional perspective on the political-economic and socio-cultural contexts within which advertising featuring Crosby is located, the contexts and cultures of production for television commercials featuring Crosby, and the manner in which dominant representations of sexuality, and in particular, gender and national identity are articulated within mediated representations of Crosby. Through explorations of Crosby's mediation, the importance of sport and sporting celebrities in contemporary culture becomes increasingly evident, as does the growing commercialization of elements of everyday life.

The case study of Gatorade's use of Crosby in four recent marketing campaigns evidences the continuously evolving nature of product advertising.

Advertising is not simply about informing potential consumers about products; as an increasing number of similar goods have come to be offered to the public, advertising and marketing have become essential in separating one's items from the crowd. More specifically, this has resulted in companies associating their product with particular ideals, values, emotions, and desires, promoting the idea that purchasing a given product will affect the consumer in a desirable fashion. What is evidenced in the association of Crosby with Gatorade is an extension of this idea; as celebrities and celebrity athletes have continued to gain prominence within contemporary culture, a greater level of attention has subsequently been placed upon them. In this sense, Gatorade sells more than just the notion that their product will make athletes perform better. They are also selling an association with Crosby – one that is attractive not only because he is a highly successful NHL player, but because he is attractive, well spoken, polite, and, according to Gatorade, these represent highly desirable characteristics within the Canadian marketplace.

I have also examined Crosby and where he fits in terms of ongoing debates regarding sporting masculinities and hegemonic masculinity more broadly within contemporary society. Crosby has received significant media coverage, and much of this has referred to the manners in which he is different from more traditional Canadian hockey stars – he has his own fashion line, he is rather well dressed, and is known for a competitive, though not overly aggressive and violent playing style. Fan reaction to Crosby is rather divided: while he is loved by

many, he is also frequently derided as a diver<sup>29</sup> and a crybaby, and emasculated in fan critiques. Because of such similarities, Crosby has been considered a metrosexual athlete and compared to its hallmark, David Beckham. Crosby's situation, however, differs greatly from Beckham's. While Crosby has his own fashion line and arrives at the rink well dressed, he is not a fashionista like Beckham, or even NHL contemporary Sean Avery. His style is better described as New Man/New Lad, where men have adopted the consumerist fashion needs typically associated with women, while maintaining connections to other masculine endeavors. Indeed, what is unique about Crosby is that he is commonly misrepresented as a metrosexual athlete when in fact the masculinity he presents is not radically different from what has traditionally been valued in Canadian hockey. Indeed, the so-called transgressions Crosby makes with regards to traditional masculinity can be associated with the continuing commodification of professional sport, and concessions made to appeal to the widest possible fan base. In this sense, Crosby's masculine identity reflects the idea that masculinities are not static, but rather change over time and context. The Crosby that is presented by the NHL, his sponsors, and the mass media is the Crosby these outlets best feel will promote the messages they are aiming to spread.

While there have been many studies that have explored individual celebrity athletes, very little has been done from a Canadian context. This thesis represents one of a very limited pool of studies that examine Canadian sporting

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<sup>29</sup> Players who over-act when other players touch them in an attempt to draw penalties are commonly referred to as divers.

celebrities, and more specifically, the manner in which a Canadian athlete playing Canada's national sport of hockey is represented in the media and utilized within advertising campaigns. As evidenced within Gatorade's marketing campaigns featuring Crosby, while scholars such as Whitson and Gruneau (2006) argue that the importance of hockey within Canadian culture may be in decline, imagery of hockey and the game's stars remain significant for cultural intermediaries. Sport is of particular importance in advertising; sporting events are seen as attracting a very specific and important target market, and sporting celebrities and imagery are thought to resonate in commercials with this same audience. Cultural intermediaries continue to envision hockey, and athletes like Crosby, as excellent vehicles in their quest to resonate with audiences in the product marketing process.

Through this examination of Sidney Crosby, differences in the perception of national identity and masculinity are also evidenced. The responses from the cultural intermediaries interviewed demonstrate that Canadians are envisioned in a particular fashion, and that it is believed that there is a particular type of national and masculine identity that speaks to these consumers. Crosby is envisioned as an ideal endorser in the Canadian marketplace because he is polite, affable, and non-threatening, in addition to being an excellent hockey player. With regards to his masculinity, while in some manners it would seem to contradict traditional, hegemonic notions of Canadian hockey-playing masculinity, these potential transgressions are explained away within the media. As a young man, Crosby is said to be growing into his masculinity, and learning from those players who have

come before him how to best do this. While there is hesitance to assert that Crosby, in the present, is not masculine, cultural intermediaries are quick to assert that there is no doubt that Crosby, as he ages, will fulfill these traditional expectations. Beyond this, many incidents that would seem to indicate challenges to hegemonic masculinity – such as Crosby’s RBK fashion line and his involvement with it – demonstrate the increased commercialization of masculinity and its advancement into consumerist realms, and not a specific challenge solely on the part of Crosby.

It is not just the commodification of masculinity that is evidenced through an examination of Crosby, but the overall increasing commodification and commercialization of elements of contemporary culture and everyday life. In the continuous quest to secure increasing levels of consumption for company products, new spaces must be colonized to encourage consumers to buy (Goldman & Papson, 1996). Crosby’s name has been attached not only to different companies – Gatorade, Reebok, Tim Horton’s, and more – but to an increasing number of products under the umbrella of those company names. Consumers can drink “Sidney Crosby 87” Gatorade, use a Sidney Crosby signature hockey stick, wear Sidney Crosby training shoes, and wear Crosby’s name on their t-shirts and sweatpants. As Goldman and Papson (1996) assert, advertising asks individuals to choose and construct their individual identities from the products they consume. Further, the signs associated with those products have become increasingly important to this process, as it has become more difficult to differentiate products by more tangible factors such as their functionality and



price. Celebrity endorsers such as Crosby are essential to this process of signification, and accordingly, have had their names and personas attached to a growing number of products and spaces. Given this increased proliferation of Crosby as a product advertising sign, however, the risks of oversaturation must be considered. While it has not yet occurred with regards to Crosby and is thus beyond the scope of this thesis, it must be considered that, in the future, the potency of Crosby as a product endorser may become limited due to the magnitude of exposure he has received to date.

The increased media attention given to Crosby – not only in advertising, but throughout the media in its many forms, including television, print, and on the Internet – also reflects the growing “celebrityfication” of contemporary culture. Certainly, there have been celebrity athletes before Crosby – for example, Michael Jordan in basketball and Wayne Gretzky in hockey – but iconic athletes of this era have significantly more attention and scrutiny directed at them. Arguably, there is not a night that goes by where Crosby is not mentioned on sports highlight shows. His every move is followed and analyzed on a variety of professionally and fan-based websites. And Crosby is not alone. Athletes such as David Beckham, Gavin Henson, and Dan Carter all also endorse multiple products and are constantly in the public eye. Whereas in the past athletes were idolized and admired, the attention they receive has risen such that it now emulates the manner in which celebrity actors and actresses are treated by the media.

## **Future Recommendations**

While this thesis has tried to expand on the work done by other scholars in cultural studies of sport by incorporating interviews with cultural intermediaries in addition to textual analyses, there are other methods that would serve to provide additional insight into these issues. In particular, audience studies would add tremendously in terms of answering questions pertaining to how the messages advertisers are attempting to send to consumers are being received. As argued within this thesis, textual analyses do not take into account the conditions of production for advertisements and their role in shaping the final product. Similarly, while studying advertising-as-text in conjunction with elements of production provides a broader picture, what continues to go unconsidered are the reactions of the consumer. Audience studies would afford the opportunity to uncover whether the manner in which producers represent their products and the imagery and ideals they aim to associate with those goods actually resonate with consumers. In textual analyses and production studies, the consumer essentially becomes a passive receptacle, whereas in truth, they have the ability to reject or transform the images and signs presented to them. Analyzing this aspect of advertising would present an opportunity to more fully explore the circuit of production, and incorporate lived culture in a more thorough and significant fashion.

With regards to Crosby specifically, there are many questions that could be asked of fans and consumers to better understand the manner in which they interpret marketing campaigns and the NHL's strategies. Crosby has been touted

by both the NHL and endorsers as the face of the NHL, and accordingly, it is quite pertinent to ask fans about their reaction to Sidney Crosby. Do they indeed view him as someone they respect and admire? Are there other NHL stars they feel are more deserving of the attention Crosby receives? Do they reject Crosby as the so-called saviour of the NHL? Further, given that the goal of the NHL and companies like Gatorade is to utilize Crosby in a manner such that his image encourages consumers to purchase their product, it is fair to ask whether this actually occurs. Does seeing Crosby touting the advantages of Reebok skates or Gatorade sports drinks make one any more likely to want to purchase such products? Is there a manner in which fans would like to see Crosby presented to them that differs from what they are currently provided with?

It would also prove very interesting to inquire what fans would like to see, and whether this differs from what is given to them. In particular, one could ask who fans think is the face of the NHL, and why. This has become a very interesting question given the increasing popularity of other young players, and in particular, Alexander Ovechkin. The Russian superstar, who bested Crosby for the Calder trophy in 2006, has since won two consecutive Rocket Richard trophies as the league's leading scorer, and is nominated for his second consecutive Hart trophy as the NHL's most valuable player. Beyond these successes, Ovechkin has also captured the imaginations of fans young and old with his passion for the game and the boisterous manner in which he celebrates his goals and his team's victories. MacGregor (2009) contends that Ovechkin is a far more alluring player to kids – both Canadian and worldwide – because of the

absolute joy he demonstrates each time he plays, that he is “Captain Underpants to Crosby's Curious George, somehow more modern, more mischievous, more alluring to them”. Of course, one must also consider the expectations placed on the two players; there have been circumstances where Crosby has indeed demonstrated his childish love for the game – such as his behind-the-net lacrosse-style goal when he still played junior - and has been lambasted for it.

Accordingly, while it would be prudent to ask who NHL fans see as the face of the league and why, it would also be interesting to further examine whether there are particular expectations for comportment placed upon players of different nationalities. If Ovechkin's behaviours were instead portrayed by Crosby, would this be accepted and celebrated, or would they be regarded as un-Canadian and disrespectful?

Beyond the characteristics that NHL fans look for in their ideal ambassadors of the game, one could also ask what ideal characteristics consumers look for when choosing between products and whether or not these differ from the characteristics that cultural intermediaries have selected as resonating with the general public. While advertising agencies and corporations undertake focus groups and other audience studies in order to gauge the potential for success of particular ideas, the opinions of audience members are constrained by what consumers are shown within such focus groups.

Overall, it is important to proceed with this additional dimension to studies of advertising and sport in contemporary culture. Cultural intermediaries are constantly trying to ensure that they understand and hail their target audiences,

and understanding how consumers interpret the products and celebrity athletes like Crosby who are presented to them would provide an added dimension to scholarly research in this changing climate of sport and promotion.

## Appendix A: Interview Information

### Email Soliciting Interviewees:

Dear (Individual),

My name is Darron Bunt and I am a Master's student in the department of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. I am currently writing my Master's thesis, which explores issues surrounding the production of contemporary advertising campaigns featuring Sidney Crosby. In particular, I wish to gain a better understanding of how Crosby is utilized as a promotional icon. In so doing, I would also like to learn more about the process of production as it relates to these advertising campaigns, such as the goals that drive their production, how decisions are made, and who the ideal consumer/target audience(s) of the advertisements are. Overall, with this project I'm aiming to better understand advertising campaigns in a Canadian context, and how and why Sidney Crosby has become a significant component of this landscape.

Could you put me in contact with those who would be able to discuss the production and promotion of Gatorade's advertising campaigns featuring Crosby? Any assistance you could provide would be much appreciated.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by phone at (780) 492-0549, or by email at [bunt@ualberta.ca](mailto:bunt@ualberta.ca). My supervisor, Dr. Jay Scherer, can also be contacted by phone at (780) 492-9146 or by email at [jay.scherer@ualberta.ca](mailto:jay.scherer@ualberta.ca).

Thank you for your time,

Darron Bunt

**Information Letter:**

**Title of Project:** Selling “The Next One”: Corporate Nationalism and the Production of Sidney Crosby

**Principal Investigator:** Darron Bunt, MA Student, University of Alberta, (780) 492-0549

Dear Participant,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master’s thesis in the Department of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta under the supervision of Dr. Jay Scherer. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

This study will focus on issues surrounding the production of contemporary advertising campaigns featuring Sidney Crosby. In particular, I wish to gain a better understanding of how Crosby is utilized as a promotional icon. In so doing, I would also like to learn more about the process of production as it relates to these advertising campaigns, such as the goals that drive their production, how decisions are made, and who the ideal consumer/target audience(s) of the advertisements are. Overall, with this project I hope to gain a better understanding of the intricacies and representational strategies of advertising campaigns in a Canadian context, and how and why Sidney Crosby has become a significant component of this landscape.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place over the telephone at a mutually agreed upon time. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. If you decline to continue or you wish to withdraw from the study, please indicate to the researcher either verbally or in writing your intention to withdraw. Your information will be removed from the study upon your request. The interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. All information you provide is considered confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however because in many cases it is possible for informed persons to deduce the identity of participants from their job titles and positions, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The information garnered from the interview will be used for academic purposes only – as a thesis project, and potentially for publication in academic journals. To ensure confidentiality, personal information will be coded and stored in a locked cabinet in Dr. Scherer’s office at the University of Alberta to which only the investigators have access. Information is normally kept for a period of five years post-publication, after which it will be destroyed. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. Participation in this study will benefit the sport

sociology community in building on limited knowledge of the work practices and labour routines of cultural intermediaries as they relate to the production of sport and sport-based advertising.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by phone at (780) 492-0549, or by email at [bunt@ualberta.ca](mailto:bunt@ualberta.ca). My supervisor, Dr. Jay Scherer, can also be contacted by phone at (780) 492-9146 or by email at [jay.scherer@ualberta.ca](mailto:jay.scherer@ualberta.ca). If you have any concerns about this study, you may contact Dr. Wendy Rodgers, Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Board at (780) 492-5910. Dr. Rodgers has no direct involvement in this project.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Principal Investigator

Supervisor

Darron Bunt

Jay Scherer



**Informed Consent Form:**

**Part 1 (to be completed by the Principal Investigator)**

**Title of Project:** Selling “The Next One”: Corporate Nationalism and the Production of Sidney Crosby

**Principal Investigator:** Darron Bunt, MA Student, University of Alberta, (780) 492-0549

**Supervisor:** Dr. Jay Scherer, University of Alberta, (780) 492-9146

**Part 2 (to be completed by the research participant)**

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study? Yes No

Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet Yes No

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study? Yes No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes No

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your information will be withdrawn at your request? Yes No

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information? Yes No

This study was explained to me by:  
I agree to take part in this study: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

## **Interview Guide: Downtown Partners' Creative Director**

### **1. INTRODUCTORY**

- How did you come to be involved in the advertising industry?
- Tell me a bit about your role at Downtown Partners/as a Creative Director
- How did you come to be involved with these ads?

### **2. CROSBY**

- Why do you think Crosby is viewed as such an important marketing commodity?
  - What is unique about him?
  - Why Crosby and not other hockey stars?

### **3. GENERAL**

- Do you think that signing and marketing Crosby has had a discernable impact on Gatorade that could otherwise not have been achieved?
  - How?
- What do you think makes Sidney Crosby a marketable commodity for Gatorade?
  - What attributes of his do you feel “mesh” with the ideals associated with the brand?
  - How do you interpret some of the criticism (like that of Don Cherry) Crosby has received?
  - What about Crosby as a masculine icon? Do you think he’s different than the stereotypical hockey player? Does this change anything from a marketing perspective?
    - Do you think there’s been a shift in the type of masculinity that’s marketed?
- Do you consider hockey to be a significant facet of Canadian national identity?
  - How does that factor into Gatorade’s use of Crosby in promotional materials?
  - How does this factor into the decision to utilize Crosby as an endorser?
    - Is Crosby utilized differently outside of Canada than he is within?
- What do you think makes sport an attractive theme in advertising?
  - What about hockey, specifically?
- Are there any unique features about Canada and the Canadian marketplace with respect to advertising?
- Where did you make the ads/where were they filmed?
  - Were the individuals involved in their creation Canadian?
    - Do you need Canadians to make a “Canadian” commercial?

#### 4. THE ADS

- What was the role that you played in the development and/or production of Gatorade's ads featuring Crosby?
  - Can you explain to me the process of development and production?
  - Is it the same basic principle for each ad in terms of the stages of development, or does it change?
  - Who was involved in this process?
  - How were decisions made?
    - Negotiations between Gatorade, ad agency, Crosby?
- Can you explain to me the process of creating a commercial in terms of
  - Coming up with ideas
  - Approval process
  - Number of people
  - Type of hours worked
  - Who works on the commercials at what stages
  - Timeline between idea generating stage and production/circulation
- Were the ads conceptualized individually, or was it planned right from the beginning to have a series of ads featuring Crosby?
  - Were there other ideas for the Gatorade/Crosby line of commercials?
  - What affected the decision to utilize the ideas that eventually became the commercials?
- What was the approval process like?
  - Did Gatorade ok the ads first, or Crosby? Or were both involved equally at all stages?
- How involved was Crosby/his handlers in the development of the commercials?

#### STICKS

- What did Gatorade hope to achieve with the initial ad (Sticks) released?
- Who was the target market for Sticks?
  - How do you envision this target market?
  - What do you know about this audience?
- What are the main themes in this commercial?
  - How were these themes selected/developed?
    - Why?
  - Were there other themes considered for this ad?
    - What influenced the decision not to use them?
- Was there any resistance when making this ad?

- Who?
- How did it play out?
- How did Gatorade influence the production of this commercial?
- Why does it really so heavily on nationalism as a theme?
- Where was this commercial shot?
- There seem to be multiple levels to this commercial – it is easy to follow right from the get go, but each time you watch it, you seem to pick up on something new. Is this an intentional strategy?
  - What do you feel is gained in utilizing such a strategy?
  - Are there some images that have no deeper meaning? (ex. Peterborough Petes jerseys, bus with “86” on it, K3EPTOK/11)

### WHAT’S INSIDE?

- This seems like a huge change from Sticks – it’s a very “postmodern” type of commercial. Why/how did this happen?
  - Is there a risk in using such a different ad strategy?
  - Could the message you’re trying to get across be lost/misinterpreted?
- Did the goals change at all with What’s Inside?
- Who was the target market?
  - How do you envision this target market?
  - What do you know about this audience?
- What are the main themes in this commercial?
  - Why were these themes selected/developed?
  - Were there other themes considered for this ad?
  - What influenced the decision not to use them?
- How did Gatorade influence the production of this commercial?
- Was it difficult to convince Crosby’s camp to do such a crazy commercial? Did you have to really sell the idea or were they on board right away?
  - Was there any resistance to this commercial by anyone else?
    - How did it play out?
- 5. If there were multiple levels to Sticks, there are even more to What’s Inside. Again, are there some images that have no deeper meaning?
  - There seem to be several versions of What’s Inside (“we’re going for a breakaway” vs. “let’s move”) – are there different goals for the different versions?
  - In, for example, naming the player Crosby is facing off against “Still”, are you hoping people will link it to Eric Staal?
  - In Sticks, while the RBK logo on Crosby’s helmet is visible, it is not a focal point (while the Sher-Wood on his stick is). In What’s Inside, however, the logos on his gloves and helmet are clearly visible. What kind of negotiations and motivations are there for this?
    - Is it cross-promotion?

## NARRATOR

- This commercial seems to be a departure from the first two ads. Was there a different goal Gatorade hoped to achieve with this ad?
- Who was the target market?
  - How do you envision this target market?
  - What do you know about this audience?
- What are the main themes in this commercial?
  - Why were these themes selected/developed?
  - Were there other themes considered for this ad?
  - What influenced the decision not to use them?
- How did Gatorade influence the production of this commercial?
- Did the closure of Downtown Partners influence this commercial at all?

## GENERAL

- Where have the commercials been released?
  - Who makes this decision?
  - What influences this decision?
- Sticks and What's Inside seem to be very different than the new League of Clutch – can you speak at all as to why?
  - Is there a different target market?
  - Different goal? (Crosby to sell Gatorade vs. Crosby fitting Gatorade mold)
- What role (if any) did Crosby himself play in the development process?
  - Were his handlers (his agent or anyone else) at all involved?
- What do you think the future holds?
  - For advertising in general?
  - For Gatorade?
  - For Crosby?

## **6. CONCLUDING**

- Can you think of anyone else that I could talk to?
- Is there anyone that you can put me in touch with?
- Do you have any documents that might help me out – award submissions, etc.?

## **Interview Guide: Gatorade Marketing Manager**

### **1. INTRODUCTORY**

- How did you come to be involved with Gatorade?
- Tell me a bit about your role at Gatorade/as marketing manager
- How did you come to be involved with these ads?

### **2. CROSBY**

- Why do you think Crosby is viewed as such an important marketing commodity?
  - What is unique about him?
  - Why Crosby and not other hockey stars?
- Was there any resistance to signing him?
- Why sign Crosby prior to his debut in the NHL?
- Was signing Crosby a factor in Gatorade getting a new deal with the NHL?

### **3. GENERAL**

- Do you think that signing and marketing Crosby has had a discernable impact on Gatorade that could otherwise not have been achieved?
  - How?
- What do you think makes Sidney Crosby a marketable commodity for Gatorade?
  - What attributes of his do you feel “mesh” with the ideals associated with the brand?
  - How do you interpret some of the criticism (like that of Don Cherry) Crosby has received?
  - What about Crosby as a masculine icon? Do you think he’s different than the stereotypical hockey player? Does this change anything from a marketing perspective?
    - Do you think there’s been a shift in the type of masculinity that’s marketed?
- Do you consider hockey to be a significant facet of Canadian national identity?
  - How does that factor into Gatorade’s use of Crosby in promotional materials?
  - How does this factor into the decision to utilize Crosby as an endorser?
    - Is Crosby utilized differently outside of Canada than he is within?
- What do you think makes sport an attractive theme in advertising?
  - What about hockey, specifically?
- Are there any unique features about Canada and the Canadian marketplace with respect to advertising?
- Where did you make the ads/where were they filmed?

- Were the individuals involved in their creation Canadian?
  - Do you need Canadians to make a “Canadian” commercial?

#### 4. THE ADS

- What was the role that you played in the development and/or production of Gatorade’s ads featuring Crosby?
  - Can you explain to me the process of development and production?
  - Is it the same basic principle for each ad in terms of the stages of development, or does it change?
  - Who was involved in this process?
  - How were decisions made?
    - Negotiations between Gatorade, ad agency, Crosby?
  - What is the timeline in terms of producing one of these ads?
- Was the online component of *What’s Inside* new for Gatorade or something that you had done before?
  - Would you say that the online content has been successful?
- How involved was Crosby/his handlers in the development of the commercials?

#### STICKS

- What did Gatorade hope to achieve with the initial ad (Sticks) released?
- Who was the target market for Sticks?
  - How do you envision this target market?
  - What do you know about this audience?
- What are the main themes in this commercial?
  - How were these themes selected/developed?
    - Why?
  - Were there other themes considered for this ad?
    - What influenced the decision not to use them?
- Was there any resistance when making this ad?
  - Who?
  - How did it play out?
- How did Gatorade influence the production of this commercial?
- Why does it really so heavily on nationalism as a theme?
- Where was this commercial shot?
- There seem to be multiple levels to this commercial – it is easy to follow right from the get go, but each time you watch it, you seem to pick up on something new. Is this an intentional strategy?
  - What do you feel is gained in utilizing such a strategy?

- Are there some images that have no deeper meaning? (ex. Peterborough Petes jerseys, bus with “86” on it, K3EPTOK/11)

### WHAT’S INSIDE?

- This seems like a huge change from Sticks – it’s a very “postmodern” type of commercial. Why/how did this happen?
    - Is there a risk in using such a different ad strategy?
    - Could the message you’re trying to get across be lost/misinterpreted?
  - Did the goals change at all with What’s Inside?
  - Who was the target market?
    - How do you envision this target market?
    - What do you know about this audience?
  - What are the main themes in this commercial?
    - Why were these themes selected/developed?
    - Were there other themes considered for this ad?
    - What influenced the decision not to use them?
  - Was it difficult to convince Crosby’s camp to do such a crazy commercial? Did you have to really sell the idea or were they on board right away?
    - Was there any resistance to this commercial by anyone else?
      - How did it play out?
7. If there were multiple levels to Sticks, there are even more to What’s Inside. Again, are there some images that have no deeper meaning?

### NARRATOR

- This commercial seems to be a departure from the first two ads. Was there a different goal Gatorade hoped to achieve with this ad?
- Who was the target market?
  - How do you envision this target market?
  - What do you know about this audience?
- What are the main themes in this commercial?
  - Why were these themes selected/developed?
  - Were there other themes considered for this ad?
  - What influenced the decision not to use them?
- How did Gatorade influence the production of this commercial?
- Did the closure of Downtown Partners influence this commercial at all?

### GENERAL

- Where have the commercials been released?
  - Who makes this decision?
  - What influences this decision?



- Sticks and What's Inside seem to be very different than the new League of Clutch – can you speak at all as to why?
  - Is there a different target market?
  - Different goal? (Crosby to sell Gatorade vs. Crosby fitting Gatorade mold)
- What role (if any) did Crosby himself play in the development process?
  - Were his handlers (his agent or anyone else) at all involved?
- What do you think the future holds?
  - For advertising in general?
  - For Gatorade?
  - For Crosby?

## **5. CONCLUDING**

- Can you think of anyone else that I could talk to?
- Is there anyone that you can put me in touch with?
- Do you have any documents that might help me out – award submissions, etc.?

## Appendix B: Thick Description of Ads

### STICKS:

The ad begins with a group of six children – five boys and one girl, all dressed in jackets, scarves and toques – in between two hockey nets on a tree-lined street. They have all placed their sticks in a pile on the ground, to be separated at random into two piles – teams – for a pick up game of hockey. As they are doing this, Sidney Crosby is walking along the sidewalk, hockey bag slung across his shoulders.

KID: Okay guys, let's make some teams!

As Crosby hears the child call for teams, he veers off the sidewalk and over to the children.

CROSBY: I'm in.

KID: Wow...

All the kids are looking up at him, wide-eyed and in awe. The camera zooms in and focuses on the Sher-Wood brand name on Crosby's hockey stick as he drops it onto the pile. Music then begins, which was supposedly created specifically for this ad. The camera then pans upwards to get a shot of Crosby – wearing a white t-shirt, black quarter zip long sleeve shirt, and grey down vest – drinking from a 710mL sport top bottle of blue Gatorade (the Gatorade logo isn't visible, but the green of the lid and the label are). The kids look at each other with wide eyes and open mouths before refocusing on Crosby, who is still sipping from his Gatorade. He stops and smiles.

The shot switches to an upstairs room in a house across the street, where two teenage girls are watching the scene unfold. One is pointing, the other is jumping up and down excitedly. The shot switches to two teenage boys, one wearing a hockey jersey, quickly leaving a different house with sticks in hand and the camera then swings back over to the house with the teenage girls, who are now running from the house, also with hockey sticks. Cue another shot of the pile of hockey sticks, which has increased from its initial count of seven. The shot moves up to the two teenage girls standing together – one is wearing hockey gloves and leaning on a hockey stick, the other is leaning on her friend's shoulder, and both are looking at Crosby, smiling. The shot switches to Crosby, who smiles back at them.

Several more people are now running down the street, sticks in hand, and once again the shot switches back to the steadily increasing number of sticks piled on the ground. The shot focuses on two boys – probably about 18 – standing beside Crosby as they toss their sticks onto the pile. One is wearing a Peterborough

Petes RBK hockey jersey. The shot turns back to Crosby, still smiling, who is turning his head left and right to survey the ever increasing crowd.

A taxi cab roars to a halt amidst more people sprinting towards the pick up hockey game, and three men – the Hanson brothers, from the classic hockey movie “Slapshot” – pile out, point in the direction of Crosby and the hockey game, and start running. A horn sounds, and a bus with the number 86 on the top left and right and “Rimouski” as its destination pulls up right behind the taxi, and the players aboard pile off and sprint towards Crosby. The camera then focuses on a woman pushing a baby carriage with the blade of a hockey stick peeking out running towards the crowd.

The camera switches focus to a man in a red jersey, with “K3EPTOK” and the number 11 on the back, pushing his way through the crowd. He stands in between two players from Rimouski and tosses a stick over them and into the now rather enormous pile, to the ominous “ooohs” of the crowd. The camera focuses on the red-jerseyed player, who is being stared at by the two Rimouski players to his left and right, and then switches to a shot of Crosby, staring at the ground before looking this new player in the eye. Crosby is no longer smiling, but rather looks serious. The shot switches to a long brown haired and bespectacled Hanson brother who is sporting a rather blank look – it could be confusion, or it could be amazement at the growing crowd.

The shot switches again to a high rise apartment building, where there are several sets of people out on balconies and then cuts back to street level where quite the mob of people is running by. The shot switches to a look out at the street from inside a building under construction, where a man standing beside a ladder on a drop-sheet covered floor with boards sitting on sawhorses behind him is standing with his arm raised on the window glass, looking at the crowds running by with a look of awe.

The camera shot quickly switches to people leaving out the back door of a house and blurs to a nearby fence, which people are clambering over to get themselves closer to the game. The shot now returns to the pile of sticks, which is now taller than the crowd, and players are now holding a hockey net in the air as one would do with a crowd surfer at a concert. Sticks are being passed through the now enormous crowd to be thrown onto the pile and a shot is shown of a smiling Crosby helping with this process. We are then shown a shot of a single stick being thrown through the air to land on the pile, followed by two more shots of several sticks being thrown and landing on the pile at different angles. The shot pans out to examine the enormous pile of sticks, which dwarfs the crowd. An overhead shot is given of the pile of sticks, which takes up almost the entire screen, leaving only a smattering of the people in the crowd surrounding it from all sides.

The shot then switches to the inside of an arena, where Crosby is clad in all black equipment, skating towards the viewer with quick, powerful strides. You can hear the ice being dug into as he makes each cut. Crosby stops, and a powerful stream of snow cascades through the air. The shot cuts to a close up of Crosby's helmet-clad face (with no visor, though he wears one during actual NHL game play). Blue sweat is dripping down his nose and over his lower lip and chin before falling to the ice.

The shot then cuts to a black screen, where Gatorade's tagline "is it in you?" (the "it" is in orange, while the rest of the words are green) fades into view before disappearing and being replaced by a bright orange lightning bolt (another Gatorade symbol).

The shot quickly cuts back to the street, and pans upward from a tennis ball and Sher-Wood hockey stick to Crosby's jeans-clad legs, to his upper body and face, still smiling, as he runs down the street, stickhandling, sprinting away from the roaring crowd only metres behind him.

#### **WHAT'S INSIDE:**

The commercial begins with a panned out shot of Mellon Arena in Pittsburgh (this is made evident by the large Penguins logo on the ice, and you can make out "Mellon Arena" written around the centre ice face-off circle). You can see fans in the lower bowl wearing Penguins jerseys, and in particular, one man wearing a white Mario Lemieux Penguins jersey. On the ice, the Carolina Hurricanes (in white) and Pittsburgh Penguins (in black) are lining up for a face-off just outside the Carolina blue line. Crosby is positioned at the face-off dot, while his opponent is skating to the dot.

The shot focuses in on Crosby positioning himself closer to the face-off dot, taking his stick down from across his knees to the ice, an intense look on his face. The RBK logos on his helmet and on his gloves are visible. Again, he is not wearing the visor that he normally does during game play. The shot changes so that Crosby is still visible, but also the referee's hand as he brings the puck before dropping it. Crosby's eyes are still focused on the referee's hand. The puck drops and we get a shot of Crosby and his opponent's sticks (a black Sher-Wood and white RBK, respectively) swinging for the puck. Crosby wins the draw back to his right defenseman, and we see a shot of Crosby skating to the right across the blue line against the opposing centre (#19 – Still). The shot changes to Crosby's legs as he skates, before focusing back up on his face and upper body as he circles and is about to cross the blue line. The shot pans out as #15 for the Penguins passes the puck to Crosby as he comes over the blue line, and the shot becomes grainy, as if being seen on a lower quality television.

The shot keeps panning upwards, and numbers corresponding to the players begin appearing on the screen (#87 in yellow above Crosby, #9 in red above the player

to the right of Crosby, and #23 above the head of the Hurricanes defender moving to defend against Crosby). At the top of the screen, computers and other equipment come into view, as do two men in khakis, light grey button up shirts (one with short sleeves, the other long sleeves rolled up) and striped ties. One is wearing glasses, as well as a headset with microphone. The other has his hands on his hips. The shot continues to pan upwards, focusing more on the men than on the ice, and more information comes into view (the score – Carolina 1, Pittsburgh 0; that it's that third period; and that there are only 24 seconds left to play).

The shot switches to what appears to be some kind of command centre. There are tubes filled with green liquid running along the sides of the room, and four men using what appears to be radar at four different stations. There are four miniature zambonis (being driven by miniature men) flooding in between these radar stations, as evidently the floor is actually ice. There are several screens projecting different images – one of Crosby receiving a pass, another of him trying to take the puck off a player, a blurrier shot of players breaking in on net, and finally a screen of a young child (presumably Crosby) in a green hockey sweater and black helmet. There are four men hovering about a circular table in the direct centre of the screen. The shot continues to pan in, and more screens become visible – one with Crosby dekeing out a player before scoring a goal; another where he is taking a shot on net; and another of a young, smiling Crosby, this time off the ice. In the centre of the shot a large screen becomes visible of the Carolina defender, and behind him, the goalie. As the shot moves in further, a human-sized penguin can be seen walking by, and on the right, a man with a mail cart.

The shot refocuses on the first two men (the one with the headset and the one with rolled up sleeves). The one with the rolled up sleeves (who is balding and has grey hair) appears to be in charge. He picks up an intercom and begins to speak:

MAN: Gentlemen, we've got the puck. We've also got defenders, a goalie, and a whole lot of real estate between us and that net. We're going for a breakaway.

As he begins speaking, the shot cuts to two men at a station featuring a circular device half filled with green liquid and a floating orange Gatorade lightning bolt, and above that a screen reading "00 25 00 099" and then CAR 01 PIT 00". Both men look up from their station as the man says "we've got the puck". The shot refocuses back on the man with the intercom as he says "we've also got defenders", before cutting to black as someone walks by him. The shot switches again, this time showing the tubes with green liquid in them on the left side of the screen, another two miniature zambonis, nine penguins walking across the screen, a stairway to an upper level, a man in a grey sweater vest analyzing information on a clipboard, and a hologram of what appears to be an outline of Crosby's body with circles, squares and mathematical equations pointing to various parts of the body. There are also screens with scenes from hockey games playing inside the body.

The shot cuts back to the man with the intercom as he says "...whole lot of real estate between us..." and then focuses on the younger man with the headset. The shot pans out so that you can see that the two men, in addition to three others, are standing around a table showing a simulation of the game Crosby is currently playing in (complete with the numbers overhead of the players which we had previously seen). A screen with a photograph of young Crosby (again in the green sweater and black helmet) and an older gentleman, presumably his father, is in the upper right hand corner, while most of the screen with the Carolina defender and goalie takes up the upper centre of the shot. There is a man at some kind of "battle station" in the bottom right of the screen.

As the man on the intercom finishes what he is saying, a siren begins to go off and the shot cuts to about a dozen men running down a corridor, the sides of which appear to be constructed out of hockey boards and glass (with "Gatorade" written along the boards). One of the men, who is middle-aged, slightly overweight, and beginning to bald, which a bushy brown beard and moustache, has his face towards the camera, and his facial expression is wide eyed and stoic. He turns his head back towards where he is running and the man on the intercom calls out, "Let's move".

The shot pans downward from the men running, to one of Crosby, dressed in his Penguins uniform, on a sheet of ice and firing pucks from a tremendously large pile at a clothes dryer with spider legs. The shot continues downwards, past what appears to be a hallway of trophies, with three sheaths of green neurons running through it. It pans down again, past what appears to be a man sitting beside a fire, holding an ice fishing pole, into a room with hundreds of pictures hanging from strings and a little boy sitting on an ottoman in the centre of the room wearing a white hockey jersey and taping a stick (again with two sheaths of green neurons running through). The shot goes down again, this time through a room completely filled with penguins and green neurons. The next shot is of what appears to be a frozen river, with a lighthouse visible off in the distance and five apparatuses that appear to be a cross between a conveyer belt for pucks and a guillotine. The shot pans downwards once again, this time into what appears to be a boiler room, where there is a muscular, bald-headed man turning a crank with a Stanley Cup in the middle of it, and two other men in hard hats turning similar cranks. Another two men in hard hats are stoking a fire with a never-ending supply of pucks. There are three smokestacks shaped like Stanley Cups on the right of the screen and a large goaltender's mask with smoke coming out of its eyes in the centre. There are also two stacks of weights, as one would see on weight machines in a gym, moving up and down on either side of the goalie mask.

In the boiler room, amidst the men hard at work turning cranks and shovelling pucks, there is an older man – again greying and balding, with glasses, who appears to be in charge – dressed in a light blue button-up shirt dark blue tie and a dark blue jacket holding an old-school black megaphone (the kind that is simply a

tube that goes from being small at the beginning to large at the end, not the electronic kind) giving direction to the workers.

MAN: You are simply not working hard enough! We need full power!

The shot cuts from the man with the megaphone back to the boiler room as a whole and we can see that in addition to the full sized workers, there are also three miniature sized men in hard hats also working in the boiler room. The shot switches again, this time to a close up of the man shovelling pucks into the fire in the stove below the smoking goalie mask. The stove looks like a mouth, with razor sharp teeth that are continually opening and closing. The close-up switches to another bald-headed man turning a crank with a pained and determined look on his face. Another stack of weights is visible directly behind him.

The shot switches to a different view of the boiler room. Two Stanley Cups are visible in the top right of the screen, and below them, three men looking at and pressing buttons and gauges on panels with a variety of blinking lights. Below them is a conveyor belt of some sort. On the other side of the screen there are dozens of whistles and chimes of various sizes as well as another large panel filled with gauges. Pucks appear to be floating around with increased frequency inside this panel. The most centred and prominent of them has reached its maximum reading (presumably, this is “full power”).

The shot returns to the men standing around the simulated rink, and the man in charge speaks into his intercom again:

MAN: Focus, give us a target.

The shot shifts to a completely different room we have yet to see. The shot pans downward, past a device that looks a lot like a microscope with clothesline upon clothesline of photographs hanging from it in every direction. The shot continues downward, to another man sitting behind a desk filled with devices, examining pictures with a large magnifying glass. A pair of eyes on an apparatus similar to an electrical wire poles are directly behind him. He picks up a picture of the Carolina goalie and examines it with his magnifying glass; in this shot we can also see that he is wearing glasses with a variety of lenses attached to them.

The shot quickly switches to this same man, having discarded his magnifying glass, responding to the other man’s request.

MAN: Target acquired. Glove side.

The shot is then an overhead view of the man with the magnifying glass’ desk, again littered with photographs and various types of electronic equipment. We begin to hear a beeping sound, the type commonly used in movies involving submarines to signify the impending firing of a missile. As the shot pans further

forward, we are taken through Crosby's eye (brown coloured with a bright white circle in the middle as the pupil) and the shot switches from inside his head to outside, with a close up of his eye panning out to view more and more of Crosby's face. Crosby furrows his brow, and the shot switches to back inside his head.

The men gathered around the simulated ice surface are watching the screen directly above them, which has a picture of the Carolina goalie out of his crease, cutting down the angle of the shot, and slowly moving back in. A roving target appears on the screen, moving back and forth above the goalie's glove side shoulder. The target turns a darker red and locks on, and the shot changes to a close up of the man in charge.

MAN: Let her go!

The shot changes again, back to the ice, where Crosby is in the middle of two Carolina defenders. The one on the far side is trying to hook his stick, while the one of the near side is skating hard to try and cut off Crosby's path to the net. The shot switches to a close up of the goalie as Crosby lets his shot go, which beats the goalie upstairs, glove side as he goes down into a half butterfly.

The shot switches again, to a camera in the stands, partially blocked by the fans who are standing and cheering, but we can also see Crosby turning in the corner, arms in the air celebrating. The shot switches to a camera closer to the ice so that we can see Crosby's smiling face and a teammate coming over to congratulate him.

The shot switches back to the simulated ice surface and the man speaking on the intercom.

MAN: Alright. Keep your shorts on gentlemen, we've got to hydrate.

The younger man with the headset is celebrating by doing some sort of dance, shaking his fists at shoulder level. The other men around the table are giving each other congratulatory high fives. There is a brief close up of the younger man, which then pans out so that we can see him and the older man on the intercom.

The shot switches back to Crosby on the ice, and he is now drinking from a 710mL sport-top bottle of yellow Gatorade, with yellow beads of sweat dripping down his face. We can also see his RBK helmet (with the vector logo on the front, and RBK on the side – it's their top-end model with the grey slits in the shell).

The shot switches to a 710mL bottle of yellow Gatorade sitting on an ice surface in a darkened room before a screen with Gatorade's tagline – "is it in you?" appears, with their URL – [www.gatorade.ca](http://www.gatorade.ca) – at the bottom. This disappears, and



is replaced by an orange Gatorade lightning bolt, which grows from the very centre of the screen and splashes off a layer of orange liquid.

\*\* There are actually several versions of this commercial. In one, after the puck drops for the face-off, instead of an extended shot of the play developing, we see Crosby skate from the face-off, circle, and then the camera switches to a shot of him from behind (where we can see the “CROSBY” on his jersey) and up to the “87” on his helmet, where the shot gets closer and closer, before we go right through the 87. Inside the 87, there are strands with blue and red bubbles floating in a bluish liquid and a big globe-like sphere with red dots all about it floating as well. There are also sharks floating in this liquid. The shot continues through this liquid, and there is a television screen of sorts in the centre. On it, there is what almost appears to be a blue eye – a blue circle with a smaller circle of darker blue in the centre. We go through this, and what slowly comes into focus is the room with the screens, little zambonis, and people gathered around the simulated ice rink. The commercial then continues the same as above.

In another version of the commercial, it starts like the first one (with the shot of Crosby taking the puck over the blue line, and then slowly panning upwards to the simulated ice rink). In this version, what the man with the intercom says is slightly different:

MAN: Gentlemen, we’ve got the puck. We’ve also got defenders, a goalie, and a whole lot of real estate between us and that net. Let’s move.

Gone are the shot of the men running down a corridor, and the shots panning downward through different settings (the spider, pictures hanging from strings, etc.). Instead, it cuts directly to the man shouting through his megaphone (“you are simply not working hard enough...”). The rest of the commercial continues as in the original.

### **LEAGUE OF CLUTCH:**

As the commercial begins, “O Fortuna” commences playing. The first shot is a shot of Mellon Arena (where the Pittsburgh Penguins play) taken from the upper levels, but is not an overhead shot, but one that is straight ahead. All the lights that shine down upon the ice surface are visible, and it’s evident that there is a capacity crowd in attendance for the game. You can see the players skating on the ice, and that the play is in the right-side offensive zone. The shot zooms in slightly, and then switches to a pseudo black-and-white shot of the Pittsburgh Penguins bench (it’s not true black and white, as you can see the red of the boards, but all the colours are very much muted). Crosby is drinking from a green Gatorade bottle (you can’t see the Gatorade logo on it, but because it’s green and has an orange lightning bolt on it, the bottle is easily read as Gatorade).

The shot changes to the overhead scoreboard – Penguins 3, Leafs 3, no time left on the clock at the end of period four. It's time for a shootout. The screen turns black, and in grey capital letters, the word "shootout" starts small and grows from the centre of the screen.

The shot changes to a still frame photograph of Crosby jumping over the boards, RBK hockey stick in hand (the RBK on his gloves is also evident). The shot zooms in on this photograph and then switches to one of Maple Leafs goaltender Vesa Toskala about to pull his goalie mask down to cover his face. Again the screen goes black, and this time the words "the fate of the game" flash on the screen. Switch to another still frame shot, this one of Crosby, taken from overhead, standing at the blue line (it's interesting to note that while he wasn't wearing a visor when he was drinking from the Gatorade bottle, he is now). The shot is taken in such a way that Crosby's shadow looms over the blue line.

The shot changes again, this time back to Toskala, standing deep in his net, waiting. The RBK logos on his pads are visible as is that his stick is made by Montreal. The screen goes black again, and "lies in the hands" flashes across the screen. Back to a shot of Crosby, this one a close up of his face and shoulders as he hunches over, ready to begin skating. The RBK vector logo on his helmet is prominent. There is an intense look on Crosby's face, and orange sweat drips from his chin. The shot changes, and said orange sweat is seen dripping to the ice, only to land on the puck that is laying there. The droplets land with a large splash. The screen goes black again, and flashes "of a kid".

The shot changes to one of Crosby starting on at centre ice with the puck. His eyes are down, looking at his blade and the puck, his left leg raised in the air as he takes a stride. The next shot is of Crosby as he reaches the hash marks. Toskala is also pictured in this shot, now cutting off the angle of Crosby's shot just outside of his crease. Crosby is leaning to his left, as if to start a fake. The next shot shows Toskala, down at the top of his crease in a half butterfly, with Crosby sending up a spray of snow to his right, pulling his body to go to the left around Toskala. As the shot pans upwards, the puck comes into view, which is going over Toskala's left shoulder.

The screen goes black again, and this time the words that flash across the screen, "every game needs a hero", and surrounded by a rectangle of small white lights. We now see the first camera shot that is not still frame, of Crosby in the corner with his arms raised in the air, mouth open in celebration, his helmet pulled high up on his forehead. The shot focuses in closer on the celebrating Crosby, and then the screen goes black once more. This time, Gatorade's tagline "is it in you?" flashes onto the screen, and then quickly changes to "leagueofclutch.com" in block letters, with a Gatorade logo directly below it (the orange lightning bolt with "Gatorade" written across it).

**NARRATOR:**

The commercial begins with a shot from ice-level of Crosby legs as he skates towards the camera. The shot is dark, as if he is skating on an indoor rink that has the lights off.

NARRATOR: Crosby doesn't stop.

The shot changes to a close up of Crosby's eyes and nose. He is wearing a black helmet (without a visor) and has a determined look on his face – his brows are furrowed. The shot changes again, this time zooming in on the number "87" – it appears to be on a shoulder patch. This shot is only on screen for a brief second – it is a flash of the number, and then the shot changes again (as the narrator says "stop"), this time to Crosby, again on the dark ice surface, spraying ice chips and snow up into the air as he stops between two pylons on the ice. There is a flash of light as Crosby stops, before the shot returns to normal. The shot is from the front and Crosby is facing to the right, where he does a crossover and begins to skate again, this time towards the camera. There is a graph running the length of the boards behind him. The shot is in slow motion as Crosby turns, and then becomes as if it were an x-ray – everything is black except for the outline of the pylons and of Crosby, which is grey and white. When the shot returns to normal, it also returns to full speed. While Crosby wasn't wearing his visor in the close-up shot, he is wearing it now.

NARRATOR: What does that mean? It means early rink time.

The shot changes to one of Crosby outside of a rink (presumably Mellon arena or their practice facility), wearing street clothes and carrying a hockey bag and stick. The sun is just beginning to rise on the horizon.

NARRATOR: It means this guy is going to be late for dinner.

The shot changes to inside of the rink, where the lights are off except for a few that make the ice surface visible. There is a zamboni cleaning the ice which is just circling the near goal crease before the shot speeds up and the zamboni travels down the middle of the ice, and then along the left side boards.

The shot changes and again it is the x-ray/overexposed look, this time of Crosby facing the camera as he stops, shooting snow up into the air. The shot changes again, still in the x-ray/overexposed look, but to a photo of neurons. We then get a close up of one specific cell, and then the shot switches again, returning to normal colours. Crosby is stickhandling a puck around the same two pylons we saw earlier, and the lines on the graph/chart behind him keep changing as he does so. A flash of light moves across the screen during this shot.

NARRATOR: It means when a bazillion cells in his body are screaming uncle, Crosby drinks Gatorade.

The shot changes when the narrator says, “Crosby drinks Gatorade”, unsurprisingly, to a shot of Crosby drinking Gatorade. A close up of Crosby from the front, with his long bangs falling across his forehead and sweat dripping on his face, is shown drinking from a 710mL sport top bottle of orange Gatorade. The shot pans towards the left and again changes to the x-ray/overexposed look as Crosby lifts the bottle further into the air as he drinks. “Thirst quencher” is on screen in the bottom right-hand corner in small, white letters. The shot continues to pan towards the left until we have a side view of Crosby, and returns to normal colouring. He is wearing a yellow long-sleeved technical top with black striping. The shot continues to the left so that we are looking at Crosby more from behind than the side, and the “Gatorade” and lightning bolt logo on the label of the bottle are more visible.

The shot changes to one of a laboratory setting, and you can see a man on a treadmill in the distance. The shot again begins panning to the left, so that you can better see that there’s a recumbent exercise bike in the foreground, and that it’s Crosby in his yellow shirt running on the treadmill behind it. The shot quickly changes to one of Crosby running down a corridor towards the camera. The shot shifts again when Crosby reaches the camera to a side view of him running past (from below – the camera is in line with his hips). The shot blurs into the x-ray/overexposed look, and then changes back to normal when the shot shifts to one of Crosby, again on the treadmill, this time wearing an apparatus over his face with tubes attached to it (presumably, they are testing his VO2 max?). Again the shot rotates left, and we can see that there is the shadow of a man monitoring Crosby’s progress. The shot changes again, to another one from behind of Crosby running on the treadmill, but this one is made to look like the quality of an old home movie. The shot pans back to a side view of Crosby on the treadmill, and returns to normal quality, and then keeps rotating right so that we are looking upon Crosby more from the front. You can see the shadow of a man directly behind Crosby, and one to his side, who is writing something down on a notepad.

The shot changes to a quick shot of three black and white circles, an even quicker one of four skeletons, and then a shot of equations written overtop of an x-ray of someone’s chest.

NARRATOR: Because no water or other sports drink helps replace fluids better than Gatorade, to help athletes perform at their best. It’s science – look it up.

As the narrator says, “it’s science”, the shot changes to game film of Crosby beating out a defenseman and going in for a shot on a goalie down in a butterfly, whom he beats. The shot changes to another game film, this one in the x-ray/overexposed style. Crosby is being checked in the slot by two Florida

Panthers defenders while a referee looks on. The shot returns to normal as Crosby falls to the ice, still getting the shot off. We are then shown a third game film of Crosby getting a shot off from his knees as he is tripped from behind. He slides on his knees just past the crease and gets up with his arms in the air, having scored on the play.

NARRATOR: So order more red light bulbs...because Crosby.Doesn't.Stop.

As the narrator begins saying "order more..." the shot switches to one of a red goal light flashing, and the reflected image of a referee pointing towards a skirmish in front of the net where someone has just scored. The image disappears as the light inside spins. As the narrator says "...more red light bulbs", the red bulb gives off a bright flash and fizzles dead.

The shot changes again, this time to Crosby pedalling on the recumbent bike, still in his yellow technical top and a pair of black sweatpants. There is a man standing to his right, recording data on a clipboard as Crosby works. Another man walks by behind the bike, and then the shot pans upward, as apparently the ceiling is a sheet of ice. As the shot continues upwards, Crosby skating full tilt towards the camera from the opposite side of the ice becomes visible. The shot stops moving upwards when Crosby's body is in full view. He gets closer, and then there is another flash of light across the screen. You can still see the pylons and graph on the boards behind Crosby.

NARRATOR: Scientifically formulated. Relentlessly researched. Gatorade.

The shot changes to strands of molecules – light blue, orange, dark blue and green – floating around on the screen. The molecules all come together and spin around until they form a 710mL sport top bottle of orange Gatorade. It stops spinning when the logo on the label is facing forwards.

The shot changes to a black screen with Gatorade's tagline – "is it in you?" (the *it* is written in orange while the rest is in grey) and "gatorade.ca" in small orange letters at the bottom-centre of the screen. This screen disappears and is replaced by one of Crosby, still standing in between the two pylons, where he fires a slapshot at the camera. As it comes towards the camera, you can see an orange Gatorade lightning bolt on the broad face of the puck, and when it "hits", the screen changes to all black, with the orange bolt in the centre, which splashes droplets of orange off itself.

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