

A Culture of Entitlement, Silence and Protection

The Case of the University of Ottawa's Men's Hockey Team

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En février 2014, un scandale a ébranlé l'université d'Ottawa (Canada) quand des joueurs d'un club de hockey ont agressé une jeune femme durant une joute. On a dû annuler la saison 2014-15. Les quatre journaux locaux en ont beaucoup parlé donnant la parole aux joueurs de hockey eux-mêmes. Ce papier basé sur 55 articles sur le sujet décèle et analyse les trois cultures de la masculinité décrite par Michael Kimmel (2008) dans la dynamique du club: celle qui donne le droit, la culture du silence et la culture de protection. En creusant la compréhension des cultures masculines du jeu, ce papier met en évidence l'envahissante règle patriarcale des clubs universitaires présents sur les campus. La presse locale en leur donnant la parole a mis l'accent sur leurs droits et s'est rangée de leur côté au détriment de la survivante et de son expérience de l'assaut. Elle ajoute une discussion autour de l'implication du campus, des athlètes mâles et les médias.

In recent years, a number of Canadian and American campuses made national headlines in connection with sexual assault perpetrated by male athletes. In Canada, two cases have been particularly high-profile examples. In 2012, three football players from McGill University in Montréal were charged with sexual assault and, in 2014, similar charges were laid against two hockey players from the University of Ottawa. Despite their resemblances, campus officials have handled those two situations very differently. In fact, the players from McGill University were not suspended as a result and were allowed to pursue their studies and play football even after charges were laid. At the University of Ottawa, the entire hockey team was suspended as a result of the initial investigation, fueling anger and outrage from the coach, the hockey players,

and to some extent from the general public.

Under these circumstances, Ottawa's local press has extensively covered the event, recurrently giving a voice to the hockey players themselves. In this paper, I argue that by giving a voice to the male athletes, the coverage from the local press provides insight into the three cultures of masculinity described by Michael Kimmel within the team's dynamic: the culture of entitlement, the culture of silence and the culture of protection. Each of these concepts will be described extensively in this paper in order to shed light on the persistence of those three cultures as revealed in the media.

Sexual Violence in Canada

Sexual violence is recognized as a form of gender-based violence against women, which comprises any form of violence “directed against a woman because she is a woman or violence that affects women disproportionately” (United Nation 15). The World Health Organization has highlighted that sexual violence is a “serious public health and human rights problem with both short—and long —term consequences on women's physical, mental, and sexual and reproductive health” (“Sexual Violence,” para. 1). It affects the victim's sexual and physical integrity, and has been defined by feminists as a manifestation of the historical and social domination of men over women and as a facet of men's control and power which dehumanize women (Héritier; MacKinnon). In our patriarchal society, if all women are not victims of sexual violence, all women have learned to fear sexual violence (Kelly).

In Canada, 117 238 sexual assaults were reported to the police between 2009 and 2014 (Rotenberg). Considering that only about one in twenty sexual assault are reported to the police (Conroy and Cotter), this number is statistically conservative. In fact, sexual violence is still an underreported crime, in comparison to other offences and has the lowest conviction rates (Sheffield). It is a crime for which victims are taken less seriously and the pervasiveness of victim-blaming and myths surrounding the issue makes it very difficult for women to report any form of sexual violence to the police (Sheffield).

Overall, women and girls represent 87 percent of sexual assault victims in Canada (Rotenberg). In 98 percent of sexual assault cases where charges are laid, the offender is a male; the majority of those offenders are known to the victim (Rotenberg). Sexual violence is also perpetrated by strangers, although the prevalence is difficult to establish considering the “deep sense of shame for women” (United Nations 41). In Canada, sexual violence perpetrated by strangers accounts for 44 percent of the cases of self-reported sexual assaults (Conroy and Cotter); whereas it accounts for 13 percent of cases where the perpetrator was charged by the police (Rotenberg).

Sexual Violence in Sports

A number of studies have shown evidence of sexual violence and bullying in sports, particularly towards female athletes (see Brackenridge; Robinson). Drawing upon 6,397 questionnaires from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Kreager underlines that high rates of violence perpetrated by male athletes in contact sports such as hockey reflects that those sports do not promote “fair play and sportsmanship” but rather encourage “violence by already privileged elites” (706). He further argues that contact sports do not reduce the level of tension, aggression and violence in men; rather they fail to inhibit male violence. For instance, young hockey players soon learn that violence is inherent to the sport that could explain why there is a strong “correlation between dangerous masculinity and player violence” (Atkinson 21). Moreover, discourses surrounding violence in hockey tend to depict violence as normal and as a non-criminal issue (Atkinson); this makes the task of holding a perpetrator accountable rather challenging.

A study conducted on a sample of 477 male undergraduate in an American university found that fraternity members were more likely to have used verbal coercion and intoxicants to obtain sex, and that male athletes self-reported more rape proclivity or sexual victimization compare to non-athletes (Boeringer, “Influence of Fraternity Membership”). Moreover, they are also more likely

to agree to rape supportive attitudes in comparison to non-athletes (Boeringer, “Associations of Rape-Supportive Attitudes”). Scot Boeringer’s findings are congruent with those of Todd Crosset, Jeffrey Benedict, and Mark McDonald who have uncovered that male student-athletes are overrepresented in reports of sexual assault to judicial affairs offices, making up for 3.3 percent of the male student population but accounting for 19 percent of reported cases of sexual assault (132).

Timothy Curry has further documented the issue by pointing out that male athletes do tend to objectify women and promote rape culture, in a setting where sex and aggression are frequently discussed topics among players in locker rooms. He further upholds that “sexist locker room talk is likely to have a cumulative negative effect on young men because it reinforces the notions of masculine privilege and hegemony, making that world view seem normal and typical” (133). Misogynistic and homophobic conversations are intrinsic to the institution of sports, which is one that promotes power and privileges in male athletes (Messner). In fact, it is common for male athletes to objectify, undermine and harass women, in a culture where masculinity and virility intertwine with violence (Curry; Messner; Robinson). If such talks can be perceived as harmless, the sexist attitudes at play among male athletes are often the onset of sexual violence (Brackenridge).

Drawing upon rules and a culture of their own, it has been argued that male athletes’ are part of a social group where contacts with women are limited. Male varsity teams have been described as a *homosocial environment* (Anderson), a *heterosexist social organization* (Messner), a *segregated social institution* (Brackenridge 256) and a *gendered institution* (Messner) where “cultural and structural forces” “influence the reproduction of sexist, misogynistic and anti-feminine attitudes among men in team sports” (Anderson 257). In fact, evidence from an extensive study conducted in Canada suggests that players are encouraged to remain focused on the “shared goals of the team, to their teammates and to their coaches and trainers”, in a *family-like structure* where disclosure can threaten the entire team (Greaves, Hankivsky, and Kirby 26). As such, Michael Messner (2002) identified a strong culture of silence in male sports teams that is “built into the dynamics of the group’s spoken and unspoken codes and rituals,” and is consistently reinforced by the players (47).

Another prevailing issue in team sports is related to the high status of universities’ varsity teams. In a report on sexual violence following criminal charges brought against two hockey players of the male ice hockey team, Boston University has exposed a “culture of sexual entitlement” among the players that “was stemming in part from their

elevated social status on campus.” Celebrity status and the resultant sense of entitlement is a factor associated with increased risk of sexual violence perpetration by male athletes (Flood and Dyson). In Canada, the power and prestige which come along with ice hockey combined with a strong sense of loyalty to the team and the coach makes it harder to disclose sexual violence (Greaves, Hankivsky, and Kirby; Robinson).

Considering the scope of the issue, Crosset maintains that an analysis of violence against women and the link to the

The University of Ottawa then launched its own investigation, with an emphasis on “whether the players’ behavior met the standard that the University community is entitled to expect” (*CBC News*). Describing this incident as a case of “serious misconduct,” Allan Rock, the president of the university, suspended the hockey team and cancelled the remainder of the 2013-2014 season; he also suspended the coach and later relieved him of his duties. On the basis that the male varsity hockey program needed to be rebuilt with improved policies, he subsequently dismissed

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institution of sports has to reach beyond individual actions to look deeper into the culture of some organization and teams, because it “needs to explore how team members, coaches, or people associated with a team promote behavior associated with violence against women or how some programs foster environments in which potential rapists and/or batterers feel comfortable” (154). In a context where aggression, force and violence are valued, sports are thus a nest for male dominance (Bryson; Crosset).

The Specific Event

In February 2014, the media reported that some players of the University of Ottawa men’s varsity hockey team—the Gee-Gees—sexually assaulted a 21-year-old woman during a weekend trip to Thunder Bay, Ontario. The team was in Thunder Bay to play a match against the Lakehead University hockey team. The incident happened in a Thunder Bay hotel in the early morning hours of 2 February 2014. The University of Ottawa was notified of the sexual assault after a third party, a friend of the victim, approached the police on 25 February to explain what had happened. It was later reported that the coach was informed that a sexual assault had taken place, but that he had decided to handle the matter himself without notifying the police or disclosing the incident to the university officials. A few weeks later, two players on the hockey team were formally charged with sexual assault following an extensive investigation by the Ottawa and Thunder Bay Police Services with the cooperation of the RCMP. Both players are still, at the time of writing this paper, standing trial for sexual assault.

the 2014-2015 season as well. Alongside those decisions, the president mandated a Task Force on Respect and Equality to “provide recommendations on how to foster a campus culture that encourages respectful behavior, prevents sexual violence and ensures that members of the community can learn and work free of harassment and sexual violence” (University of Ottawa 3). The Task Force has issued 11 recommendations, which were fully endorsed by the president of the University of Ottawa and made public in January 2015.

The decision to suspend the entire hockey team has been perceived as excessive or unfair by the team’s supporters and individual players who were not involved in the sexual assault of the young woman. As a result, the university has been criticized for treating “innocent players unfairly” (*CBC News*) and for tarnishing the reputation of all of the players. Beyond strong community reactions, the extensive press coverage provided opportunities for players to express their perspectives on how this case has been handled by the university. The players’ opinions provide valuable information about the manifestation of Kimmel’s three cultures of masculinity within their team.

Theoretical Framework: The Three Cultures of Masculinity

This study draws upon the work of sociologist Michael Kimmel, who has been studying masculinity for decades from a pro-feminist standpoint. In his 2008 book *Guyland*, he describes at length the transition from adolescence to adulthood in young men while taking a critical stance with regards to the patriarchal social world in which this

transition occurs. In chapter 3, he discusses what he calls the “Guy code,” arguing that three cultural dynamics act together when young men commit acts of violence and that, “Taken together, these cultures do more than make these more extremes cases the actions of a small group of predatory thugs” (59). The three cultural dynamics that he refers to are the culture of entitlement, the culture of silence and the culture of protection.

The culture of entitlement lies in the idea that men, in particular white men, have the right to hold power in

most brutal forms of violence they commit. It usually plays in favour of the perpetrators, by insuring solidarity amongst men. But what distinguishes the culture of protection from the other two is the community’s response and support in favour of the perpetrators, making accountability rather challenging while fueling their sense of entitlement.

The three cultural dynamics described above provide the theoretical framework for the current study that seeks to answer the following question: To what extent does

Whether they witness sexual harassment, sexist remarks or an assault, they can feel pressured to remain silent, not to intervene, or feel afraid to notify the authorities given that they might be ostracized or rejected by their friends as a consequence of being the whistleblower.

society. In other words, they feel entitled to what they believe society owes them. Kimmel argues that “many young men today have a shockingly strong sense of male superiority and a diminished capacity for empathy” as “they believe that the capacity for empathy and compassion has to be suppressed, early on, in the name of achieving masculinity” (59). Based on this assumption, they usually feel a deep sense of injustice, and see themselves as victims of unfair circumstances whenever a privilege is revoked from them because “unlike women, men feel entitled to power” (60). Far from being a psychological process, these men rather “fully subscribe to traditional ideologies about masculinity” (59) and direct their anger towards minority groups and women for taking away what they consider belongs to them in the first place.

The culture of silence creates a context in which men “learn to keep their mouths shut, even when what they’re seeing goes against everything they know to be good” (61). Whether they witness sexual harassment, sexist remarks or an assault, they can feel pressured to remain silent, not to intervene, or feel afraid to notify the authorities given that they might be ostracized or rejected by their friends as a consequence of being the whistleblower. Furthermore, helping a woman who may fall victim to one of their male friends can be perceived by the others as a “betrayal of brotherhood” or an “act of treason” (230).

The culture of protection goes hand in hand with the culture of silence, given that by remaining quiet, “guys implicitly support the criminals in their midst who take that silence as tacit approval” (63). This occurs when young men protect each other at all costs, even from the

the media coverage of the incident of sexual assault by players of the University of Ottawa’s male hockey team provide insight into the three cultures of masculinity at play within the team’s dynamic?

Method

Four local daily newspapers covered events occurring in Ottawa: *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Ottawa Sun*, *Metro News* and *Le Droit*. Relevant articles were identified through a search on their respective websites using the following combination of keywords: *Gee Gee hockey*, *University of Ottawa’s hockey team*, *Université d’Ottawa hockey*. The research analyzes eight months of media coverage, from the end of February 2014 when the event became known to the public, until the beginning of the court procedure in October 2014.

All of the articles were imported into QSR NVivo (10.2). The coding process was developed through a deductive process whereby the three components of the theoretical framework (“entitlement,” “protection,” and “silence”) were determined in advance as the categories through which the data were further analyzed. The coding was therefore “driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven” (Braun and Clarke 12). This method draws upon the *matching model* (Yin qtd. in Landry 349) whereby empirical data are analyzed through a theoretical configuration that is initially assigned by the researcher.

All of the articles were carefully read and the relevant excerpts were then coded into the three categories of “Entitlement,” “Protection,” and “Silence.” At the end of

the coding process, the category “Entitlement” contained 72 references from 23 articles, the category “Protection” contained 38 references from 16 articles and the category “Silence” contained 56 references from 20 articles. Throughout the coding process, thoughts and reflections were noted in memos.

Following the coding process, each of the three categories was broken down into subcategories in order to facilitate the content analysis, a “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings” (Berg 303–304). More specifically, each of the excerpts in each of the three codes was assigned a theme. The themes were then clustered according to their proximity to each other (Mayer and Deslauriers) and further analysis was conducted to connect the excerpts that might provide access to a deeper understanding of the culture of masculinity within the team.

Results

The results presented in this section will closely follow the chronology of the events and will highlight how the media coverage of the issue portrays the three cultures of masculinity working together in the team’s dynamic. More specifically, the results expose how the interaction of the three cultures work to deflect men’s accountability for their actions, protect and promote men’s entitlement to power and prestige, and ultimately reinforce and reproduce gender inequality.

The Culture of Silence

The initial reaction from the players and the coach was to remain silent regarding the sexual assault. This silence can be the result of the players feeling pressured by their peers or coach or the fear of being alienated from the team. This culture of silence, perceptible through the media coverage of the story, seems nonetheless disturbing when the media uncovered that the coach and the players failed to notified the authorities about the information that they may have had:

University officials expressed concern the allegation wasn’t reported to them for weeks. (*The Ottawa Sun*, March 3, 2014)

For now, what is the most troubling thing in this case is that the University of Ottawa claims to have found out on February 24th, several weeks later ... and three days after the end of the regular Gee Gees season which ended on February 21st. (*Le Droit*, March 4, 2014)

More specifically, it was later reported in the media that the coach was aware of the incident, but chose to remain silent and tried to handle the issue himself. His silence was one of the reasons that he was relieved of his duties:

While the coach was not involved in the alleged incident, he became aware of it and tried to handle it himself—including disciplining players—without reporting it to the school, University of Ottawa president Allan Rock said Wednesday. (*The Ottawa Sun*, June 25th, 2014)

In the same vein, it was suggested in the media that the players who were not involved in the assault may have also known about it and that there was a “concerted effort” to keep quiet about any information they may have had:

Senior management was “deeply concerned” that it was only made aware of the allegations on Feb. 24—some 24 days after the men’s hockey team first stepped foot in Thunder Bay for a pair of away games—suggesting there was some concerted effort by those who knew something to keep it from administration. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, March 6, 2014)

Following the disclosure of the incident to the public, the former coach and the players refused to comment on the events. The journalists’ efforts to reach out to them were thus unsuccessful:

The Citizen’s efforts to reach coach Réal Paiement or any Gee-Gees players for comment were not successful. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, March 3, 2014)

No player has spoken publicly since the team’s suspension and the serious criminal allegation came to light at the beginning of March. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, March 13, 2014)

Even though they may have been bound by a legal component, secrecy was still maintained after two players on the team had been formally charged with sexual assault:

Foucher and Donovan (accused players)’s former teammates would not comment on the accusations. (*Le Droit*, August 22, 2014)

The way in which the culture of silence materialized was complex, from individuals choosing to remain silent to the entire team’s concerted effort not to report the sexual assault to the authorities and campus officials. However, it reveals the extent to which the team and their coach

worked in a close alliance until a friend of the victim came forward to the police.

The Culture of Protection

In this particular event, the coach protected the team, the players, and their reputation. Although the information reported in the media draws upon sources from the “quiet channels,” it is believed that the coach attempted to protect the image of the team by quickly calling a meeting regarding the issue:

A team meeting was quickly called, as early as 5 a.m., rousing everyone from bed. The coach tried to figure out what was going on, as there was a nine a.m. flight home to catch. When the team arrived back in Ottawa on Sunday afternoon, there was another meeting. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, July 3, 2014)

The source said that team meetings were called both in Thunder Bay and once the team returned to Ottawa, and that more than one player was suspended as a result. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, August 22nd, 2014)

Although the content of those team discussions are not known to the public, gathering the players in the middle of the night and again later that day underlies the seriousness of the issue and shows the concerns on the part of the coach regarding the potential damage to the reputation of the team. The initial response of silence by the coach and the team constitutes a form of passive protection, but as more details became known to the public, the team pursued more active techniques of damage control. One straightforward strategy to protect each other through this sexual assault investigation was to discredit the victim through anonymous phone calls to the media.

At this point, some players aggressively challenged the reporting of the sexual assault and actively engaged in a campaign of victim blaming. Some players in fact reached out to *Le Droit*, claiming that the alleged victim was willing to “have sex with more than one person,” and therefore that no rape has occurred:

On Tuesday, a close source of the team has told *Le Droit* that the incident is in no way a “gang rape,” implying that the woman consented to have intercourse with more than one player. (*Le Droit*, March 5, 2014)

Some of the Gee Gees players told *Le Droit* anonymously that the woman consented to have sex with more than one person, and that no gang rape occurred. (*Le Droit*, March 12, 2014).

This latest strategy must be understood in a broader context, whereby a journalist was somewhat sympathetic enough to their cause to report this issue twice in the same week. Public sympathy strengthened the culture of protection amongst the team, despite their concerted effort to remain silent and the coach’s attempts to handle a criminal matter himself. But compassion in this case went beyond the media coverage, as the entire team has benefited from a wave of sympathy from their classmates, students on campus, and from the general public as illustrated in the following quotes:

She said she attends classes with members of the hockey team and has never found them to be sexually aggressive or violent towards women. “The guys I know are actually quite fantastic. I wouldn’t expect this from them,” Binette said. A student stood nearby, listening to Charette speak to reporters. “We’re just seeing what lies are being told,” he said, refusing to talk further or give his name. (*The Ottawa Sun*, March 3, 2014)

Donors, some members of the public, parents and alumni were critical of the university’s handling of the scandal. They called the initial suspension announced on March 3 “narrow-minded,” said it showed “negligence,” called it a “knee-jerk reaction” and said the university needed a refresher in crisis communications. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, July 21, 2014)

When two players had been formally accused and the rest of the team had the opportunity to collaborate with the police to contribute to the investigation, and eventually to rebuild their reputation, the culture of protection persisted. In fact, the media reported that some of the players refused to cooperate in the investigation, although it is not clear if this reticence concerned “some” or “several” players:

Thunder Bay police say some of the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees hockey players involved in a gang sex assault investigation, chose not to speak to detectives. (*The Ottawa Sun*, March 20, 2014)

Officers from Thunder Bay interviewed team members in Ottawa in March, but several of the players refused to be interviewed. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, August 22, 2014)

As seen through the quotes, the culture of protection ensured solidarity amongst the team players and sympathy from the general public.

The Culture of Entitlement

The cultures of silence and protection are ultimately driven by the sense of entitlement engendered in men through patriarchal socialization. After the initial silence of the team and their attempts to protect their reputation, indications of a sense of entitlement emerged in their statements. There are many examples of the culture of entitlement prevailing amongst the team players and the coach in the coverage of the story. Indeed, some of the players have reached out to the media to expose the consequences that the suspension of the team has had on their lives, seeing in those consequences a deep sense of injustice:

In an open letter to the media, Burns said his invitation to a reception last week honouring graduating Gee-Gees athletes was revoked due to the hockey team's suspension. In addition, he has been uninvited to the university's annual athletic banquet this Friday. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, April 2, 2014)

"I bought a condo in Gatineau and now I have to sell it because I can't play hockey anymore in Ottawa," said the former Gee-Gee, who spent the past three years with the club. (*Metro News*, September 9th, 2014)

If these excerpts are to be understood fully, they have to be considered in the context of the sexual assault that took place, and that those players have reached out to the media with claims of injustice due to personal losses. Here, entitlement is not stated explicitly but can nevertheless be detected in the implication. The perception by the players of the material inconveniences caused to them as being infringements of their rights and as a good enough reason to go public betrays the deep sense of entitlement at play in their minds.

Beyond those material repercussions, some players have further stated that their reputation has been damaged as a result of the suspension of the team. As stated in the following quotes, it is the suspension of the team and not the sexual assault that tarnished their reputation:

Unfortunately, my years of dedication and my good name have been smeared by the very university I spent so much time working to promote. ... As this semester ends, I leave the University not having been recognized for my accomplishments, but having had the door slammed behind me. (*Ottawa Sun*, April 1, 2014)

As soon as the school suspended the entire team and told the media about it my reputation was damaged

.... Suspending a CIS hockey team is something that can really damage a career for someone like me. (*Metro News*, September 9, 2014)

Again here, a focus on their reputation and an understanding of the issue as being the university's reaction, rather than the assault itself, constitutes a convenient and simplistic way of comprehending the situation. The focus on players' material losses and the damage to their reputation took precedent in the media coverage and provides an insight into the culture of entitlement. The two following players have further pointed out that the University's decision constituted an injustice and a lack of respect towards them, one of them questioning if he would ever again wear the varsity team's jersey:

I cannot believe the lack of professionalism of the university in this story, and the lack of respect for us, the players. (*Le Droit*, April 30, 2014)

It's unbelievable how the University has treated us and if there is a team again, I would not want to wear the uniform. (*Le Droit*, April 29, 2014)

This sense of entitlement to respect uncovers the "strong sense of male superiority" as pointed out by Kimmel (59) as those two players perceive the university as disrespectful under the circumstances and feel that they deserve more appreciation from the institution. The following two players further suggest that the University has been punitive by taking away their right to play hockey:

I have refused offers from a lot of other schools in order to play in Ottawa. If I wanted to transfer to another university now, I couldn't play hockey for a whole year. (*Le Droit*, April 30, 2014)

I have played hockey since I was four-years-old. I (left) home at the age of 14 to go play hockey in Saskatchewan. I didn't come to Ottawa just for the school, I went there to play hockey and the university took that away from me. (*Metro News*, September 9, 2014)

It is therefore the actions of the university that are perceived as problematic and not the allegation of sexual assault itself. Once again, entitlement is implicitly expressed. It is evident in the release of statement after statement about how the university's decision has inconvenienced them and not the sexual assault committed by their peers. The following two quotes further suggest that it is the university that is to blame, as it "betrayed" the players and created "negative publicity" towards them:

A veteran University of Ottawa hockey player says he feels frustrated and betrayed by the university after it suspended its men's hockey program last month amid allegations of sexual assault. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, April 2, 2014)

We really don't know what's going to happen... Their mentality could lead to the suspension of the program because of all the negative publicity. (*Le Droit*, April 30, 2014)

hockey, the consequences on their reputation, and a feeling of betrayal which led some of them to consider legal action. If the culture of entitlement is an issue in itself, it also plays out with the culture of silence and protection; they all interact dynamically to protect the interests of the patriarchy. These findings are concerning.

Discussion

This article has sought to explore more fully the cultures

This overwhelming focus on the players as victims in the media and in the general public has cast aside the issue of male sexual violence towards women. Virtually all of the players' strategies to manage their image did not include taking a strong stance against sexual violence.

Again here, the university's decision is the target of the players' animosity, while the two accused players are immune to criticism by their teammates. By targeting the university and not the alleged perpetrators, those players bring to light their sense of superiority by expecting loyalty from the institution despite the situation. Under the circumstances, the coach and the players considered legal action against the University:

(The coach) is currently consulting a lawyer to determine whether he will file a lawsuit for wrongful dismissal. (*Le Droit*, September 5th, 2014)

Several players on the hockey team have threatened legal action since the suspension was extended last month, although a statement of claim has yet to be filed. (*The Ottawa Citizen*, July 17, 2014)

Finally, one of the player's grievances during the investigation is strongly revealing of the culture of entitlement. He explains that since the officers made him wait for an hour, he left the police station and refused to assist any further in the investigation:

I didn't go because I wanted to collaborate, but they made me wait for a whole hour. They had forgotten about me! I left and when they asked me to return, I didn't go. (*Le Droit*, April 29, 2014)

In sum, these excerpts provide a deeper understanding of the culture of entitlement as the players reach out to the media to expose material losses, their right to play

of entitlement, silence, and protection in connection to the University of Ottawa's male hockey team as reflected through the local newspapers. A significant finding emerging from the data is that playing hockey was perceived as a fundamental right and not a privilege by the players, and that anger soared when that "right" was revoked from them. Interestingly, all of the resentment expressed by the athletes as depicted by the media has focused on the university and more specifically, the president, while disregarding the role of the accused players and the coach in the president's decision to suspend the team. The attitude of the players exemplifies Kimmel's "diminished capacity for empathy" as a central component of the culture of entitlement, and Messner's "suppression of empathy" among male athletes through *homosocial bonding* (46).

More concerning, though left unspoken by the players, is their "concerted silence" around the issue, which is a reflection of men going against "everything they know to be good," to quote the words of Kimmel, in order to uphold their code of loyalty to each other. If they have remained silent regarding the perpetration of the assault and their failure to report what they knew to the authorities, they have been rather vocal in positioning themselves as victims to deflect responsibility and manage their personal image and that of the team. This particular strategy—positioning men as victims—aligns with the wider men's rights' advocates' discourse on the victimization of men (Blais and Dupuis-Déri). More specifically, the defensive attitude of the hockey players and their supporters is grounded in the underlying rhetoric of women destroying men's reputation with false allegations (Romito). It is also worth mentioning that a few weeks after the assault occurred, a

men's right group organized a conference at the University of Ottawa intending to dismiss the use of the terms "rape culture" in connection with incidents of sexual violence on campus, including the assault by players of the male's varsity hockey team.

This overwhelming focus on the players as victims in the media and in the general public has cast aside the issue of male sexual violence towards women. Virtually all of the players' strategies to manage their image did not include taking a strong stance against sexual violence and the behaviours of the two alleged perpetrators on the team. Not a single word of empathy for the victim has been identified among the articles analyzed for this study. The consequences of particular losses such as selling a condo or missing out on a banquet was not put into perspective with the consequences the victim has to suffer from having been sexually assaulted by two of the players. When looking at the grand scheme of things, what they consider a "lack of respect towards them" is revealing of the prevalence of male entitlement in sports. Nevertheless, male entitlement would no longer stand without the protection of the media.

Indeed, as journalists bluntly came to the defense of the players with articles framing the issue in terms of male entitlement and male victimization, the team may have found in the media a useful resource to shape the public's opinion about the assault. While framing the central issue as the team's suspension, sexual assault became peripheral in the media coverage, therefore twisting the public's perception about the real issue at stake in this story. Even if we grant that some of these journalists had good intentions, they have failed utterly to challenge the worldview of those privileged athletes and their absence of empathy for the female victim. More broadly, they have safeguarded the cultures of masculinity by promoting the rhetoric of the players' victimization, and by doing so, have acted as stalwart defenders of the dominant ideology. In this sense, the media did more than protect a few individual players; they protected the interests of the patriarchy and skillfully distracted the population from the issue of male violence against women which prevails in our society. That being said, important implications arise from those findings.

Implications for Campuses, Male Athletes, and the Media

Education plays a vital role in the prevention of sexual violence against women by male athletes. Some universities have consequently implemented sexual assault prevention policies for athletes—which include training sessions on sexual assault prevention—and they turned out to have a positive impact on the players (Kimmel). In fact, targeting specific settings that are more prone to male culture

and perpetuation of negative attitudes towards women, including sporting clubs, is a promising avenue (Flood and Pease). However, to insure effectiveness, those programs need to be supported in a coherent manner by the campus administration and coaches, thus moving away from the culture of protection and addressing the issue seriously (Kimmel). Furthermore, involving high-status athletes as positive role-models who advocate pro-feminist values decreases tolerance of violence against women (Crosset); they hence play a critical role in reducing sexual violence on campuses (Wilson). As Katz points out:

If we can convince popular athletes and other exemplars of traditional 'masculine' success to model non-sexist behavior, we believe they can contribute to a dramatic shift in male behavior toward women. At the very least, they will help to catalyze a growing intolerance by all men for the abuse of women. (173)

Gender-integrated sports also contribute to a decline in negative attitudes towards women (Anderson). Brackenridge argues that structural initiatives are also required, notably the increase of women's representation in sports, but also "cultural initiatives" which resist the traditional images of women in sports in order to challenge the sexist attitudes towards them (265). However, Lorraine Greaves, Olena Hankivsky and Sandra Kirby point out that "changing the values of sports requires a reassessment of the values of the society which supports it" (28).

The three cultures of masculinity in young men could well benefit from serious challenges (Kimmel). In this case, if the coach had been pro-active by condemning sexual violence and reporting the perpetrators to the authorities, the whole case could have turned out differently. Moreover, coaches can have such an influence on young people that they have a duty to go beyond the actions of their players on the field and provide a positive model for the whole team. Similarly, the culture of entitlement will not be broken until perpetrators learn the consequences of their actions. If they assume that their peers will protect them notwithstanding the circumstances, they will never be held accountable for their actions and inactions, and this inevitably reinforce a sentiment of superiority. Playing hockey shouldn't be perceived as a fundamental right positioned above the well-being and security of others. The same is true for the culture of silence and the culture of protection which calls for serious challenging in order to reduce the incidence of violence towards women and girls. This involves speaking up, denouncing, breaking the silence, and reporting such incidents. Bystanders programs have proven particularly effective at targeting this issue (Coker *et al.*). Those programs, among other results, lower

rape-supportive attitudes and rape proclivity (Katz and Moore), bullying and sexual harassment (Nickerson *et al.*), and sexually aggressive behaviors (Gidycz, Orchowski, and Berkowitz).

Finally, the media coverage of a particular case can provide a snapshot of broader societal beliefs while at the same time influencing the public's opinion on a specific issue. By giving a voice to the players, the local press has, intentionally or not, framed the story in terms of male entitlement. This issue is not unique; other cases of sexual violence have been reported in the past where the media has emphasized the consequences of the assaults on the lives and futures of the perpetrators (see Garcia-Rojas). Depicting sexual violence this way undoubtedly has consequences for girls and women in general. Greaves, Hankivsky, and Kirby draw attention to the fact that the media sometimes acts to further silence sexual assault victims by creating a stigma around the issue of sexual violence in sports (27). They should instead build up an open dialogue regarding this topic, while ensuring that they do not contribute to the shame and humiliation felt by the victims. If the Canadian criminal code protects the alleged perpetrators until proven guilty, it does not mean that the press has to go to great lengths to protect them and thereby, elicit public sympathy at the expense of the victims.

Conclusion

By deepening our understanding of the cultures of masculinity at play through the media coverage of a sexual assault perpetrated by hockey players from the University of Ottawa's team, this paper offers a critical stance on the pervasiveness of the patriarchal rules that prevail in men's varsity teams on campuses. It has also examined how the media themselves have failed to address the issue of sexual violence and rape culture and, to a certain extent, have sided with the hockey players by focusing on the suspension of the team. By giving a voice to the male athletes, the press framed the story in terms of male entitlements and took the side of the hockey team and its players over that of the survivor and her experience of assault. This particular case could also be useful in studying serious pitfalls when reporting sexual violence, as it is still common for the media to obscure male violence against women (Bayliffe).

Besides the issues discussed in this article, a broader reflection is required regarding men's status in our society, who are frequently positioned as victims and protected, even when they commit reprehensible and criminal actions (Romito). On a positive note, the University of Ottawa responded promptly and in a decisively strict manner in

regards to the case; it could have easily been swept under the carpet to preserve the university's reputation. However, discharging the coach and suspending the team aroused intense media interest and fueled the anger of the players and their supporters. Nonetheless, it does send a clear message to young men regarding the seriousness of the issue and that privileges should be removed when violence against women is perpetrated by one or several members of a varsity team.

However, in order for men in the community to understand the issues at stake and the reasoning behind the withdrawal of privileges as a response to sexual assault, the patriarchal norms of manhood remain to be challenged within varsity teams and outside the institution of sports. In that respect, Messner (2002) argues that prevention programs targeting male athletes are unlikely to engender positive outcomes if the culture in which the institution of sports takes place remains unchallenged. He further suggests that the institution of sport and the interaction of men within it do not exist in isolation from the rest of society, and as such, "a commitment to address the root causes of men's violence against women will ultimately run up against the need to fundamentally rethink both the dominant conceptions of gender in the society and the specific ways that gender difference and hierarchy continue to be constructed in sports" (158). As a result, challenging the cultures of silence, protection, and entitlement in sports settings is part of the solution, but pursuing the broader feminist struggle for gender equality throughout society remains the most important way to dislodge deeply-rooted ideas about masculinity in all its various manifestations.

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