



## **SECRET CONNECTIONS:**

**MALE COLLEGIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTACT SPORTS,  
PORNOGRAPHY, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**CultureReframed**

**Secret Connections:  
Male Collegial and Professional Contact Sports,  
Pornography, and Violence against Women**

Prepared for Culture Reframed

by

Walter S. DeKeseredy, PhD

Anna Deane Carlson Endowed Chair of Social Sciences,

Director of the Research Center on Violence, and

Professor of Sociology

West Virginia University

walter.dekeseredy@mail.wvu.edu

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Pornography, Image-Based Sexual Abuse, and Athletes' Violence against Women</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pornography, Elite Male Contact Sports, and In-Person Violence against Women</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>15</b>

## Introduction

A small but growing social scientific literature shows that misogyny and rape culture narratives are endemic to high revenue, contact male sports, such as ice hockey, football, and basketball (*Sutton, 2022*). These accounts not only influence players to engage in harmful patriarchal practices, but they also encourage rape myth acceptance in the general population, especially among frequent viewers of televised games. On-air sports are not solely responsible for creating disrespectful environments for women, but they are, nonetheless, highly influential. People who regularly watch National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL) games are familiar with close-ups of scantily dressed cheerleaders, and such sexism and sexual objectification leads to problems uncovered by communications studies scholars Kathleen Custers and Jenna McNallie. They conducted an online survey of 465 undergraduate students enrolled at a large, midwestern U.S. university and found that increased television sports viewership is strongly related to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and sexual objectification. These factors, in turn, are intricately connected to rape myth acceptance (*Custers & McNallie, 2017*). Other researchers uncovered data showing that these four elements are major components of a rape-supportive culture that also consists of masculine gender roles, feminine gender roles, and adversarial sexual beliefs (*Johnson & Johnson, 2021*).

Misogyny's tentacles are in other types of mass media, including pornography, and those who manufacture it are fully aware of male contact sports' popularity and viewership. For instance, in August 2020, porn performer Phoenix Marie took to Twitter to celebrate the return of the National Hockey League (NHL) after COVID-19 forced the shutdown of the season. She posted, "All my hockey lovers and players slide in my DMs" (*Postmedia News, 2020*). She also promoted her OnlyFans account on Twitter and gave away free 30-day access. Around the same time, porn performer Mary Carey went into a Home Depot wearing a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team shirt and posted pictures of herself on Instagram along with the caption: "I'm looking for the power tool department, can you help me?" (*Carey, July 27, 2020*).

Traces of porn also appear in televised NHL hockey games, and some broadcasters make statements like these (*JamieD, 2022*):

- "The goalie is weak between the legs."
- "He managed to barely slip it in there."
- "He got nailed from behind."
- "He just gave him a reach around."
- "He stuck his stick between the opposing player's legs."
- He took that shot from the opposing player right in the face."
- He was looking backdoor and he snuck it in there."

Porn, too, has infiltrated some elements of women's hockey. In 2017, Pornhub—one of the world's largest internet porn sites—sponsored an adult female street roller hockey team based in Perth, Ontario, Canada. The team was called "PerthHub: Two Girls One Puck," and it got "a bunch of cash" for uniforms and equipment after it sent a "really average email" to the company. In exchange, Pornhub only asked for a photo of the women in their new jerseys. Maddy, a PerthHub player and team marketing manager, justified the sponsorship by claiming: "Porn is definitely not going anywhere any time soon, and we think it's just one of those things it's best to accept" (*Papas, 2017*).

Pornhub is not the only business contributing to the pornification of women's hockey. Calendars, for example, showcasing semi clad female ice hockey players are easily available online, one of which was produced in 2020 by the Russian Women's Hockey League (WHL). It features 12 half-naked players with flowers and fruits barely covering their bodies. According to a WHL marketing statement promoted by the Russian state media propagandist network RT, this calendar reveals that "along with tough hockey qualities, [each] player has tenderness, sincerity, and delicacy" (*RT, December 22, 2019*).

Other types of female hockey players take it to different level. In 2015, the Lytham St. Annes Field Hockey Club, based in Lancashire, UK, posed naked to raise money for the Lytham Sports Foundation. David Perkins, chairman of the club, said: "I am so proud of all the girls that have taken part in the hockey calendar. . . . Lytham Cricket and Sports Club has always felt like a family and to see the girls supporting our charity to ensure the future of our club continues for generations is brilliant to see" (*Jackson-Edwards, October 19, 2015*).

It is not surprising that porn poisons sport. Documented by Culture Reframed and other antiporn organizations (e.g., National Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation), pornography negatively affects millions of people's relationships, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors because it is widely used and distributed around the world. Porn consumption is not a rare act committed by a small group of pathological people, and it causes much cultural and health-related damage (*see DeKeseredy, 2020*). Still, rarely discussed by researchers, journalists, policy makers, sports league executives, and team owners is that pornography use is "rampant" in male contact team sports and serves as a "how-to" guide for "out-of-sport" sexual assault and other types of woman abuse, including the production of the above calendars (*Pappas, 2012*). This white paper reviews the current state of social scientific work on the secret connections between porn and online and offline abusive acts committed by men who play the most popular and profitable contact sports.

## Pornography, Image-Based Sexual Abuse, and Athletes' Violence against Women

In this “post-Playboy world,” porn transcends videos, pictures, and adult novels (Jensen, 2007, p. 38). The sexual objectification and degradation of women and children exists in a wide range of contexts, including strip bars, live sex shows, mainstream social media (e.g., Facebook), and advertising (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, 2017). Brian McNair correctly points out on the back cover of his 2002 book *Striptease Culture* that “sex and sexual imagery permeate every aspect of culture” (McNair, 2002). Most of what he refers to is harmful and contributes to copious pain and suffering. One chief example is *image-based sexual abuse* (IBSA) (McGlynn et al., 2017). This is termed, in some academic and legal circles, as *nonconsensual image sharing* (a label seen by some scholars as “falling under the broad umbrella of image-based sexual abuse”) (Huber, 2022, p. 2), *revenge porn* (Hall & Hearn, 2018), *nonconsensual pornography*, or *involuntary pornography* (Franks, 2015).

Regardless of which terminology one prefers, the images and videos discussed in this section have “become pornified,” a “form of entertainment,” and “surrounded and buried within a wider pornography culture” (Huber, 2022, p. 11). These media are typically made by men with the consent of the women they were intimately involved with, but then distributed online without their consent, predictably following women’s termination of relationships (DeKeseredy et al., 2017). IBSA websites and blogs first appeared on the internet in 2000 and started to gain national attention in the United States following the creation of IsAnyoneUp.com in 2010 (Salter & Crofts, 2015). Reneè D. Lamphere and Kweilin T. Pikciunas note in their history of revenge porn that:

The creator [of Is Anyone Up?], Hunter Moore, a 25-year-old man from Sacramento, California, began the website which featured sexually explicit photos, a link to the person in the photo’s Facebook, Twitter, and/or Tumblr, as well as personal information about the person. The site allowed anonymous submissions of photos of any person to its database, and at one point it had reached a rate of over 30 millions views per month. (Lamphere & Pikciunas, 2016, p. 148)

There is, regardless of its shape and form, a “massive potential audience for revenge porn” (Nicola Henry, summarized in Marriner, 2015), especially if professional male athletes and other kinds of popular male celebrities (e.g., actors and musicians) produce it. One recent high-profile case involves what Buffalo Bills pass-rusher Von Miller did in May 2020 in a “fit of jealousy, anger, and rage.” He nonconsensually shared a sexually explicit photo (taken consensually) of a woman he dated with “two well-known celebrities” along with this crude, misogynistic message: “This the b\*tch you want? You can have her dawg” (TMZ Sports, 2022). No criminal charges were filed, but the target of his abuse sued Miller, and not surprisingly, the suit was soon dismissed because apparently, he and the survivor, who is the mother of his child, “are trying to work things out.”

Though with limitations, the #MeToo movement has resulted in some instances of tangible action taken against male athlete perpetrators like Miller (*Abrams & Bartlett, 2018; Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019*). Nonetheless, professional athletes generally avoid extensive punishment because of the resources and structural power advantage they have over their victims (*Sailofsky, 2022*). In fact, most image-based sexual abuse offenders, regardless of their celebrity status, never endure legal consequences—their female targets are the ones who suffer (*Zauner, 2021*). Many if not most of these survivors experience one or more of the following outcomes: victim-blaming, ridicule, lost employment opportunities, and alienation from family, friends, and community members (*Henry et al., 2020*).

The rationale for using the term IBSA instead of revenge porn includes the fact that it is not only ex-partners who nonconsensually share sexual images. There are also people who do so for a variety of other reasons, such as to make money, as a sick joke, and sometimes for no discernable reason at all. Moreover, the term *revenge porn* puts too much emphasis on the perpetrators' motives at the expense of the damage done to victims (*McGlynn & Rackley, 2016*). Consider, too, that images created without consent are also often shared nonconsensually (*DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016*). Two prominent events found in the world of elite male sport warrant attention here. The first involves the case of Logan Mailloux, deemed by many hockey fans to be a forgivable mistake. In November 2020, while on loan from the Ontario Hockey League's (OHL) London Knights—due to the COVID-19 shutdowns—to SK Lejon (a Swedish amateur team), Mailloux photographed a woman without her consent while engaging in a consensual sexual act. He then shared this image and her name nonconsensually with his teammates on Snapchat. He was charged with, and convicted of, defamation and offensive photography, and then fined \$1,650 in U.S. dollars by a Swedish court in December 2020. In spite of this, he was the Montreal Canadiens' first round draft pick in July 2021, participated in some Canadiens' training camp activities in August 2022, and continues to play for the London Knights. It is also highly likely that he will eventually play for either the Montreal Canadiens next year or their farm team, the Laval Rocket, while the survivor of his assault continues to experience severe emotional distress and anxiety.

Ponder, too, the case of a highly publicized rape in Steubenville,<sup>1</sup> a small city of about 18,000 in a rural county found in the eastern, Appalachian region of Ohio. This atrocity gives us pause to contemplate the seriousness of image-based sexual abuse in real-life terms. In Steubenville, two high-school football players were convicted of raping a young woman of high school age while she was intoxicated after attending several parties held on August 11, 2012, right before the new school year began. Bringing this incident to light were the social media posts: chats, videos, and photographs, on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook of the incident by those who were there.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the documentary *Roll Red Roll* for more information on this sexual assault and the role that social media played in this crime and on the community.

This event highlights those who callously posted their exploits on social media outlets, others at the party who did nothing to stop the abuse, the pedestal on which football is placed in this economically declining area, and the tight-knit relationships between the sheriff and other community leaders with the football coach, team, and parents and players (*DeKeseredy et al., 2014*). It is also about the trauma experienced by the rape survivor. After the two perpetrators were found guilty on March 17, 2013, she was threatened by people siding with the players, and she experienced other harrowing indicators of victim-blaming that, in the words of Amy Davidson Sorkin, left the survivor “wondering if she has any friends in the world” (*Sorkin, 2013*). Her experience adds to the list of reasons why some feminist scholars assert that the term *revenge porn* ignores the devastating effects on survivors.

These two examples of IBSA committed by male athletes are not isolated incidents or the acts of a select few deviant men. Referring specifically to ice hockey, for example, Rachel Doerrie, contributor to *Rinkside* and an OHL scout, correctly noted in her July 29, 2021 column, they are products of a broader culture:

Quite clearly, hockey culture is in a terrible place. . . . It’s in a place where it’s fine to draft players guilty of sex crimes or racial bullying and or to hire those accused of domestic violence to front office jobs. This is the culture that’s been accepted in the game: As long as you can skate, shoot, hit, and contribute on the ice, you can be a deplorable human off of it. (*Doerrie, 2021*)

Doerrie is not exaggerating. There are—as described throughout my forthcoming book (with Stu Cowan and Martin D. Schwartz) *Skating on Thin Ice: Professional Hockey, and Violence Against Women*—many more high-level hockey players like Mailloux that could easily be identified here. He is not among a unique minority who abuse women and who, as Gianluca Agostinelli puts it in his July 26, 2021 contribution to the *Conversation*, “treat social media as virtual locker rooms, where they brag of their sexual achievements and share their sordid stories of their ‘conquests’ of women” (*Agostinelli, 2021*). For example, in June 2021, two members of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League team the Victoriaville Tigres, Nicolas Daigle and Massimo Siciliano, both 19 at the time, sexually assaulted a minor and filmed this harm, which was shared by Daigle.

Some in-person sexual assault perpetrators do not post their crimes on social media but still record them. In the summer of 2022, Canadian hockey fans were shocked by widely publicized news stories of allegations of gang rapes involving members of the 2003 and 2018 men’s World Junior Hockey Teams. Sources told The Sports Network’s Rick Westhead in July 2022 that a player called the 2003 atrocity a “‘f—ing lamb roast’ before videotaping their [group] rape of an unresponsive woman” (*Maddeaux, 2022*). The video is six or seven minutes long and shows nearly six players taking turns sexually assaulting this woman who was lying face up on a pool table (*McGran & Leavitt, 2022*). The 2018 gang rape survivor was also videotaped, but in July 2022, lawyers for eight unnamed members



of the team showed Globe and Mail reporters two videoclips recorded on June 19, 2018, first at 3:25 a.m. and then again at 4:26 a.m., which they maintain proves that the sexual contact was consensual and that the woman was not scared, intimidated, or intoxicated (Friesen et al., 2022).

These events are just the tip of the iceberg within the realm of male team contact sports. As well, they make up, to quote Liverpool Hope University scholar Antoinette Huber, “only one part of a wider misogynistic culture that is increasingly seeping into, and poisoning, a wide range of online spaces and communities” (Huber, 2022). For Huber, among others (see, for example, DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016), these and similar digital sexual assaults committed by male nonathletes also tell us much about the role of *male peer support*, which is attachments to male peers and the resources that these men provide that encourage and legitimate woman abuse (DeKeseredy, 1988). That Mailloux’s Swedish teammates and coach allowed him to engage in nonconsensual sharing reinforces beliefs and values that promote violence against women. Furthermore, male spectators at the Steubenville incident did nothing to stop the rape, nor the filming of it. And consider the reaction of several young, college-age men, one of whom was enrolled at The Ohio State University and from the same county where the Steubenville barbarity occurred. Caught on a cell phone video camera by a friend while he was drunk at a party, he laughingly proclaimed: “They raped her harder than that cop raped Marsellus Wallace in *Pulp Fiction*. Have you seen that?” He then proceeded to concoct several other analogies, making fun of the incident as if it was the replay of a football game telecast. Signifying this young man’s insensitive quips as a form of comedy, another partygoer tosses out the compliment: “He comes up with them so fast.” That video also went viral, adding another layer of shame to the Steubenville case (DeKeseredy et al., pp. 181–182).

Though 35 years of rigorous research shows that the relationship between male peer support and woman abuse is fairly complex,<sup>2</sup> a relatively new body of sociological knowledge strongly indicates that the pornography industry and pornography consumption are integral parts of the equation in the world of sport (DeKeseredy, Cowan, & Schwartz, *in press*). Pornography reflects, amplifies, and provides support for sexist attitudes and values, making it a fundamental piece of today’s modern and expanded rape-supportive culture that contributes to IBSA committed by a large cadre of male athletes. There is, as described in the next section, also a robust correlation between pornography, male peer support, and in-person assaults committed by a sizeable portion of male athletes, particularly ice hockey players (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Cowan, *in press*).

---

<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth history of research on how male peer support contributes to woman abuse, see DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013.

## Pornography, Elite Male Contact Sports, and In-Person Violence against Women

Like millions of other men around the world, those affiliated with elite contact sports teams (such as hockey), are taught to objectify women and porn is one powerful agent of such socialization. Porn is also closely connected to players' offline violence against women. In fact, male bonding through drinking while viewing porn is a common practice and is a "gateway to sexual deviancy" as uncovered by Pappas' study of U.S. collegiate hockey players. Pappas summarizes the statements by one of his interviewees as follows:

Two-thirds of his team would show up late night to participate in a competitive drinking event that involved pornography, team bonding, camaraderie, and perhaps some peer pressure as well. Furthermore, it is apparent that these activities were normalized within this team's culture because the players knew exactly how much time they had to finish their "30 pack" since they were all too familiar with the pornography and its accompanying binge drinking. (*Pappas, 2012, p. 60*)

Two players told Pappas they were convinced that porn caused violent sexual behaviors since often viewing demeaning acts made them "more acceptable" and they provided "a lot of ideas" (*Pappas, p. 61*). One of them said:

I don't want to be a porn star you know, but . . . when you see something on a porn, maybe I'm going to try that tomorrow or tonight when I bring a girl home. I think a lot of ideas come, where we get these ideas, comes from that. They're not natural, some of the things we tried to do. Like the two-on-ones, the three-on-ones, whatever. . . . I think it has a big influence [on sexual deviancy] . . . I think it's the stuff you've heard about, stuff you've seen—the porno stuff, or guys' older brothers had done and told them about it. (*Pappas, 2012, p. 60*)

Another player revealed:

Just about every guy I know watches porn, you know big, big stack at my house . . . [and] I know guys who want to try . . . every guy want to try what they saw in a porn . . . [and] I think if they're abusive and they're people who . . . have these cravings for any kind of violence, and they sort of watch this sort of thing, they're going to want to try it, you know with a girl. (*Pappas, 2012, p. 62*)

The world is multivariate and pornography alone cannot explain the rampant sexual objectification and abuse of women endemic to male contact sports. Additionally, there are no rigorous quantitative empirical demonstrations of the relationship between male

athletes' porn consumption and face-to-face violence against women. Yet, this association is, to quote Kevin Young (one of the world's leading experts on sport-related violence), "not *without* evidence" (Young, 2019, p. 247), as showed by Pappas' qualitative research and anecdotal data featured in my forthcoming, co-authored book *Skating on Thin Ice*. For instance, dating back to Laura Robinson's work published in 1998, there are now sufficient data supporting her claim that gang rapes of female fans are common in the world of elite Canadian junior hockey<sup>3</sup> and that these ruthless misogynistic behaviors are means of ensuring that players adhere to their teams' narrow conceptions of masculinity (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Cowan, *in press*). Actually, recent research shows that the problem just might be worse in junior hockey than it is in professional hockey (Moore & Shah, 2021). While there has been only limited study of college and university hockey teams, there is some reason to believe that the problem is rampant there as well (Anderson & White, 2018).

Recall that one of Pappas' respondents talked about the influence of watching "three-on-ones" in pornographic videos. There is now robust evidence of many *multiple perpetrator rapes* (MPR) committed by men who play college and professional basketball and football in the United States (see Sutton, 2022), and at least 60-70% of professionals who play these two types of sport use porn "everyday" (Pappas, 2012, pp. 47-48). MPR is an "overarching term for any sexual assault involving two or more perpetrators" (Horvath & Kelly, 2009, p. 94).

Pappas explains the connection between porn consumption and athletes' in-person sexual assaults on women as follows:

Positive rape portrayals depicted through movies, television, and pornography desensitize men to the seriousness of this crime while increasing men's acceptance of rape myths, which include beliefs that women secretly desire to be raped even though they resist. . . . In the end, it is more than apparent that pornography can influence certain men to engage in sexually aggressive behavior with women, and because many elite-level sport demand their athletes develop an ultra-aggressive nature in order to promote success, certain athletes are at-risk for participating in sexual aggression particularly when they frequently use degrading, violent pornography and begin to accept the harmful messages it contains.  
(Pappas, 2012, p. 63)

As noted above, porn use is one of elite male athletes' major routine activities. Pappas found that professional athletes' large salaries make porn use easily affordable and since they travel to games on planes rather than on buses, they have much free time to watch internet offerings. Pappas, too, uncovered that certain professional sports organizations accept porn to the point where they supply it to their players. A Major

---

<sup>3</sup> In Canada, Canadian junior hockey consists of three major leagues: the Ontario Hockey League, the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, and the Western Hockey League. The age range is 16 to 20.

League Baseball player told him: “A lot of the major league clubhouse bathrooms have girly magazines everywhere,” while another said, “Oh in clubhouse . . . they would be there, they would be all over I guess, every clubhouse” (Pappas, 2012, p. 50). What is more, Pappas found that 95% of the athletes representing every level of and type of sport in his study were exposed to a wide range of porn within their teams.

Though thought to be many, an unknown number of junior hockey players are examples of the “certain athletes” identified by Pappas (DeKeseredy, Cowan, & Schwartz, *in press*). As Laura Robinson discovered in her study of sexual assault in junior hockey:

A player who engages in group sex, who long ago shut down the voice inside him that questions if the woman has really consented, does so because he needs to meet his own standards of masculinity and gain the approval of his teammates, who will judge him not as a compassionate human being, but as a hockey player. His actions have nothing to do with providing sexual pleasure and respect for a woman and everything with being seen as a man in his world. He does this because being a “team player” is good for his game, his bank, account, and his future worth in hockey. (Robinson, 1998, p. 118)

Some readers may argue that Robinson’s 1998 observation is dated and that the cruelties she exposed are much less likely to occur in this current era of #MeToo. Nothing can be further from the truth, as chronicled in *Skating on Thin Ice*. Sports journalist Jashvina Shah reminds us that:

Nothing has changed. In some ways, it’s gotten worse. . . . Hockey is still operating now the way it did twenty years ago. . . . Organized hockey is too often a safe haven for predators. This isn’t new. . . . But now it feels worse than ever before. Now it feels like gloating in the faces of the survivors. (Shah, 2021)

Empirical support for Shah’s claim is found in a May 2022 legal case. Noted earlier, a young woman was gang raped by eight Canadian World Junior Hockey Team members in April 2018 in London, Ontario, Canada. She had been drinking with some players at a bar and then went to a hotel room with one of them. After they had sex, he invited seven of his teammates into the room and then they slapped her, spat on her, and repeatedly sexually assaulted her, which are behaviors routinely featured in much of today’s porn (Westhead, 2022). She recently agreed to drop a lawsuit for \$3.5 million Canadian dollars in exchange for a settlement reached with Hockey Canada (the governing body of junior hockey in Canada), and some of the offenders are now playing in the NHL. The survivor, who is now 24, claimed that Hockey Canada was told about the assaults and neglected to investigate or punish the perpetrators (Westhead, 2022), which lends even further support to the claim that elite men’s hockey, like pornography, is a central part of the broader rape culture that continues to terrorize women and children around the world (DeKeseredy, Cowan, & Schwartz, *in press*).

## Next Steps

Some studies show that male professional and collegial contact sport athletes have higher rates of violence against women compared to male members of the general population, but large-scale systematic research on the extent, distribution, sources, and consequences of such players' abuse of women is in very short supply. No one, to the best of my knowledge, has thus far conducted a representative sample survey of potential male offenders. Likewise, there are no major surveys of women's victimization experiences in the world of elite male sports (*DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Cowan, in press*), and there are no quantitative studies that determine whether abusive male athletes are more likely to use porn than other types of violent men.

What we know for sure, though, is that athletes are sexually victimized more often than others, mostly by other members of their sports communities. A June 2021 digital survey of 800 U.S. adults under the age of 45 found that more than one in four current or former student athletes were sexually assaulted by someone in a position of power on college or university campuses, compared with one in 10 of those in the general population. Athletes were three times more likely to report such abuse, and coaches were the most identified perpetrators (*Book, 2021*). Still, the influence of pornography was not measured and thus the next step is to conduct self-report surveys of potential offenders and victimization surveys that prioritize gauging the impact of porn.

Most of the current data on male athletes' deviant and criminal conduct, in fact, comes from North American sports journalists and legal experts (*Gotberg & Wiersma-Mosley, 2022*). This is not to say that these professionals have not made important contributions to raising awareness and to efforts aimed at preventing violence against women in sport. They certainly have, but it is now time for more social scientists to jump into the fray and I hope that this white paper will stimulate some of those sitting on the sidelines to do so.

It is not only new research that is necessary. We need effective answers to the question: "What is to be done about pornography as a source of violence against women in male contact sports?" One would be hard pressed to find answers to this question in the social scientific literature on sport. Keep in mind that the words "pornography" and "porn" are nowhere to be found in the indices included in the most widely read and cited books on violence and sport (*one major example is Giulianotti, 2017*). At the risk of appearing self-serving, the only recent book written for a broad audience to examine the secret connections between porn use and violence against women in male contact sports is my co-authored offering *Skating on Thin Ice*. There are, for sure, new, innovative curricula designed to help stop collegial and professional athletes from abusing women, such as Sheldon Kennedy's Respect Group training program.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as far as I know, they do not include strategies aimed at preventing men from consuming violent and dehumanizing porn. For reasons provided in this white paper and in *Skating on Thin Ice*, any education

and/or training program aimed at reducing athletes' violence against women is incomplete without these initiatives.

## Conclusions

The information provided in this white paper and other sources confirm what Michael Messner, a leading expert on the connection between gender, sports, and violence concluded. Based on his analysis of the part sports play in the construction of white, heterosexual masculinity, he contends that, "male athletes' off-the-field violence is generated from the normal everyday dynamics at the center of male athletic culture" (Messner, 2005). These everyday dynamics, as demonstrated by this white paper, include the frequent consumption of pornography, which is not unexpected since pornography is now "seamlessly integrated" into mainstream society (Paul, 2005, p. 5) and sport is now "a dominant social institution that provides existential meaning and joy in many people's lives" (Sutton, 2022, p. 3610). Due to the efforts of Culture Reframed and a rapidly growing cadre of researchers, there is now ample evidence of the *pornification* of popular culture of which sport is a major part of.

There was a burst of creative investigation into sports masculinities and violence against women in the 1980s and 1990s (Schwartz, 2021), but this connection has been ignored in recent years. There are occasional attempts to reveal the deep-seated, antiwoman culture in sports, such as the series of exposes about the behaviors of prominent people like former NFL player Ray Rice who was publicly exposed, on a hotel elevator security tape in February 2014, punching his then-fiancé in the face. The horrifying video ends with Rice dragging her limp body out of elevator. Unfortunately, this connection has been mostly ignored in recent years (DeKeseredy, Cowan, & Schwartz, *in press*). It is time, then, to go back and study this topic again and prioritize the rigorous study of how pornography fits into the relationship between male contact sports, toxic masculinities, and violence against women.

---

<sup>4</sup> For more information on this program, see <https://www.respectgroupinc.com>.

## References

- Abrams, M., & Bartlett M. L. (2018). #SportToo: Implications of and best practices for the #MeToo movement in sport. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 13(2), 243–253. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jcsp.2018-0065>
- Agostinelli, G. (2021, July 26). The Montreal Canadiens have legitimized rape culture by drafting Logan Mailloux. *Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/the-montreal-canadiens-have-legitimized-rape-culture-by-drafting-logan-mailloux-165047>
- Anderson, E., & White, A. (2018). Sport, theory and social problems: A critical introduction (2nd ed.). *Routledge*.
- Book, L. (2021, August 31). College athletes report high incidence of sexual abuse by campus authority figures, survey finds. *Lauren's Kids*. <https://laurenkids.org/college-athletes-report-high-incidence-of-sexual-abuse-by-campus-authority-figures-survey-finds/>
- Carey, Mary (@realmarycareyz). (2020, July 27). "I am looking for the power tool department, can you help me?" *Instagram photo series*. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CDKNE2Nnwr1/>
- Custers, K., & McNallie, J. (2017). The relationship between television sports exposure and rape myth acceptance: The mediating role of sexism and sexual objectification of women. *Violence Against Women*, 23(7), 813–829. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216651340>
- DeKeseredy, W. S. (1988). Woman abuse in dating relationships: The relevance of social support theory. *Journal of Family Violence*, 3(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00994662>
- DeKeseredy, W. S. (2020). Understanding the harms of pornography: The contributions of social scientific knowledge. *Culture Reframed*. [https://violenceresearch.wvu.edu/files/d/06c75dda-91d5-40d4-bee0-c9eeafc8fb8b/harms\\_of\\_pornographypdf.pdf](https://violenceresearch.wvu.edu/files/d/06c75dda-91d5-40d4-bee0-c9eeafc8fb8b/harms_of_pornographypdf.pdf)
- DeKeseredy, W. S., Cowan, S., & Schwartz, M. D. (in press). Skating on thin ice: Professional hockey, rape culture, and violence against women. *Aevo/University of Toronto Press*.
- DeKeseredy, W. S., Dragiewicz, M., & Schwartz, M. D. (2017). Abusive endings: Separation and divorce violence against women. *University of California Press*.
- DeKeseredy, W. S., & Hall-Sanchez, A. (2017). Adult pornography and violence against women in the heartland: Results from a rural southeast Ohio study. *Violence Against Women*, 23(7), 830–849. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216648795>

DeKeseredy, W. S., Muzzatti, S. L., & Donnermeyer, J. F. (2014). Mad men in bib overalls: Media's horrification and pornification of rural culture. *Critical Criminology*, 22, 179–197. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-013-9190-7>

DeKeseredy, W. S., & Schwartz, M. D. (2013). Male peer support and violence against women: The history and verification of a theory. *Northeastern University Press*.

DeKeseredy, W. S., & Schwartz, M. D. (2016). Thinking sociologically about image-based sexual abuse: The contribution of male peer support theory. *Sexualization, Media, & Society*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2374623816684692>

DeKeseredy, W. S., Schwartz, M. D., & Cowan, S. (in press). On thin ice: Toward a modified male peer support theory of professional hockey players' violence against women. *Sociology of Sport Journal*.

Doerrie, R. (2021, July 29). The Logan Mailloux draft pick confirms worst fears of who is and not welcome in the NHL. *Rinkside*. <https://eprinkside.com/2021/07/29/logan-mailloux-column>

Fileborn, B., & Loney-Howes, R. (Eds.). (2019). #MeToo and the politics of social change. *Springer*

Franks, M. A. (2015, August 17) Drafting an effective “revenge porn” law: A guide for legislators. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.2468823>

Friesen, J., Freeze, C., & Doolittle, R. (2022, July 19). Canadian world junior player asked woman whether she had gone to police after alleged sexual assault. *Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-hockey-canada-sexual-assault-lawsuit-police/>

Fritz, N., Malic, V., Paul, B., & Zhou, Y. (2020). A descriptive analysis of the types, targets, and relative frequency of aggression in mainstream pornography. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 49, 3041–3053. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-020-01773-0>

Gotberg, K., & Wiersma-Mosley, J. D. (2022). An empirical investigation of violence against women in the NFL. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 46(5), 445–457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01937235211043645>

Giulianotti, R. (Ed.). (2017). Routledge handbook of the sociology of sport. *Routledge*.

Hall, M., & Hearn, J. (2018). Revenge pornography: Gender, sexualities and motivations. *Routledge*.



- Henry, N., McGlynn, C., Flynn, A., Johnson, K., Powell, A., & Scott, Adrian J. Image-based Sexual abuse: A study on the causes and consequences of non-consensual nude or sexual imagery. *Routledge*, 2020.
- Horvath, M. A. H., & Kelly, L. (2009). Multiple perpetrator rape: Naming an offence and initial research findings. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 15(1), 83–96.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600802653818>
- Huber, A. R. (2022). Image-based sexual abuse: Online communities and the broader misogynistic landscape. *The British Journal of Criminology*, azac067.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azac067>
- Jackson-Edwards, P. (2015, October 19). Having a field day! Women’s hockey team strip off as they practice their drills for cheeky charity calendar. *Daily Mail*.  
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3279302/Women-s-hockey-team-strip-practice-drills-cheeky-charity-calendar.html>
- JamieD. (2022, January 24). Hockey or sex: 7 in-game comments that will make you think. *Totalprosports*. <https://www.totalprosports.com/2009/05/12/hockey-or-sex-7-in-game-comments-that-will-make-you-think/>
- Jensen, R. (2007). Getting off: Pornography and the end of masculinity. *South End Press*.  
<https://robertwjensen.org/books/getting-off/>
- Johnson, N. L., & Johnson, D. M. (2021). An empirical exploration into the measurement of rape culture. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(1/2), NP70–NP95.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517732347>
- Lamphere, R. D., & Pikciunas, K. T. (2016). Sexting, sextortion, and other internet sexual offenses. In J. N. Navarro, S. Clevenger, & C. D. Marcum (Eds.), *The intersection between intimate partner abuse, technology, and cybercrime* (pp. 141–165). *Carolina Academic Press*.
- Maddeaux, S. (2022, July 29). Hockey Canada encouraged a celebrity culture that made players feel untouchable. *National Post*.  
<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/sabrina-maddeaux-hockey-canada-encouraged-a-celebrity-culture-that-made-players-feel-untouchable>
- Marriner, C. (2015, September 30). Revenge porn: Government urged to make it illegal. *Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/government-urged-to-outlaw-revenge-porn-20150926-gjvod5.html>

McGlynn, C., & Rackley, E. (2016, March 9). Not “revenge porn,” but abuse: Let’s call it image-based sexual abuse. *Everyday Victim Blaming*. <http://everydayvictimblaming.com/media-complaints/not-revenge-porn-but-abuse-lets-call-it-image-based-sexual-abuse-by-%e2%80%8fmcglynncclare-erikarackley/>

McGlynn, C., Rackley, E., & Houghton, R. (2017). Beyond “revenge porn” The continuum of image-based sexual abuse. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 25(1), 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-017-9343-2>

McGran, K., & Leavitt, K. (2022, August 11). TSN reports on shocking video from 2003 as Hockey Canada confirms two police investigations of sex-assault claims. *Toronto Star*. <https://www.thestar.com/sports/hockey/2022/07/22/hockey-canada-says-2003-world-junior-team-also-accused-of-group-sexual-assault.html>

McNair, B. (2002). *Striptease culture: Sex, media and the democratization of desire*. Routledge.

Messner, M. A. (2005). Still a man’s world? Studying masculinities and sport. In M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn, & R. W. Connell (Eds.), *Handbook of studies of men and masculinities* (pp. 313–325). Sage.

Moore E. F., & Shah, J. (2021). *Game misconduct: Hockey’s toxic culture and how to fix it*. Triumph.

Papas, C. (2017, March 8). How a Perth hockey team got sponsored by the world’s biggest porn site. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/ez8vkm/how-a-perth-hockey-team-got-sponsored-by-the-worlds-biggest-porn-site>

Pappas, N. T. (2012). *The dark side of sports: Exposing the sexual culture of collegiate and professional athletes*. Meyer & Meyer Sport.

Paul, P. (2005). *Pornified: How pornography is damaging our lives, our relationships, and our families*. Henry Holt.

Postmedia News (2020, August 9). SIN BIN: Porn star marks return of NHL, invites fans to “slide in my DMS.” *Toronto Sun*. <https://torontosun.com/sports/other-sports/sin-bin-porn-star-celebrates-hockeys-return-by-inviting-players-fans-to-slide-into-her-dms>

Robinson, L. (1998). *Crossing the line: Violence and sexual assault in Canada’s national sport*. McClelland & Stewart.

RT. (2019, December 22). Pure tenderness and sincerity: Russian female hockey players strip off for annual calendar.

<https://www.rt.com/sport/476608-whl-calendar-2020-female-players/>

Sailofsky, D. (2022). More talent, more leeway: Do violence against women arrests really hurt NFL careers? *Violence Against Women*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012221092477>

Salter, M., & Crofts, T. (2015). Responding to revenge porn: Challenges to online legal impunity. In L. Comella & S. Tarrant (Eds.), *New views on pornography: Sexuality, politics, and the law* (pp. 233–253). Praeger.

Schwartz, M. D. (2021). Masculinities, sport, and violence against women: The contribution of male peer support theory. *Violence Against Women*, 27(5), 688–707.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220958493>

Schwartzman, N. (Director). (2018). *Roll Red Roll* [Film]. Together Films.

Shah, J. (2021, July 27). Hockey has never cared about survivors, and it's getting worse.

*Russian Machine Never Breaks*. <https://russianmachineneverbreaks.com/2021/07/27/jashvina-shah-hockey-care-about-survivors/>

Sorkin, A. D. (2013, March 18). Life after Steubenville. *New Yorker*.

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/amy-davidson/life-after-steubenville>

Sutton, J. E. (2022). Athlete multiple perpetrator rape (MPR) as interactional and organizational deviance: Heuristic insights from a multilevel framework. *Violence Against Women*, 28(14), 3608–3630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012211070312>

TMZ Sports. (2022, April, 20). Von Miller sued for allegedly sending explicit photos to 2 celebs . . . Revenge porn lawsuit. *TMZ*. <https://www.tMZ.com/2022/04/20/von-miller-sued-allegedly-sending-sexually-explicit-photos-two-celebrities-revenge-porn-lawsuit-nfl/>

Westhead, R. (2022, May 26). Hockey Canada, CHL settle lawsuit over alleged sexual assault involving world junior players. *TSN*. <https://www.tsn.ca/hockey-canada-chl-settle-lawsuit-over-alleged-sexual-assault-involving-world-junior-players-1.1804861>

Young, K. (2019). *Sport, Violence and Society* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Zauner, J. (2021). The continuum of symbolic violence: How sexting education neglects image-based sexual abuse, dismisses perpetrators' responsibility, and violates rights to sexual autonomy. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 5(3), 483–498.

<https://doi.org/10.1332/239868021x16123478358067>