

**Man to Man:
Communicating Narratives About Violence Against Women in
Sport Media**

by

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Abstract

Domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW) are social phenomenon primarily perpetrated by men against women. Previous research has identified that women are primarily targeted by media messaging as the parties responsible for avoiding and eliminating this violence. This study examined all *Sports Illustrated* magazine articles between the years 2015-2019 that mentioned DV/VAW to investigate how a key site for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity communicates narratives about DV/VAW to men. Narrative analysis is used as the primary tool to identify the ways that men and women are presented in these articles. Common themes identified include the denial, diminishment and erasure of women's violent experiences. Men in *Sports Illustrated* articles are cast as specific characters that follow predictable narratives to either self-destruct or attain a patriarchal masculine ideal.

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While it often seems like an individual endeavour, the process of researching and writing a thesis is not something I could have accomplished solely on my own. This project would not have been possible without the advice, guidance, and support of a number of people.

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1.0 Introduction

*They say, best men are moulded out of faults;
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad*

(Shakespeare, 2011, pp. 56406)

“One of the reasons why women may talk more about [domestic violence] more than men is because abuse is often seen as a ‘woman’s issue’ and thus it is a ‘woman’s responsibility’ to stop or prevent it” (Berns, 2004, pg. 18). This sentiment, succinctly posed by Nancy Berns, was one of the key motivations that drove me to undertake this research. When men are primarily the perpetrators of violence and abusers of women, why does our culture make it into a ‘woman’s responsibility’? Why are women who experience violence seen to be at fault for their own victimization? How come we have messages telling women to watch out for ‘red flags’ or ‘signs of an abuser’ but have limited messaging telling men not to abuse? These are all questions that make me angry and have inspired me to pursue research in this area. My primary goal in this project is to attempt to understand how men talk to each other about domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW).

DV in Canada is defined as violent offenses that occur between current and former legally married spouses, common-law partners, boyfriends and girlfriends, and other kinds of intimate partners (Conroy, Burczycka, & Savage, 2019, pgs. 24 & 27). VAW is a term that DV can fall under, but also includes a range of other violent acts against women that perpetrators may or may not have intimate relationships with.¹ While DV remains an underreported crime, there were over 99,000 reported victims of DV aged 15-89 in Canada in 2018 (Conroy, Burczycka, & Savage, 2019, pg. 24). DV was identified as the most common

¹I used the two terms in conjunction throughout my project to minimize the inclusion of cases that support the myth that most violence against women is conducted by strangers.

type of violence experienced by women; women accounted for 8/10 victims of DV (Conroy, Burczycka, & Savage, 2019, pg. 24). Conversely, men aged 25-34 were the most commonly accused of DV. DV exceeded all other types of violent offenses for men in this age group (Conroy, Burczycka, & Savavage, 2019, pg. 26). This overrepresentation of women as victims and men as perpetrators leads me to question how messages of DV/VAW are communicated to these different groups. Particularly, I am interested in moving beyond seeing DV/VAW as a 'women's issue' (Berns, 2004) and would like to examine messages about DV/VAW that are targeted at men – the primary perpetrators of DV/VAW. Exploring how men talk about this type of violence may elucidate the perpetuation of DV/VAW in society.

Legal studies recognize that law does not exist only within judicial and policing systems. Law, instead, is interwoven with and a signifying practice of culture (Mezey, 2001). Naomi Mezey (2001) states, "law shapes individual and group identity, social practices as well as the meaning of cultural symbols, but all of these things (culture in its myriad manifestations) also shape law by changing what is socially desirable, politically feasible, legally legitimate" (pg. 46). Accordingly, law becomes part of individuals' lived experience within society and culture. A snapshot of the continuous feedback loop of law and culture can be captured within narratives, a form of socially organized phenomena that contribute to both the production of social meanings and the power relations expressed by sustaining those meanings (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Media, as a production location for social narratives, is an important site to study because it teaches individuals about who and what matters in their society (Bruce, 2012). Various acts relating to DV/VAW are considered to be against the law. Examination of how men communicate amongst each other about DV/VAW can contribute to understanding how DV/VAW continues to exist.

The analysis of sport media becomes my site of study to understand how narratives of DV/VAW are communicated to a predominantly male audience. I was particularly interested in identifying patterns of narratives surrounding cultural events such as the Ray Rice incident – wherein a video was released of a football player violently assaulting his fiancée on an elevator, prompting major sports leagues to add DV policies to their codes of player conduct – and the MeToo movement. In addition to these cultural events, I was more broadly interested in identifying the ways that men, as the primary perpetrators of DV/VAW, construct narratives about violence.

I begin with a literature review of DV/VAW portrayal in the media, using a conceptual framework to organize my review. I first explain how a news story is constructed, including: the selection of a particular event for reporting, how certain stories are deemed newsworthy, what type of and how frames are applied to events.

Once these elements are established, I explore the themes and gaps of DV/VAW portrayal. I identify six key themes in DV/VAW portrayal that exist within an episodic framework of DV/VAW stories: victim blaming, ignoring social context/focusing on exceptionalism of the case, excusing or sympathizing with the perpetrator, reliance on professional (i.e., police) sources, representing the individuals involved as the main issue rather than societal issues, and treating DV/VAW homicides like ‘any other homicide.’

I also found that the main overarching theme in portrayal of DV/VAW perpetrators is excusing his actions as the result of forces beyond his control. I identify the most common ways the literature recognizes that media attempts to excuse perpetrators’ behaviour and evoke sympathy for him: contextualizing the perpetrator’s behaviours by explaining aspects of his life circumstances that contributed to the violent act; justifying behaviours by asserting violence as an appropriate response to a woman’s (i.e., victim’s) actions; referencing the perpetrator’s mental state or mental illness as the reason for violent behaviour; pointing to

drug and alcohol abuse as the explanation for violent behaviour; and suggesting male anger that results in violence is both inevitable and uncontrollable.

My theoretical framework draws upon concepts from feminist theory, critical cultural studies, hegemonic masculinity theories, framing theory, media studies, and the construct of the redemptive narrative. I use feminist theory as the predominant lens through which I analyze my data. Critical cultural studies and hegemonic masculinity theories inform the expected constructions of men and women within DV/VAW stories. I implement framing theory in conjunction with Shadd Maruna's (2001) work on redemption and condemnation narratives to interpret how journalists construct stories about men who engage in DV/VAW. Deb Waterhouse-Watson (2013) outlines three main characters that appear in narratives about athletes who (allegedly) commit DV/VAW; I also investigate how these characters are used by journalists and fit into different narrative frameworks. These theories also help situate my findings within a larger academic discussion.

The methodology I use contains two main components that allow my research to contribute to the literature: studying magazines and focusing on men as the principal audience. I have chosen the magazine *Sports Illustrated* as my primary object of research. Most of the studies examined in my literature review focused on DV/VAW portrayal in newspapers; magazines allow an analysis of articles that have a more targeted audience, give journalists more time between publications to pursue stories, and provide longer articles (Nettleton, 2018). Toni Bruce (2012) identifies sport media as being "overwhelmingly male and a hegemonically masculine domain that produces coverage *by men, for men, and about men*" (pg. 128, emphasis in original). As such, sport media can be studied to identify and analyze narratives produced by men, for men. The literature review reveals that celebrity perpetrators can make an instance of DV/VAW newsworthy, which can allow for telling stories of verbal, psychological, and emotional abuse that are normally delegitimized by

media. Because professional athletes can be categorized as a celebrity subgroup, sport media becomes a unique site for examining how men construct narratives of DV/VAW – including pervasive forms of DV/VAW that go underreported when there is not a noteworthy perpetrator – for other men to consume. In comparison to newspapers, magazines become an important site to examine because of the longer amount of time between publications and length of stories. This time gives magazine journalists the ability to overcome the shortcomings of reporting ‘just the facts’ of a DV/VAW event, allowing them to construct a narrative around the incident (Bullock, 2007; Nettleton, 2018).

My methodology is modeled after work conducted by Pamela Hill Nettleton in 2011 and 2018. In her 2011 work, Nettleton compared DV/VAW messages in magazines with different audiences (i.e., men or women); her 2018 study examined DV/VAW messages in *Maxim* magazine, which primarily targets a male audience. This methodology relies heavily upon narrative analysis as a means of understanding how concepts and meanings are conveyed through the use of stories. It goes beyond merely a textual analysis by including a consideration of both the presence and absence of concepts and representations to more fully discern meanings conveyed in a text. I apply this approach to *Sports Illustrated* magazine articles from 2015-2019.

My examination of these articles revealed four primary categories of articles that reference DV/VAW: DV/VAW as substantive content within an article; DV/VAW mentioned but did not impact the article; Letters to the Editor about substantive articles; and articles where reference to acts of DV/VAW are made but common language related to DV/VAW is notably absent. I focused on all articles where DV/VAW substantively contributed to the narrative. The Substantive Content category was broken down into three sub-categories: DV/VAW was a key component of the article; DV/VAW included as an element of a larger story; and, activism articles with a focus on anti-DV/VAW initiatives. While I examined

patterns and themes in all the articles identified, I focused the majority of analysis on articles that had DV/VAW as a key component. My analysis included an examination of thematic and technical components of the narratives, the presentation of masculinity, representations of both men and women, and implications for consumers of *Sports Illustrated*.

Within the first analytical chapter, I explore the ways women are discussed in the *Sports Illustrated* articles. My principal findings are that women who experience violence, and the recognition of their victimization, are diminished, denied, and erased from these narratives. Diminishment of women's experiences happens with the reduction in perceived severity of acts of violence. This works to reduce the degree of victimization endured by women. The ways diminishment occurs is through: conflation of DV/VAW with other 'scandals'; the use of euphemism; favouring men's perspectives; and requiring multiple victims to make a story newsworthy. Once an event is diminished, it becomes easier for writers and intended readers to deny both women who suffer violence their status of victim and that a specific violent act occurred. Patterns that support the denial process include: renaming women, devaluing the legitimacy of civil proceedings, and emphasizing women's own denial of violent events. When acts of violence are diminished to the point they are denied completely, it allows women to be erased entirely from the narrative. The primary ways women are erased from stories are by: using images that do not align with expectations of ideal victims or excluding visual representations of women; reducing acts of violence to a single plot point in a male-centric narrative; and, recasting men as the victims of their own violent acts. Erasing violence and the women who experience it allows writers to employ narratives where men are able to overcome the odds, prove their redemption, and strengthen their family bonds. This creates room for readers to focus on men at the centre of the narratives, direct their sympathy towards these men, and release the reader from any uncomfortable and disturbing realities about the consequences of violent acts on women.

I include a section at the end of chapter 4.0: “What Women?” that discusses what I determined to be Activism articles. While these articles are more likely to focus on women as the main subject, include women’s voices, and favour women’s accounts, I classify them as peculiarities within my data set. I recognize specific Activism ‘blips’ that occur twice in 2015 and 2016, and once in 2019 and a ‘cluster’ of Activism articles in 2018. This cluster appears to be the result of two social events, the MeToo movement and emergence of the Larry Nassar case. These articles are peculiar because their victim centric focus diverges from expressions of hegemonic masculinity present throughout the other articles.

The second analytical chapter, “Becoming A Real Man”, investigates the different ways that the narratives construct characters around male athletes who commit, or allegedly commit, acts of violence and the primary narratives these characters follow on their symbolic attempt to become men. The presence of a violent act disrupts the usual coming of age narrative about the transition to adulthood; journalists seek alternate ways to surmount this fissure in the narrative.

I recognized the presence of characters with many of the elements initially proposed by Waterhouse-Watson (2013) within *Sports Illustrated*. The dominant characters that are present are the Naughty Boy and Bad Apple. I expand upon Waterhouse-Watson’s characters by proposing that the Naughty Boy character is used to initially describe men who (allegedly) commit violence but, depending on the narrative they are cast into, may become either a Bad Apple or Real Man. A man transforms into a Bad Apple through what I call The Descent, which draws on elements from Maruna’s (2001) condemnation narrative. To become a Real Man, the Naughty Boy character is inserted into an underdog story, informed by the redemption narrative (Maruna, 2001). Within the underdog story, acts of violence against women are reduced to ‘Just Mistakes’ – actions that are merely mistakes that serve the purpose of making the man a better person. I identify different ways that these mistakes are

dealt with in the underdog narrative, including: receiving a good word from another Real Man; overcoming obstacles alone; and the importance of the father-son relationship. All of these male-centric stories rely on the diminishment, denial, and erasure of women regardless of the narrative chosen to tell it.

DV/VAW is a problem in society that does not appear to be abating in the near future. While this problem is predominantly framed as a women's issue, this project contributes to reframing the conversation from one that focuses on violence against women to violence committed by men. The way men currently talk about DV/VAW must be understood in order to change future framing of the problem.

2.0 Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of my literature review is to identify trends and patterns in literature related to DV/VAW portrayal and media, with a particular focus on portrayals within sport media. A literature review can serve many purposes, some of which include: determining a research problem; identifying what has been done and what needs to be done; and establishing context of the topic or problem (Randolph, 2009, pg.2). Montuori (2005) highlights two main components of a literature review: community participation and the construction of knowledge. Community participation occurs because the researcher is interacting with other scholars and their literature to create a community surrounding the area of inquiry. Additionally, Montuori (2005) defines writing a literature review as a process that involves active construction of knowledge by the reviewer. All surveys of a field inherently become an interpretation of that field by the reviewer. Additionally, this interpretation of previous findings can provide a framework for understanding how new findings advance and relate to previous findings in an academic field (Randolph, 2009).

My research aims to contribute to the literature on how media communicates messages about DV/VAW to men. I was able to identify specific trends in relation to: common themes of DV/VAW portrayal in media; limitations of reliance on police sources; and ways media evokes sympathy for male perpetrators. I focused on sport media as an object of study because of its traditional connection to constructing and reproducing hegemonic masculinity for men, by men (Bruce, 2012; Waling, Duncan, Angelides, & Dowsett, 2018; Waling, 2017). The primary goal of this review is to critically analyze previous research in order to identify central issues and gaps that exist within it. I will be using a perspective that is consistent with my position, in keeping with qualitative research practices (Randolph, 2009, pg. 3).

My literature review was conducted at various levels. First, I looked for all articles that discussed DV and media.² From this broad perspective, I narrowed my focus to identify articles pertaining to DV and sport; DV, media, and men; DV, media, and sport; and DV, media, men, and perpetrators. The majority of the literature fell under the first category, DV and media. Within this category, many articles use a media analysis to determine how often DV is reported in print news media and what key themes are amongst these articles. I found that the overreliance on print news creates gaps in current understandings of DV representation and messaging because of its dependence on episodic framing to produce a ‘just the facts’ story for the 24-hour news cycle. Accordingly, further study of media portrayals of DV and its perpetrators – particularly on media that are targeted towards men, such as sport media – is required.

I constructed a conceptual framework to organize my review and create distinctions. I start the literature review by explaining how a news story is constructed. This includes the selection of a particular event for reporting, how certain stories are deemed newsworthy, and what type of and how frames are applied to events. Once these elements are established, I explore the themes and gaps of DV/VAW portrayal.

I organize the rest of the review into the following sections: The Act, The Victim, The Perpetrator, and Social Context. The first three sections are a reference to the three key components of a crime. Because DV/VAW can be considered a criminal act, I wanted to understand the common themes present relating to the main aspects of a crime. Within sections relating to the act, victim, and perpetrator, I also examine what makes each of these elements individually newsworthy. DV/VAW is also considered a societal issue, which is

² I chose to limit the literature review to only DV, without including articles that fit more broadly into discussions of VAW. The focus on DV was to limit the scope to studies that included a relational component between the men and women involved. By restricting the scope to DV, my hope was to focus on incidents that do not fit into common rape scripts and myths that narrowly define sexual violence against women as spontaneous attacks by strangers. These rape myths do not account for the more common experiences of violence, which are often perpetrated by someone known to the woman (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004).

why I have included an examination of trends in themes relating to how social context is presented in media. Additionally, I identify gaps and issues within each of these sections.

2.2 Creating a News Story

Not all crimes become news stories. Those that are deemed newsworthy undergo the framing process in order to reconstruct the crime event into a news story that is appealing to consumers. In this section, I review trends in the literature that surround media processes in selection and reconstruction of DV/VAW cases, indicators of newsworthiness, and primary framing practices. A brief examination of popular methodologies used is also included.

Media are unable to report all criminal acts due to the large number of crimes in society. *Figure 1.1* outlines the basic processes that crimes are filtered through before they are represented in the media.

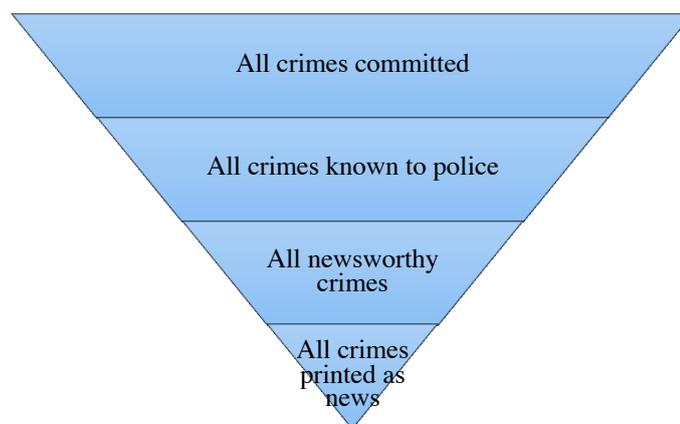


Figure 1. 1 Crime Event Selection Processes. Adapted from Sherizon, 1978, pg. 205

I am most interested in the bottom two sections of the inverted pyramid: how certain events are deemed newsworthy and how they are presented in the news media. What makes a story newsworthy must first be examined in order to analyze how framing is used to present events as news stories.

It is important to understand how media selects and depicts news events because of their ability to influence conceptions of reality, including social acceptance, by depicting events in ways that impact what the public may interpret as the cause and effects of DV (Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008). DV itself, and particular instances of DV, are not innately newsworthy topics. Because news is socially constructed, the construction does not revolve around a news item's inherent significance, but around the needs and practices of news promoters, assemblers, and consumers (Bullock, 2007, pg. 35).

DV began to be understood as a social problem with legal ramifications in the 1970s, during second wave feminism (Carlyle et al., 2008). However, media coverage of DV throughout the 1980s-early 2000s often portrayed a distorted picture that supported men's subordination of women (Bullock, 2007, pg. 34), a key component of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Since the mid-2000s, the scholarly literature has focused on whether DV is presented as isolated, individual events or within a larger social context that depicts it as a social problem primarily affecting women.

Social constructionism is the primary theory used for explaining how an event is identified as newsworthy (Bullock, 2007; Bullock, 2008; Jewkes, 2015; Lee & Wong, 2019; Wong & Lee, 2018). The newsworthiness of a particular event by a media outlet is shaped by multiple factors, including assumptions about what will generate interest with their audience. Social constructionism focuses on knowledge creation, emergence, and how that knowledge comes to hold significance within a society (Lee & Wong, 2019). As such, media and their audiences work together to create commonly accepted knowledge of what is or is not newsworthy. However, media play the greater role. Yvonne Jewkes (2015) notes, "The media might be more accurately thought of as a prism, subtly bending and distorting the view of the world it projects" (pg. 45) rather than accurately reflecting real life.

Dane Henry Isaacs (2016) states, "Stories deemed newsworthy are generally characterized by drama, action, and conflict and are aimed at keeping media audiences captivated" (pg. 492). Michelle Meloy and Susan Miller (2009) outline the main criteria used for identifying a story as newsworthy, including: seriousness of the event; presence of sensational components and criminal elements; involvement of prestigious victims or notorious offenders; and relevance to interests of their audience (pg. 30). An event is more likely to be reported if it meets multiple criteria. These criteria are agreed upon by other authors throughout the literature, particularly the need for sensational components (Isaacs, 2016; Smith & Bond, 2019; Wong & Lee 2018) and criminal elements (Isaacs 2016; Meyer, 2018). Michele Lloyd and Shula Ramon (2017) add that the sexualization of DV is also used to increase its appeal and newsworthiness. Additionally, Isaacs (2016) notes that there is a disproportional focus on DV events that result in homicide or where acts are horrific enough to be deemed 'unusual' cases. This observation is supported by the amount of literature that covers DV homicide or attempted homicide cases. I found ten articles that focused exclusively on covering reports of DV that resulted in homicide or attempted homicide (Bullock, 2007; Bullock, 2008; Comas-d'Argemir, 2015; Eastal, Holland, Breen, Vaughan, & Sutherland, 2019; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Hawley, Clifford, & Konkes, 2018; Hernandez, 2018; Jiwani, 2009; Lee & Wong, 2019; Wong & Lee, 2018). Six articles stated that they covered news reports of DV resulting in homicide or attempted homicide and/or any other violent acts that did not result in homicide/attempted homicide (Carlyle et al., 2008; Isaacs, 2016; Lindsay-Brisbin, Deprince, & Welton Mitchell, 2014; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017; Nettleton, 2018; Smith & Bond, 2019). This trend of examining reports that focus on homicide/attempted homicide could be the result of either media selection of the most violent cases or academic focus on violent cases. Based on media's desire for drama, conflict, and action, it is more likely that the former is true, but they may both be. By focusing on the most

violent cases of DV/VAW, media and academic literature delegitimize the other forms DV, including verbal, psychological, and emotional abuse. This also normalizes and distorts the pervasiveness of these aspects of DV that are not deemed violent enough to be reported on.

Once an event is deemed newsworthy enough to be reported, it is reconstructed through a particular frame. Framing is used as a way to make a set of facts more newsworthy by presenting them in a way that generates interest among an audience. As Robert Entman (1993) explains, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (pg. 52). Through the framing process, events are transformed into an interesting narrative of shared culture on the basis of socially defined roles and expectations (Hernandez, 2018, pg. 1458). Framing does not occur naturally; it is actively constructed by news producers. The two key aspects of framing are selection and salience. “Those who construct a communication select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in order to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, pg. 52).

Jewkes (2015) notes, “far from being a random or personal process, editors and journalists select, produce and present news according to a range of professional criteria that are used as benchmarks to determine a story’s newsworthiness” (pg. 45). She continues, stating, “[journalists and editors] edit words, adopt a particular tone and decide on the visual images that will accompany the story; all of which constitutes framing.” (Jewkes, 2015, pg. 45).

These frames are used as devices to build associations between concepts; frames can cause individuals to think about issues in particular ways (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Accordingly, the primary functions of frames are to: define problems, diagnose causes, make

moral judgments, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). These functions occur within a particular cultural context and serve a particular purpose. David Tewksbury and Dietram Scheufele (2009) identify two main effects of framing: persuasion effects and agenda-setting effects. Persuasion effects present content to influence attitudes in a predictable direction; agenda-setting effects expose an audience to news about issues to raise accessibility of information to those issues, which allows individuals to consider certain issues important within their sociological context (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009).

Scholarly literature that examines how DV is portrayed in media criticizes the use of episodic framing when constructing narratives around DV events. Episodic framing is contrasted with thematic framing, where episodic framing focuses on the individual case and individual explanations and thematic framing focuses on society's role in addition to the individuals involved and provides social explanations for an event (Carlyle et al., 2008). Emily Meyer (2018) notes that "both episodic and thematic frames can affect public opinion; however, episodic frames have a stronger influence on audience opinion when the topic elicits an emotional response" (pg. 12). The reliance on episodic framing is evident throughout the literature, with many authors choosing to identify and compare DV articles that use either an episodic or thematic frame (Bullock, 2007; Carlyle et al., 2008; Hawley et al., 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Meyer, 2018; Spencer & Limperos, 2018; Wong & Lee, 2018). Examining the frames used to present DV in media is seen as important because it contributes to who and what is seen as responsible for the behaviours leading up to and including the event (Bullock, 2008). Additionally, Jenna Lindsay-Brisbin and colleagues (2014) note that many people rely on the media as their primary source of information on DV. As such, "media coverage can be a powerful force in framing issues, either facilitating or inhibiting public understanding of DV" (pg. 384).

Within the use of episodic framing, academics also identify and examine common themes of DV portrayal in media. I divide the discussion of DV portrayal in media in the scholarly work into six themes in order of prevalence. These are: **victim blaming** (Bullock, 2007; Chancer, 2009; Easteal et al., 2019; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017; Nettleton, 2018); **ignoring the social context/focusing on exceptionalism of the case** (Bullock, 2007; Easteal et al., 2019; Hernandez, 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017; Smith & Bond, 2019; Storer & Strohl, 2017); **excusing or sympathizing with the perpetrator** (Chancer, 2009; Lee & Wong, 2019; Smith & Bond, 2019); **reliance on professional (i.e., police) sources** (Bullock, 2007; Easteal et al., 2019; Hawley et al., 2018; Hernandez, 2018; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014); **representing the individuals involved as the main issue, rather than societal issues** (Hernandez, 2018; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014); and **treating DV/VAW homicides like ‘any other homicide’** (Lee & Wong, 2019; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017). Each of these themes relies on the narrative provided by episodic framing. While DV was seemingly recognized as a social issue by second wave feminism in the 1970s, it has yet to be extensively represented as a social issue within media coverage. There also appears to be a confidence in the scholarship that a switch to thematic framing of incidents will shift society’s understanding of DV. Some pieces even suggest that a change in media framing can and will result in governmental policy changes that will reduce the instances of DV in a society (Carlyle et al., 2008; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013). While media may be one source that can influence social and governmental change, this perspective can give media too much credit for its degree of direct influence.

One crucial media practice that contributes to episodic framing, which is also identified as a key theme across the literature, is reliance on professional or police sources. Meyer (2018) identifies the three main steps in constructing a DV crime report as: reviewing publicly available affidavits to identify DV cases for coverage; interviewing witnesses and

informants; and assembling the final story (pgs. 13-14). Steps one and two both rely on information provided by police sources. Sources used by journalists are important because they become the primary definers of the issue and therefore a prominent source for discourse (Hawley et al., 2018; Hernandez, 2018). As such, “information mostly gathered from the police [suggests] that law enforcement’s voice is disproportionately represented in [DV] public discourse, whereas others are virtually absent” (Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014, pg. 365). I have identified four key limitations of reliance on police sources in the literature. In order of occurrence, these are: **employing episodic framing to over simplify the event** (Hernandez, 2018; Meyer, 2018; Sherizon, 1978; Simons & Morgan, 2018); **viewing police as the only authentic, reliable, and verifiable source** (Cullen, 2019; Hawley, 2018; Meyer, 2018); **relying on police information as most accessible to meet journalistic reporting needs** (Bullock, 2008; Hawley, 2018; Meyer, 2018); and **mislabeling/not labeling acts as DV** (Cullen et al., 2019; Simons & Morgan, 2018).

Police information necessitates an episodic frame due to its nature; law enforcement sources provide the basic facts of an incident as a legal situation. This ‘just the facts’ approach focuses solely on the parties involved and does not take context of the event into consideration (Bullock, 2007; Sherizon, 1978). Erin Hawley and colleagues (2018) recognize that the primary source for DV incidents can change over time. The reliance on law enforcement as key sources in newspaper articles is related to the quick turn around time required by many news media outlets, particularly with the 24-hour news cycle and the dominances of online news (Cullen et al., 2019; Hawley et al., 2018; Simons & Morgan, 2018). It is not surprising that reliance on police sources is recognized as a theme across the literature as the majority of articles look at DV in print news media (Bullock, 2007; Bullock, 2008; Carlyle et al., 2008; Cullen et al., 2019; Easteal et al., 2019; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Hawley et al., 2018; Hernandez, 2018; Isaacs, 2016; Jiwani, 2009; Lee & Wong, 2019;

Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017; Meloy & Miller, 2009; Smith et al., 2019; Wong & Lee, 2018). Additionally, Meyer (2018) reports that victim advocates are not used as sources by newspaper journalists because they are seen as barriers to reporting. Reporters referred to victim advocates as impediments to “covering the full story” because advocates speak about DV generally in order to protect individual victims (Meyer, 2018).

None of the articles that deal with non-newspaper sources note overreliance on police sources, although they do recognize an overrepresentation of episodic framing (Berns, 2004; Meyer, 2018; Morgan & Simons, 2018; Nettleton, 2018; Simons & Morgan, 2018; Storer & Strohl, 2017). In a case where a shift was seen in news reporting of a particular outlet from episodic to thematic framing of DV events, Margaret Simons and Jenny Morgan (2018) found that this was not due to journalistic practices, but rather to a change in law enforcement perspective. This supports Pauline Cullen and colleagues’ (2019) notion that framing changes with the timeframe requirements of media; media sources that have a quick timeframe for developing a story will often rely on police sources due to their availability and accessibility, resulting in a frame reflective of law enforcement’s view of DV. However, if a longer timeframe is allowed, primary sources of the DV event can change to include a wider array of perspectives that support a thematic frame. This contributes to my own choice to focus on a ‘slower’ media product, the magazine.

I have previously noted that the majority of academic articles examined provide a media analysis of newspapers to determine trends in media reporting of DV. This methodology relies on assumptions that may be outdated or irrelevant. First, it assumes that newspapers are a popular source for gaining information. Nancy Berns (2004) found that television was the most prevalent source for news. Additionally, she found that individuals were less specific about the details of events they read about, or even which source (e.g., which newspaper, magazine, etc.) they read it in. Andrea Waling (2017) recognizes that there

has been a migration of readership to online news sources. Although there is a shrinking number of titles available, newspapers and magazines that remain on news stands suggest that they are still being read (Waling et al., 2018). The trend of overreliance on newspaper articles in scholarly study may be due to the accessibility of newspapers to the researchers, which makes them easier to study. I was surprised to find that I did not come across any studies that suggest there is a move to analyze aspects of social media, which have become a prevalent news aggregator for individuals in recent years.

I think it is important to note the usefulness of examining journalistic practices of news construction. There were only three studies that used methodological techniques (e.g., semi-structured interviews; key informant interviews) to gain insight into how journalists construct a narrative around DV/VAW (Meyer, 2018; Morgan & Simons, 2018; Simons & Morgan, 2018). Meyer (2018) aimed to explore how journalists select and give meaning to certain crimes. She then identified whether frame construction was used to report on DV. This is useful for understanding the processes a journalist may use to deem an event as newsworthy. It also contributes to identifying institutional practices that are in place to allow for episodic framing to persist. Simons and Morgan used the same set of newsroom interviews, analyzed for different contexts, in both of their articles. In their earlier piece (Morgan & Simons, 2018) they sought to explain how campaign journalism is conducted. Particularly, they explored whether implementing thematic frames is a top down or bottom up process. Their second study (Simons & Morgan, 2018) found that a shift to thematic framing was not the result of journalistic or newsroom practices, but was associated with police (i.e., the main source used in DV reporting) shifting their framing practices. This suggests that sources, which exist outside of the newsroom institutional structure, are more important to changing reporting practices than the individual wills of journalists and editors.

2.3 The Act

There are three main components of a crime that contribute to its newsworthiness: the nature of the act itself, the victim, and the perpetrator. I will examine how each of these components is discussed within the literature.

The specific acts that make up a DV event worthy of reporting are not given much attention in the literature. However, it is evident that the most newsworthy DV events are those that result in murder or attempted murder based on the number of articles that focus on examining news reports on these instances (Bullock, 2007; Bullock, 2008; Comas-d'Argemir, 2015; Easteal et al., 2019; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Hawley et al., 2018; Jiwani, 2009; Lee & Wong, 2019; Wong & Lee, 2018). Meyer (2018) notes that cases are not considered newsworthy unless they are a serious or violent felony, perceived as unusual or bizarre, or involved noteworthy perpetrators (pg. 14). Antoinette Smith and colleagues (2019) add that the most newsworthy DV events are sensational or extreme forms of abuse. The most common theme across the literature is that acts are chosen for reporting because they are particularly violent, unexpected, or 'out of the ordinary' (Isaacs, 2016; Meloy & Miller, 2009; Meyer, 2018; Smith et al., 2019; Wong & Lee, 2018). Acts of DV that do not meet the sensational components required to become newsworthy are often overlooked because of the routineness associated with non-homicidal DV (Bullock, 2007; Meyer, 2018).

Additionally, some instances, often those lacking sensational components, are not always labeled as DV. Lindsay-Brisbin and colleagues (2014) suggest that the DV label is avoided in order to make these acts more socially acceptable. For example, battery may be presented as a 'lovers' quarrel' or 'domestic dispute' to avoid the use of the term DV. However, other reasons for avoiding the term DV also exist. The absence may be because key sources, primarily law enforcement officials, do not use the term DV when providing 'just the facts' of the case (Cullen et al., 2019; Simons & Morgan, 2018). This allows for

removal of criminal language, reinforcing an episodic approach that constructs these acts as a private matter. Cullen and colleagues (2019) also note that editors place greater scrutiny on journalists working on DV stories because of the potential legal repercussions regarding defamation and adherence to court reporting's strict guidelines as a reason to omit the DV label. Further, terms such as 'lovers' quarrel' or 'domestic dispute' convey a higher degree of drama and sensationalism, aiding the construction of a newsworthy narrative that audiences want to consume (Smith et al., 2019). This process can depoliticize violence by presenting it as a story for consumption rather than a pervasive social issue.

2.4 The Victim

Women who experience DV themselves are not often seen as newsworthy. Lloyd and Ramon (2017) identify the 'ideal' victim as one that boosted newspaper circulation figures. Characteristics of the 'ideal' victim include: being young, female, white, middle-class, respectable, and physically attractive; victims from urban areas with higher property values are also deemed more newsworthy (Lloyd & Ramon, 2017, pg. 126). Meloy and Miller (2009) also note that the most newsworthy victims fit the 'Perfect Woman' archetype (i.e., those that display traditional notions of femininity and womanhood, such as being domestic, feminine, a mother, attractive, etc.). However, the majority of female victims do not fit many of these categories of a newsworthy victim. Miriam Hernandez (2018) and Lindsay-Brisbin and colleagues (2014) identify that women who experience DV are often portrayed as inherently different from the general public, making them predisposed to be affected by violence. Characteristics of these women that predispose them to violence, or make them 'deserving subjects of violence', include: race, socioeconomic status, alcohol and/or substance abuse, geographical location, culture, and ethnicity (Hernandez, 2018; Meloy & Miller, 2009; Pepin 2016).

Women are most often referenced in media when they are being blamed for their own victimization. I have previously identified victim blaming as the most prevalent theme in media representation of DV (Berns, 2004; Bullock, 2007; Chancer, 2009; Cullen et al., 2019; Easteal et al., 2019; Hernandez, 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017; Nettleton 2011; Nettleton, 2018). Chancer (2009) explains that victim blaming is a predictable outcome within the dualistic debate structure of media. This structure promotes victim blaming as a way to support debate and create drama by defending the perpetrator, recasting him as the victim. Victim blaming allows a DV event to be presented as an individual's problem, which ignores the social context in which DV takes place and further supports an episodic frame of representation (Carlyle et al., 2008). Cullen and colleagues (2019) recognize that victim blaming is not always explicit, but is often communicated through gendered messages.

The primary means of victim blaming is by burdening women with the responsibility for DV intervention and prevention (Berns, 2004; Carlyle et al., 2008; Hernandez, 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Nettleton, 2011). The private, individualistic nature of how DV is presented can lead to victims believing that they are responsible for solving problems within their intimate relationships (Carlyle et al., 2008). Berns (2004) recognizes the use of 'empowerment' language as a means to hold women responsible for their own victimization and abuse. In her examination of DV messaging of women's magazines, Berns (2004) identifies the theme that women are required to be responsible for prevention and intervention of their own abuse. Pamela Hill Nettleton (2011) reasserts this theme in her examination of women's magazines; women are represented as responsible for recognition and prevention of men's violence because men cannot do it themselves. When men's violence is the result of women's inability to prevent it, a woman's own behaviour can act as

the causal basis for her victimization (Hernandez, 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019). These themes are echoed in reasons why perpetrators' actions are excused.

2.5 The Perpetrator

A DV event may be covered by news media if the perpetrator is deemed newsworthy. This may be because he is prestigious in his community (Meloy & Miller, 2009), has celebrity status (Pepin, 2016), or is labeled a notorious offender (Meloy & Miller, 2009). This factor also contributed to my focus on male athletes and sports media because the professional athlete constitutes a subgroup of celebrity. Two main themes emerged from the literature when I examined how perpetrators of DV are spoken about in the media.

The predominant theme in media portrayal of DV is that perpetrator behaviours are excused by eliciting sympathy for them (Cullen et al., 2019; Hernandez, 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Nettleton, 2011; Nettleton 2018; Smith et al., 2019). I have divided the discussion of excusing behaviour and evoking sympathy into five subgroups, listed in order of prevalence within the scholarly literature. The subgroups are: **contextualizing the perpetrator's behaviours by explaining aspects of his life circumstances that contributed to the violent act** (Lee & Wong, 2019; Nettleton, 2011; Smith et al., 2019); **justifying behaviours by asserting violence as an appropriate response to a woman's (i.e., victim's) actions** (Hernandez, 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Nettleton, 2011); **referencing the perpetrator's mental state or mental illness as the reason for violent behaviour** (Cullen et al., 2019; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014); **pointing to drug and alcohol abuse as the explanation for violent behaviour** (Cullen et al., 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014); and **suggesting that male anger that results in violence is both inevitable and uncontrollable** (Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Nettleton, 2011). Some of these excuses for violent male behaviour are directly linked to ways that women are blamed for their own victimization. For example, women become

responsible for controlling and preventing men's violence because men are unable to do it themselves. If a man becomes violent in response to a woman's behaviour, it is her fault for angering him.

In some cases, excusing the perpetrator's behaviour can be avoided by representing him as an exception to societal norms. Meloy and Miller (2009) identify the 'evil husband' archetype presented in media. When employing this archetype, media raises questions about the basic features of a man's character (e.g., he is adulterous, a cheater, liar, untrustworthy, etc.) to present him as innately evil. This reinforces false stories of who are the most dangerous offenders. Hernandez (2018) explains that another way of othering male perpetrators is by presenting them as a specific, pathologized type of man. This also skews representation of which men are considered most violent by focusing on demographic factors that contribute to creating an abuser (e.g., race, socioeconomic status). Perpetrators who fit into an 'other' category may be seen as particularly newsworthy (if they are notorious enough) or not newsworthy (if they are likely to abuse). When these constructions are invoked, there is no need to excuse the man's behaviour or elicit sympathy from the audience for his life circumstances.

Celebrities represent a particular type of offender that is necessarily newsworthy because of the meaningfulness society attaches to them. As Jewkes notes, "Whether they are victims or perpetrators of crime, celebrities, their lives, and their experiences are deemed intrinsically interesting to the audience. Even otherwise under-represented categories of crime are guaranteed widespread media attention if they have a 'name' associated with them" (pg. 57). Joanna Rae Pepin (2016) examines celebrity perpetrators. She aims to identify differences in how black male celebrities and white male celebrities who perpetrate DV are represented in media. Pepin (2016) found that celebrity coverage allows for a wider breadth of DV events to be reported on in media (e.g., beyond homicide and attempted homicide),

due to the newsworthiness of the perpetrator. Her findings also align with previously mentioned themes of excusing behaviour and ‘othering’ perpetrators. Black celebrities were more likely to be placed into an ‘other’ category by referencing their innate tendency towards violence; violence committed by black celebrities appeared to be expected. In contrast, white celebrity violence was presented as being exceptional or unexpected. Pepin (2016) noted that themes of excusing behaviour and eliciting sympathy were implemented in reports with white celebrity perpetrators.

There are very few academics who examine how DV is portrayed in media that directly targets potential perpetrators (i.e., men). Nettleton did a comparative analysis of DV narratives portrayed in ten popular men’s and women’s magazines from 1998-2008 (Nettleton, 2011). The 2011 research identified four central themes of DV representation: women are responsible for preventing the violence of men and men cannot help themselves; DV is terrifying to women and amusing to men; statistics are distorted to implicate men and overlook the violence of women; the only way to prevent DV is to separate victims from abusers (and it’s the woman’s responsibility to do this) (Nettleton, 2011, pg. 140). In 2018, Nettleton conducted an in depth analysis of DV discourse in 72 issues of *Maxim* magazine, which is identified as having a primarily male readership. The follow-up research notes that discourses in this men’s magazine aligns with the dismissive, humorous, and minimizing attitudes found in previous research (Nettleton, 2018, pgs. 7-8). Nettleton (2018) identifies six recurring themes that appear in DV discourse of *Maxim* magazine: male violence is naturalized and celebrated; violent women are crazy; violence against women is funny; the lines between violence and sex are blurred; women are responsible for male violence; and women are bullied. The themes identified by Nettleton in both her 2011 and 2018 research projects reflect themes established in news media, predominantly that of victim blaming and perpetrator excusing and sympathizing.

In addition to recognizing themes that emerge in DV discourse, Nettleton makes efforts to name absences within the discourse she examines. Notably, she finds that no magazines hold men responsible for their violence; none suggest that men should take active roles in reducing DV; no narrative represents victims as innocent of the violence done to them; and no connection is drawn or discussed between patriarchal social structures and the existence of DV (Nettleton, 2011, pg. 140). Key absences from *Maxim* magazine include: no advice on how to think critically about cultural attitudes toward violence; no consideration of the consequences of being violently attacked or being a violent attacker; no serious treatment of DV (e.g., DV presented as a joke, which minimizes the pain and consequences); and no articles that explore alternate masculinities that do not exhibit violence and rage (Nettleton, 2018). Thematic identification within DV discourse allows us to recognize what is being talked about and how specific topics are constructed. However, I welcome Nettleton's attention to absences as a means of identifying what ought to be involved (and notably is not) in public discourses of DV.

2.6 Social Context

Discussion of social context that DV takes place within is the most prominent absence in media portrayals that is identified across the literature. This is an expected outcome considering the recognized reliance on episodic framing (Bullock, 2007; Carlyle et al., 2008; Hawley et al. 2018; Lee & Wong, 2019; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Meyer, 2018; Wong & Lee, 2018). I find it of interest to note that when social context is taken into account, it is in order to excuse or sympathize with the perpetrator (Nettleton, 2011; Lee & Wong, 2019; Smith et al., 2019). This may be reflective of patriarchal attitudes that value men (i.e., perpetrators) over women (i.e., victims) (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

2.7 Media, DV/VAW, and Professional Athletes

I was able to locate two studies that focus on media portrayals of professional athletes that commit DV. Elizabeth Spencer & Anthony Limperos (2018) examine ESPN's coverage of DV in the National Football League (NFL) during the two years before and after the Ray Rice incident. Ray Rice is a professional football player who was arrested on charges of assault for striking his fiancée into unconsciousness in an elevator in 2014. This incident sparked a series of events that led to the revision of the NFL's personal conduct policy regarding assault, battery, DV, and sexual assault (Spencer & Limperos, 2018). Spencer and Limperos (2018) studied DV reports in the two years before and after this incident to see if there were any changes in the coverage or portrayal of similar incidents. The main themes they identified are comparable to themes found throughout the Literature Review. They include: focus on the individual player; presenting the player as a problem for the team; DV as the problem for the NFL; and what they call, 'missing the point'. While the authors note that DV included more thematic framing after the Ray Rice incident, media focuses on perpetrators' backgrounds when contextualizing incidents, reflecting trends in the larger body of literature that suggest contextualization of a man's situation is used to evoke sympathy for the perpetrator and/or excuse his violent behaviours. Another area to note is that, post-Ray Rice, there was a clear shift to players' statements being written by attorneys and image management agents (Spencer & Limperos, 2018). This focus on players' image management may have an effect on how the audience is addressed by media.

The second study analyzed the treatment of Hope Solo by media and contrasted it with male professional athletes, predominantly black male NFL players (Chase, 2019). Solo was a member of the United States national soccer team who was accused of DV against her 17-year old nephew. Media characterizations of Solo emphasized her athleticism and physique. Alexandria Chase (2019) identifies this as an issue because, "traditional gender

stereotypes that glorify men as strong, capable, and determined render women weak, uncertain, and hesitant, positing that there is little natural about female athleticism and muscularity" (pg. 253). As such, Solo can be seen as an abnormal woman because of athleticism and body type. The study also notes that media sources included reference to male athletes accused of DV when reporting on Solo, some of the acts committed by men included: assault of a female partner; assault of a girlfriend; rape; and beating a four-year-old child with a branch (Chase, 2019). Chase (2019) identifies a conflation between Solo and the male athletes who are also accused of DV, which suggests a reflection of the notion that sports are inherently gendered because athletes must exemplify traditional masculine traits to be successful. However, females who embody these traits and are accused of DV will be used as an example to degender instances of DV.

The Spencer and Limperos (2018) and Chase (2019) articles are part of the specific body of literature to which my work directly contributes. My research directly builds upon the works of Berns and Nettleton in examination of sports magazine messages surrounding DV. Waling (2017) notes "theoretical examinations have argued magazines provide for, and legitimize, particular representations of gender identities and gender role expectations" (pg. 429). This suggests that magazines can act as a site for providing representations of masculine ideals (i.e., examples of hegemonic masculinity).

While there is ample literature that examines DV portrayal in newspapers, these studies are limited by the time frame between publications and length of published articles. My project aims to fill this gap by providing an analysis of magazine articles. Additionally, the focus on *Sports Illustrated* adds to the literature on how DV messages are communicated to a male audience. Because professional athletes are often characterized as a type of celebrity, my project also contributes to media portrayals of more common types of DV that are often underreported (i.e., not murder).

2.7 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a structure that summarizes concepts and theories from previously published knowledge. This synthesis creates a theoretical background, or basis for data analysis, that will be used to interpret the meaning of primary data (Kivunja, 2018, pg. 46). The theoretical framework is also used to explore the relations between individuals, institutions, and forms of knowledge and practice (Poynton & Lee, 2000). My theoretical framework draws upon concepts from feminist theory, critical cultural studies, hegemonic masculinity, discussions of a redemption narrative, framing theory, and media studies.

2.7.1 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory recognizes gender inequities created by patriarchy and how they are used to contextualize DV/VAW (Nettleton, 2018). Price (2005) explains, “Etymologically, patriarchy refers to a system of rule by older men in their position as heads of households” (pg. 25). While many sociologists hold onto the original meaning of this word, feminist theorists often take a social constructionist approach. This approach identifies patriarchy as a social phenomenon that demonstrates a consistent pattern of ideological and structural practices, which serve to justify and perpetuate men’s oppression of women (Price, 2005). The patriarchal social structure generates gender stereotypes that reflect societal beliefs about men’s and women’s places within the social order. These are referred to as masculinity and femininity, respectively. Which gender stereotypes a society constructs and enforces contributes to sets of understandings of the self and others. For example, they can influence men’s understandings of themselves, women, and other men (Price, 2005). My research primarily deals with examination of the construction and dissemination of masculinities, especially as they relate to DV/VAW.

2.7.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

Sociological and cultural examinations of masculinities recognize that masculinity does not originate from a psychological or biological basis. Instead, it is based in interrogation of cultural, poststructuralist, media-driven, or sociological driven studies (Edwards, 2005). Raewyn Connell is often cited as being the first to theorize about hegemonic masculinity in the 1980s. This conception stated that hegemonic masculinity, “embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women and men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pg. 832). There was early recognition that hegemony is not static. Eric Anderson (2009) notes that, from this perspective, hegemonic masculinity – the dominant form of masculinity in a society – is then a process, not an archetype.

The dominant hegemonic masculinity stereotype is centered on four main themes: antifemininity; status-achievement; inexpressiveness-independence; and adventurousness-aggressiveness (Kilmartin & Allison, 2007, pg. 98). Additionally, Christopher Kilmartin and Julie Allison (2007) describe the concept of hypermasculinity to describe the extreme ‘macho’ man, or manliest of men. Hypermasculinity is comprised of three related components: sexually calloused attitudes toward women, equating heterosexual intercourse with male power and female submissiveness, and perceiving sex as an achievement rather than a means of intimacy; violence as an acceptable and often preferred means of expressing power, dominance, and manliness; and the view that danger is exciting and enjoyable (pg. 100). This definition of hypermasculinity reflects the current hegemonic masculinity within North American society, particularly in professional sports. Professional athletes are recognized as exemplars of masculinity within Western society (Tjønndal, 2016; Connell &

Messerschmidt, 2005) and sport as a site for the reiteration of hegemonic masculinity (Bruce, 2012; Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010).

2.7.3 Redemption Narrative & Violent Characters

Shadd Maruna is recognized as the preeminent scholar on the redemption narrative, known particularly for the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS) and subsequent analysis in “Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives.” The LDS included interviews with ex-convicts to examine how they constructed narratives around their ability (or not) to desist from participating in criminal activities upon release from prison. In this study, the individuals are narrators of their own stories. Maruna (2001) identifies desistance as “not an event that happens, rather it is the sustained *absence* of a certain type of event” (pg. 17, emphasis in original). Ex-convicts who were able to desist tell their story within a redemption narrative, while those who continue participating in criminal activities construct condemnation narratives. Maruna (2011) recognizes that these narratives are not limited to ex-convicts, as they are based on an exploration of how people can sustain changes in entrenched patterns of behaviour.

The redemption narrative is characterized as a ‘making good’ process, wherein “the redemption script allows a person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life” (Maruna, 2001, pg. 87). There are three main themes needed to construct a redemptive script: establishment of core beliefs that characterize the person’s ‘true self’; optimistic perception of personal control over one’s destiny; and, a desire to be productive and give back to society (Maruna, 2001, pg. 88). This redemption narrative is contrasted by the condemnation narrative told by those who continue to be active criminal offenders.

Individuals who employ a condemnation narrative write themselves off; they blame or condemn themselves, as well as society, for their position as a criminal (Maruna, 2001, pg.

75). These narratives lack language of agency or self-initiative, as though the individuals lack control over situations and are helpless to change their position (Maruna, 2001, pg. 76). The presence or absence of control within a narrative appears to play a key role in one's ability to desist a negative pattern of behaviour or not. The redemption and condemnation narratives are used by individuals to explain their own patterns of behaviours. I explore how these narratives are applied by journalists to explain male athlete's patterns of violent behaviours in a DV/VAW context.

Examination of narratives and characters that emerge around athletes in media is explored by Deb Waterhouse-Watson (2013) in "Athletes, sexual assault, and trials by media: Narrative immunity." She establishes three main male characters that emerge from media created narratives about sexual assault:

1. Heroes, men who are out to save the world from sexual assault;
2. Bad Apples, men who are a source of corruption who are responsible for any negative attitudes or behaviours present in leagues. They are also used as a scapegoat to protect [sport] from blame; and
3. (Naughty) Little Boys, athletes who do not know what rape is, cannot be held responsible for it, and therefore need to be 'educated' (Waterhouse-Watson, 2013, pg. 54).

Waterhouse-Watson (2013) identifies that the main purpose of these characters is to exculpate athletes from blame (pg. 131). I found these characters helpful to interpret how magazine writers portray men involved in DV/VAW and draw upon Waterhouse-Watson's concepts within my analysis.

2.7.4 Framing Theory

Framing theory is most commonly used to evaluate how a media story is constructed and presented. First explained by Robert Entman in 1993 and later elaborated upon by

scholars such as Tewksbury and Scheufele (2009), Jewkes (2015), and Hall (2019), I followed the lead of these earlier media researches and will be working with framing theory in my own analysis. I used framing theory to better understand the ways that media representations of masculinity shape social narratives and reflect the culture they exist within. These representations included the consideration of both presences and absences that exist within the texts I examined.

I analyze portrayals of DV/VAW in sport media through the lens of feminist theory. Drawing upon theories of hegemonic masculinity, I identify the frames, narratives, and characters used in the portrayals of men and women in these stories, particularly the use of Waterhouse-Watson's (2013) *Bad Apples* and *(Naughty) Little Boys*. Finally, I use framing theory in conjunction with Maruna's (2001) redemption and condemnation narratives to analyze how journalists construct stories about athletes, and the characters used to represent them, that engage in DV/VAW.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

I developed a methodology that examines how DV/VAW is portrayed in media where men are the principal audience in order to better understand why DV/VAW is not seen as a “men’s issue.” This discussion of methodology includes an outline of the administrative procedures I created for this project, an overview of my research design, and a description of and justification for my sources of data (Behling, 1984). I read, examined, and analyzed five years of *Sports Illustrated* magazine articles to identify the ways that DV/VAW is portrayed to the magazine’s primarily male audience.

Sports Illustrated was first launched as a weekly sport magazine by Time Inc. in 1954 (MacCambridge, 1998). While its targeted audience in 1954 was the high-class ‘sportsman,’ around the mid-1960s it began to appeal to a broad audience of blue-collar sports fans (MacCambridge, 1998). Michael MacCambridge (1998) explains that by the 1990s *Sports Illustrated* had become a multimedia enterprise that included spinoff magazines for both women and children as well as an all sports news channel. While *Sports Illustrated* was hit by the move to digital content in the 2010s, it still had a readership of 2.75 million subscribers in 2018 (MacCambridge, 2018). In 2018 Time Inc. sold *Sports Illustrated* to Meredith Group, who then sold it to Authentic Brands Group in 2019 (James, 2019). During that time, the magazine has seen a reduction from weekly to biweekly magazine (plus special issues). It was noted to be moving to a monthly publication in 2020 (James, 2019; MacCambridge, 2018).

The main inquiries I was hoping to answer in my examination of *Sports Illustrated* articles included whether or not DV/VAW was even presented as a problem, how women and their experiences were depicted, and what ways men involved in instances of DV/VAW were presented.

My findings from the Literature Review noted that the field of DV/VAW and media studies relies heavily upon studying newspaper reports. I did not want to focus on the study of newspapers because these types of examinations focus on how an issue is reported (Nettleton, 2011). Instead of focusing on reporting, I wanted this project to centre on narrative as its object of study. Patricia Ewick and Susan Sibley (1995) note that, when narrative is used as an object of study, scholars can examine the processes by which people construct and communicate their understandings of the world. This can also inform how actors rely on narratives when interpreting and making sense of their worlds (pg. 202). In order to study narrative, I directed my attention to magazines because, as Nettleton (2011) asserts, analysis of magazines is helpful in order to examine how an issue is discussed and characterized because of the longer timeframe given for narrative construction and the longer length of the media text. Additionally, “research on men’s magazines continues to serve an important purpose as a ‘window’ into broader cultural representations, discourses, and practices of gender and sexuality” (Waling et al., 2018, pg. 2). This is consistent with what scholars identify as the purpose of narrative analysis as well as the emerging notion that legal consciousness can be formed around narratives that exist outside of the court room (Brooks, 2005; Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Smyth, 2006)

The literature revealed only two researchers who have done work examining trends in the field of DV/VAW representation in magazines with a primarily male audience: Berns (2004) and Nettleton (2011, 2018). I used these researchers to inform my own methodological approach and analysis. I considered content, headlines, images, and captions of news articles when conducting my analysis because magazines are a visual media. This approach accounted for included images, highlighted or inset quotes, prominence of certain quotes or images, layout, and other visual components of the articles. The visual aspects of articles are used to complement narratives and bring attention to particular components.

Because magazine audiences do not strictly consume the text of an article, I deemed it necessary to include how visual components were used to reinforce particular content and enhance meanings conveyed within narratives.

The primary method I employed is narrative analysis. Peter Brooks (2005), in advocating for the use of narrative analysis in legal studies, notes that “use of narrative in life is a necessary human activity to help make sense of the world” (pg. 45). He also emphasizes that narrative employs a logic, through the use of sequential events, to explain certain situations; the logic used in one narrative can also be applied to other similar situations (Brooks, 2005). Additionally, narratives are social acts that depend on norms of performance and content that specify when, what, how, and why stories are told (Ewick & Sibley, 1995, pg. 197). As such, any given narrative will be “built around a set of unexamined cultural beliefs that structure understanding of everyday happenings” (Brooks, 2005, pgs. 417-418).

Narrative can also be characterized as a resource for negotiating meaning across relationships. Therefore, interaction with narrative implies a relationship between tellers and listeners (Shuman, 2012, pg. 25). The way narratives are listened to, received, and how they call to be acted upon is another aspect to consider when studying them (Brooks, 2005, pg. 424). With this in mind, men’s magazines – or magazines that target a male audience – can fall into the category of male-to-male communication (Bruce, 2012; Nettleton, 2018; Waling et al., 2018; Waling 2017). Waling (2017) recognizes that media can sell different traits or attributes as masculine by working them into narratives of what masculinity is, which then allows them to be interpreted as inseparable from what men may believe is male/masculine (pg. 437). She also states “masculinity can be understood as an aspect of personhood that requires some external acknowledgment from, and continuous engagement with, the broader social institutions that work to shape and maintain it” (Waling, 2017, pg. 429). Engaging with professional sport institutions through a popular media source, such as a magazine, can allow

individuals to read stories that advance dominant hegemonic forms of masculinity that are articulated in broader culture.

When using narrative as a method, the researcher must read for a meaning within a text that goes beyond the literal statements. I created coding systems to identify meanings within the text that may not be explicitly identifiable by reading the manifest content alone; coding the articles allowed for identification of implicit meanings communicated within them. Narrative as a mode for understanding is retrospective to the time the story was told. “Narratives always and necessarily entail looking backward from some present moment, and seeing in the movement of events episodes that are part of some larger whole” (Freeman, 2015). This view that narrative can reflect a singular moment in a societal context, while also communicating particular meaning can illuminate cultural understandings of issues at certain points in time. Examination of narratives over time can then be used to determine whether or not changes in cultural understandings of particular issues have occurred. As Nettleton (2011) states, “media messages are powerful, and their rhetoric is the terrain upon which hegemonic values are reinforced” (pg. 142). I previously noted that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant cultural viewpoint; narrative can be used to determine whether dominant cultural constructions change over time.

Professional sports are an aspect of society predominantly played, consumed, and controlled by men. It is also an arena used to reify traditional patriarchal ideals of hegemonic masculinity, particularly valorizing elite, able-bodied, heterosexual, and professional male athletes (Bruce, 2012, pg. 128). These valorized professional athletes are not immune from committing acts of DV/VAW, one may even argue they are more likely to commit DV/VAW because of their existence within a professional culture that emphasizes patriarchal ideals of hegemonic hyper masculinity. Because the majority of the professional sport media audience is also comprised of men, sport media present a unique niche to examine what messages men

receive about DV/VAW. It is important to understand the narratives that are presented to this audience because they can inform the dominant cultural constructions of DV/VAW within a masculinized context. It must also be noted that, while narratives may present dominant cultural explanations for certain events, they do not directly affect how readers think in a linear manner. Narratives can provide space or promote certain interpretations of an event, but readers maintain their ability to critically reflect on them and come to their own conclusions.

There is not much scholarly literature that looks at how links are made between DV/VAW and sport in media. Very few sources connect DV to sport or athletes. This supports the need for further research in this area. Male university athletes who commit acts of sexual violence are the primary objects of study in literature that examines portrayals of DV/VAW or sexual assault (McCray, 2015). This is likely due to the accessibility of student athletes to academic researchers. However, this creates a gap for understanding professional athletes who commit DV/VAW. Nettleton's 2011 research that examined DV/VAW messages in men's and women's magazines considered *Sports Illustrated* as one of the five magazines for men. She noted that *Sports Illustrated* often excused DV/VAW.

I examined each article's content, headline, and captions. Each article was read multiple times and coded based on themes identified in the literature review as being present in DV/VAW articles, representations of both the perpetrator and victims, aspects of the narrative provided, and how the article is meant to affect the reader.

3.2 Before Reading

I chose *Sports Illustrated* as my object of study because of its popularity and long history. In addition to print circulation, *Sports Illustrated* is also available online, providing further access to its articles. For this project, I focused on articles published in the print version of *Sports Illustrated* from 2015-2019.

I first had to find access to these, a total of 187 issues, before I could select and analyze relevant articles. I inquired at both MacOdrum Library and the Reader's Digest Resource Centre at Carleton University, but neither location had access to the relevant issues. I then made an appointment with the MacOdrum Library's Communication and Media Studies subject specialist to discuss possible locations for accessing *Sports Illustrated*. These included contacting the magazine directly, putting in requests with other university libraries that have larger communication and media studies programs, and accessing the Ottawa Public Library (OPL).

OPL provided me access to the Full Text Finder database for newspapers and magazines. After searching for *Sports Illustrated* in Full Text Finder, I was provided entry to Canadian Reference Centre publications via EBSCOhost. I was able to view issues of *Sports Illustrated* through this portal. Once an issue was selected, links to pdf versions of each article within the issue were provided; the pdf file included original lay out, formatting, and visuals along with the text. I had to open each article individually to search for relevant content.

The 2015-2019 time period covered eight volumes³ and 186 issues, totaling 5133 articles. I used four key search terms in order to select relevant articles for study. I used a few methods for selecting relevant articles. First, I read the titles and subtitle of the article. This was necessary for all 5133 articles to determine whether an article may contain a reference to an DV/VAW incident but did not include associated language. I then searched each article for four terms: "domestic"; "violence"; "sexual"; "assault". These words were searched independently because of limitations I identified in the literature review, particularly the tendency of articles to mislabel DV/VAW when relying on police sources (Cullen et. al., 2019; Simons & Morgan, 2018). If I got a 'hit' on one of these search terms within the text, I

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read parts of the article surrounding them to determine whether DV/VAW was a part of the article. For example, the term “assault” may appear in an article but refer to a player or team’s athletic performance (e.g., an offensive assault) rather than a criminal act. Using these criteria, I identified 97 articles that referenced DV/VAW and 8 articles where the search terms were notably absent.⁴ I also included Letters to the Editor that used any of the search terms or were a response to an article that I identified.

3.3 Reviewing Identified Cases

I thoroughly read through all of the articles selected. While reading, I was attentive to how acts of DV/VAW were presented, how the men and women included in the case were represented, the context in which DV/VAW was presented, and the primary narrative of the article. This included identifying where within the article the incident of DV/VAW appeared, what type of language was used to portray the incident, which quotes were chosen to be inset on the text, examining the accompanying visuals, and determining how the incident of DV/VAW fit into the broader narrative of the article.

After the initial read through I identified four major categories to sort the articles into: Substantive Content; Mentions DV/VAW; Absences; and Letters to the Editor. Articles where DV/VAW had influence on the story or had an effect on the larger narrative of the story were sorted into the Substantive Content category. The Mentions category included articles where DV/VAW was mentioned but did not have an impact on the story or larger narrative. The Letter to the Editor category includes articles that explicitly mentioned

⁴ An example of a notable absence is the article “Collision Course” by Josh Sens (2017). The article centres on a man whose dream was to build a golf course that would one day host the Professional Golf Association’s Masters Tournament. The tournament was held on the course in 2017, but the man was unable to experience it because he was serving a prison sentence for murdering his wife. The article details how his wife was seeking a divorce. He murdered her after one conversation where she brought up the idea of divorce. Throughout the article there is no mention of terms relating to DV/VAW, such as: domestic violence, violence against women, intimate partner violence, etc. The article is framed as a man who ‘snapped’ because his wife tried to leave him and was unable to live his dream.

DV/VAW or were written in response to an article that fell into the Substantive Content category. All notable absences were included in the Absence category.



Figure 3. 1 Article Categories

I then focused on each of these groups to determine whether further subcategories were needed and to identify themes and patterns within them. I was able to establish three subcategories within Substantive Content: Key Component of Article; Element of Larger Story; and Activism. These subcategories represent the particular ways that DV/VAW comes up as a substantive component of an article. DV/VAW was the central topic in articles sorted into the Key Component subcategory (e.g., a former NFL prospect who became a serial killer; new civil cases of sexual assault by athletes on college campuses; a NASCAR driver in court facing DV/VAW allegations). Articles where DV/VAW was a part of but not central to the story were put in the Element subcategory (e.g., DV/VAW scandal as a sign that the WNBA has reached maturity as a league; Free agent rankings that would have put a player higher on the list if not for a DV/VAW charge; DV/VAW as part of an athlete's polarizing image and reinvention). Finally, the Activism category includes articles where the focus is anti-DV/VAW initiatives (e.g., A team investing in anti-violence programs to bring

generational change; identifying and giving voices to victims of DV/VAW; ex-athletes advocating for colleges to take a stronger stance against sexual assault).

With the subcategories established, I began to brainstorm potential patterns and themes that arose across articles. These themes were based on my initial reading of all articles and subsequent review of the Substantive articles in addition to prevalent themes I identified in the Literature Review. The full list of the 52 themes and patterns are listed in *Appendix A* (see Tables 1-4). I wrote each pattern or theme on a cue card, then conducted four more rounds of reading the Substantive articles to identify which ones contained potential patterns and themes. Once I determined an article contained a particular pattern, I wrote the title of the article and its subcategory on the cue card for future reference. After coding the Mentions, Absences, and Letters to the Editor as well as a meeting with my supervisor I identified more potential patterns and themes. I returned to the Substantive articles and read through them another two times to code for these additional patterns.

I was also able to identify three subcategories within the Mentions articles. The subcategories are: Combined with other ‘Scandals’; included as part of a player’s background; Reason for player suspension/absence. The first subcategory mentions DV/VAW by bunching it with another scandal or cluster of scandalous behaviour (e.g., talking about DV/VAW and concussions in the NFL; highlighting DV/VAW as part of an individual’s pattern of bad behaviour). The inclusion of DV/VAW – including accusations, charges, convictions, and suspensions – appeared obligatory in articles that fell into the Part of the Player’s Background category. In many of these articles, the mention of DV/VAW briefly appears in brackets after a player’s name or buried within the text explaining his background. Similarly, the final category states DV/VAW as the reason for a player’s suspension or absence from a team. In these instances, the exact incident is not elaborated upon or explained.

I created cue cards for patterns and themes that may appear within the Mentions articles. These were informed by my previous read through and the patterns that appeared throughout the Substantive articles. There were not as many cue cards for the Mentions articles (*Appendix A*); I was able to code all the Mentions articles in two rounds of reading. As with the Substantive articles, I returned to code more patterns after completing the remaining categories and meeting with my supervisor. These patterns were coded during an additional two readings.

Letters to the Editor were coded based on the emotions expressed by readers who wrote in. I was also attentive to which party they supported if responding to a specific instance of DV/VAW as well as their sentiment towards the journalist and magazine. A full list of patterns that I coded for are available in *Appendix A*. I was able to code all Letters to the Editor in two readings.

Absences was the final category for coding. While I did not identify particular subcategories in this section, I noted that two of the eight articles would have fallen within the Substantive: Key Component subcategory had DV/VAW been appropriately labelled (“Tamed Fury”; “Collision Course”). The remaining six articles would have been categorized into Mentions. The patterns I coded for were informed by what I had identified in the Substantive and Mentions categories. The full list of patterns I coded for are listed in *Appendix A*. I used the same cue card method for recording which articles aligned with each pattern. All Absence articles were coded in two readings.

3.4 After coding

The final part of my methodology included an analysis and synthesis of identified patterns and themes. I decided to keep the articles sorted into four main categories and focus primarily on articles with DV/VAW as Substantive Content. A key component of my post-coding methodology is the use of data visualization.

I needed to visualize my data to see how certain patterns and themes are used across types of articles (or not). I used two 22” by 28” sheets of poster paper to aid this visualization. I started by focusing on the substantive content articles; I made a Venn diagram including the three categories of substantive content (e.g., key component of article; element of larger story; activism). I then went through the cue cards and sorted the patterns into the Venn diagram based on the categories of articles that I identified for that pattern (Image 1, Appendix B). For example, the pattern of journalists relying on police reports and police sources was found in nine key component articles and three element of larger story articles. Accordingly, that pattern was placed in the space where the circles for these categories overlapped. After completing the Venn diagram, I created a table on the back of the poster as an alternative way to visualize how many articles from each category exhibited a pattern (Image 2, Appendix B; typed out in Table 1, Appendix A).

I repeated the process of creating a Venn diagram and table for the Mentions subcategories. I created tables for the Letters to the Editor and Absences categories because they did not include any subcategories. I was able to include visualizations for the Mentions, Letters to the Editor, and Absences on a single poster (Image 3, Appendix B). The tables from this poster are included in *Appendix A*.

These data visualizations allowed me to see different ways that the patterns and themes I identified in the articles interacted with each other, where they were most likely to be seen, and also where certain patterns were not used. My next step was to use the data visualization to help my analysis.

I focused my analysis on the substantive articles because they provide more detailed information on the various aspects of DV/VAW than articles that merely mention it. I started my analysis referencing the patterns present in key component articles with the common themes of DV/VAW portrayal in media that I identified in the Literature Review: victim

blaming; ignoring the social context/focusing on exceptionalism of the case; excusing or sympathizing with the perpetrator; reliance on professional (i.e., police) sources; representing the individuals involved as the main issue, rather than societal issues; and treating DV/VAW homicides like 'any other homicide'. I also referenced the patterns present with the four limitations of reliance on police sources in literature that I identified: employing episodic framing to over simplify the event; viewing police as the only authentic, reliable, and verifiable source; relying on police information as most accessible to meet journalistic reporting needs; and mislabeling/not labeling acts as DV/VAW.

While I certainly found evidence to support these categories previously identified in the literature, through the analysis process I noticed other clusters of patterns emerging that centre around the treatment of men and women. I used these clusters to determine the key themes and ideas I present in my analysis section. When looking at women, I noticed a trend where articles would work to diminish the impact on them, deny that they were victims, and ultimately erase them from the story completely. I determined that perpetrators of DV/VAW were primarily sorted into two categories, as men who had made a mistake or someone who is flawed based on either their circumstances or bad character traits. These fit into literature review characterizations that contextualize men's behaviours by explaining aspects of his life circumstances that contributed to the violent act (Lee & Wong, 2019, Smith et al., 2019; Nettleton, 2011) or othering the men by representing them as the main issue (Hernandez, 2018; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014).

Within the literature review, I recognize the importance of identifying journalistic practices in news construction. While I was unable to gain direct insight to how journalists construct narratives around DV/VAW in *Sports Illustrated*, I did notice that the magazine favoured particular journalistic representations. There are two journalists who account for a significant number of Key Component articles that contributed to my analysis: S.L. Price and

L. Jon Wertheim. Articles written by Price or Wertheim covered the entire 5-year time frame I examined. Whether they are contractually employed or paid on a freelance basis, this trend suggests that *Sports Illustrated* was pleased and agreed enough with their work on articles about DV/VAW.

The total amount of articles I identified in each category are outlined in Table 3.1.

The number of substantive articles are described in Table 3.2.

Type of Article	Amount
Substantive Content	43
Mentions	39
Letter to the Editor	14
Absence	7
TOTAL	103

Table 3. 1 Total articles per category

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Key Component	6	4	7	3	2
Element	10	5	0	1	2
Activism	2	2	0	5	1
Total Substantive Articles	18	11	7	9	5
Total DV/VAW Articles	31	23	16	20	7
Total <i>Sports Illustrated</i> Articles	1268	1197	1066	871	731

Table 3. 2 Substantive articles in each category per year

My overall sense of the presence of DV/VAW articles, particularly those that fell into the substantive category, was that they were incidental to the stories being told. Only one article (McKnight & Wertheim, 2015) was intentionally about DV/VAW. “This is what Domestic Abuse Looks Like” told the story of an abuser that a jury convicted on nine misdemeanour counts (including inflicting corporal injury on a spouse or cohabitant, assault with a deadly weapon, and criminal threats and brandishing a deadly weapon) and was sentenced to 32 months in prison and 52 weeks of domestic violence and anger-management classes

(McKnight & Wertheim, 2015, pg. 62). This article relied almost exclusively on police and court documents to explain what ‘domestic abuse looks like.’ Almost all other inclusions of DV/VAW were provided as necessary, if not obligatory, background information about the men at the centre of the articles. In this regard, DV/VAW becomes merely a compulsory component to be included in a story, rather than the main focus of reporting.

The analysis in the following two chapters is the result of my methodological process. Chapter 4.0 “What Women?” draws upon the patterns and themes identified around how women are portrayed in the articles examined. I note that, wherever possible, women are removed from narratives in favour of a male-centric story. Chapter 5.0 “Becoming a Real Man” explores journalists’ decisions on which characters to cast men into and the narratives constructed around them. Representations of both women and men in these articles work to reproduce hegemonic patriarchal understandings of society.

4.0 What Women?

Denial, Diminishment, and Erasure of Women's Violent Experiences

4.1 Introduction

One of the main purposes this project was to identify the ways that *Sports Illustrated* discussed women who experience violence. At many points throughout reading articles centered around men who commit violence I found myself asking, “wait, what about the women?”. As in, “what women are we talking about?”, “what women are affected by these acts of violence?”, “where are the women in the narrative?”, “what role do women play in these stories?”. More often than not, the answers to these questions were difficult to find. I began to recognize the ways in which female victims of DV/VAW are elided from narratives that include acts of violence against women. Overall, I realized that women who experience violence, and the status of victimhood, are diminished, denied, and erased from these narratives. Diminishment of women's experiences happens with the reduction in perceived severity of acts of violence. By diminishing the seriousness of an act of violence, the degree of victimization experienced is also diminished. This leads into the second main theme I found, denial. Once an event is diminished, it becomes easier for writers and the intended readers to deny sufferers of violence their status as a victim. This also includes denying that a specific violent act occurred. Finally, if acts of violence can be diminished to a point that they are denied completely, it allows women to be erased entirely from the narrative. Erasing violence and the women who experience it allows writers to tell stories where athletes are able to overcome the odds, prove their redemption, or strengthen their family bonds. This creates room for readers to focus on the male-centric narrative promoted in the articles, focus their sympathy on the men involved, and release the reader from uncomfortable and disturbing realities of the consequences of violent acts on women.

4.2 Diminishment

Violent incidents can occur in many forms, including: grabbing, shoving, slapping, hitting, biting, kicking, pushing, punching, tripping, beating, bruising, choking, shaking, breaking bones, burning, stabbing, shooting, and forcing sexual acts. These are all brutal actions that can result in physical, psychological, and emotional harm. The first step in erasing victims from narratives about male perpetrators of DV/VAW is to reduce the perceived severity of violence that occurred. I found this in the diminishment of acts of violence. I have identified four ways that acts of violence are diminished in *Sports*

Illustrated: conflation of DV/VAW with other ‘issues’ faced by an individual or institution, reducing the violence to just another ‘scandal’ that must be dealt with; the use of euphemism to mask the violence that occurred in more palatable terms; favouring perpetrators’ accounts and perspectives, which reduces the ability for womens’ voices and experiences to be heard; and requiring the presence of multiple victims before the violence is worthy to report on, which suggests that no single act of violence is significant enough to warrant attention.

4.2.1 Just another scandal

The most prevalent way the magazine diminished DV/VAW is by conflating acts of violence with other scandals or undesirable patterns of behaviour. Bundling DV/VAW with other misdeeds diminishes the severity of violence that occurred as well as the impacts the violent acts had on women. Reference to DV/VAW as “just another scandal” occurs in reference to both individual athletes and athletic institutions (e.g., specific leagues or teams).

Journalists writing about star athletes who face allegations of DV/VAW consolidate violent acts with other “controversial” behaviours that add to athletes’ “polarizing” image. As S.L. Price (2017) wrote about NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, who was accused of raping women in 2008 and 2010, “With the retirements of Ray Lewis and Kobe Bryant, the 34-year-old Roethlisberger is American sports’ most prominent polarizer, his number 7 is as

provocative as a question mark” (pgs. 22-23). In addition to the alleged rapes, other factors that contributed to Roethlisberger’s polarizing image included an extreme sense of entitlement, rudeness, and gambling (Price, 2017). While the rape accusations are held up as the pinnacle of Roethlisberger’s poor deeds, presenting them with more common place behaviours diminishes both the violence that is alleged to have occurred and the effects on the women.

This diminishment of acts committed by popular players is also demonstrated in Ben Golliver’s (2016) one-page article on the retirement of Kobe Bryant. Golliver (2016) writes, *Maintaining Stardom in Los Angeles* requires talent, dedication, charisma, and a knack for reinvention. Kobe Bryant possessed all of the above, arriving as an 18-year-old Lakers rookie in 1996 and hanging on for two decades despite major personality conflicts, a sexual assault allegation (the criminal charges were dropped, and a civil suit was settled) and serious late-career health issues. *The Kobe Show* drew ratings in good times and bad (pg. 122).

Here, the sexual assault is listed with personality conflicts and health issues as though they are of relatively equal significance. By noting Bryant’s knack for reinvention, Golliver also suggests that – like personality and health issues – the sexual assault was something Bryant merely had to overcome throughout his career. Further examination of how overcoming DV/VAW is expressed as part of athletes’ redemption narratives is discussed in the next chapter.

Diminishing acts of violence can serve the redemptive story of athletes or contribute to a narrative outlining an athlete’s fall from grace. DV/VAW alone, it seems, cannot cause a fall, but in conjunction with other poor behaviours it contributes to a negative image of an athlete. However, this need to compile evidence against an athlete’s character allows for the acts of violence committed against women to be defused and diffused. In Emily Kaplan’s

(2016) article about Johnny Manziel, “The Abyss”, DV/VAW language is avoided completely when describing multiple incidents of police responding to assault calls by his girlfriend (pgs. 36, 37). The avoidance of DV/VAW language further diminishes the severity of violence and its connection to a pattern of violence. In addition to the assaults against his girlfriend, other misbehaviours that put Manziel’s future with the NFL in jeopardy included: excessive partying and drinking; going on a 3-day trip to Las Vegas without telling anyone; being late for team meetings; and attending practice hungover (Kaplan, 2016, pgs. 36-37). The “just another scandal” pattern contributes to the Naughty Boy character I discuss in the following chapter. Presenting an athlete as a Naughty Boy explains the “scandals” he is associated with as immature behaviours. Conflating DV/VAW with other Naughty Boy behaviours that are perceived as less serious and more forgivable may lead readers to believe that those acts are not his fault. Alternatively, dismissing DV/VAW as not serious may cause the need to assign fault or blame for an incident irrelevant.

A similar pattern is seen in the Robert Klemko’s (2019) article about NFL player Antonio Brown, entitled “History of Trouble.” Klemko explains, “In a half-dozen lawsuits, [Brown] is accused of refusal to pay wages to former assistants and part-time employees. Court documents and interviews also suggest a pattern of disturbing, sometimes bizarre behaviour – including a second woman’s allegations of sexual misconduct by Brown” (pg. 32). Klemko (2019) mixes the stories of DV/VAW in with other tales of Brown’s behaviours, which also consist of refusing to pay wages to assistants and employees (pg. 37); purchasing a painting from a charity auction, receiving the painting, and failing to pay for it (pg. 33); ignoring calls from an artist who was working on a commissioned mural at his apartment and not returning her supplies after she refused sexual advances (pg. 33); accusing a personal chef of making threats on his life after finding a fish head in his freezer (pg. 36); and multiple interactions with police, including one where police responded to Brown throwing furniture

from the balcony of a 14th floor apartment (pg. 34). The experiences of violence of the women involved become lost in Brown's increasingly absurd misbehaviours, which invites readers to skim over accounts of violence in search of more absorbing stories.

Diminishment of DV/VAW and its victims also occurs in articles referring to scandals faced by athletic institutions. One of the most common conflation occurred in 2015 when referring to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell's handling of the Ray Rice incident (in which video emerged of Rice brutally assaulting his then-fiancée in an elevator) and Deflate-gate (wherein the New England patriots were accused and found guilty of using under inflated balls in the playoffs, giving them an unfair advantage) (McCann, 2015; Price, 2015; Taylor, 2015; Rohan, 2016). Repeatedly discussing these scandals in tandem generates the perception that a violent assault of a woman is parallel to cheating in a playoff game.

Comparable approaches to discussing DV/VAW as just another scandal can be seen in articles about the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and NASCAR, both written by Andrew Lawrence. In an article mainly focused on the winner of the Daytona 500, Andrew Lawrence (2015a) discusses how NASCAR faced a "Speedweek from hell" leading up to the race. Lawrence describes the scandals, "NASCAR's troubles simmered and stewed before exploding in a spectacular fashion" (pg. 36). The beginning of the explosion was a court opinion that supported Patricia Driscoll's version of events when detailing how her ex-boyfriend, a NASCAR driver, "bashed her head against the wall of his motorhome" (Lawrence, 2015a, pg. 36). While the court decision was just the beginning, other scandals that emerged to plague NASCAR were: a multi-car wreck; top-contenders for the Daytona 500 playing bumper cars; and a confrontation between a male and female driver after a qualifying race (Lawrence, 2015a, pg. 37).

In August of that year, Lawrence (2015) wrote about the WNBA, "If one mark of a league's maturity is an ability to generate headlines, then consider the W all grown up" (pg.

46). The first “bombshell” of a headline was an all-star player choosing to sit out the 2015 season in order to play basketball in Russia, where she would receive better pay (Lawrence, 2015, pg. 46). The second biggest headline identified by Lawrence (2015) was when the defensive player of the year and her fiancée (also a WNBA player) were arrested by police on assault and disorderly conduct charges (they were subsequently dropped when one of the women agreed to 26 weeks of domestic violence counselling) (pg. 46). Although this story references woman on woman violence, it is still relevant to understanding the treatment of DV/VAW within *Sports Illustrated*. After identifying the DV/VAW incident, Lawrence (2015) goes on to describe other headline worthy scandals involving WNBA players: two more all-star players taking the 2015 season off; the hiring of a new team president who was previously accused of creating a toxic work environment with other organizations; and the relocation of one of the league’s teams (pgs. 46-47).

The treatment of DV/VAW incidents in NASCAR and the WNBA exemplify how DV/VAW can be diminished by its conflation with other scandals. Comparing DV/VAW with other events, such as athletes going to bumper cars or a team relocating, can reduce the impact of emotional reactions to the brutality of DV/VAW on readers. Reducing the severity of events also facilitates the diminishment of impacts of DV/VAW on women. This is the first step in erasing women completely from their own stories about DV/VAW.

4.2.2 Euphemism

Examination of word choice and usage can inform male/female social dynamics across time and cultures (Martin, 2007). The use of coded language in *Sports Illustrated* – adopting other terms and language to refer to acts of violence – works in two ways to diminish the severity of acts of DV/VAW and its impact on women. First, the perceived severity of acts is reduced by avoiding the use of words such as violence, assault, or rape. Lindsay-Brisbin and colleagues (2014) note that this avoidance is used in order to make

violent acts more socially acceptable. Additionally, the use of labels and euphemisms allows the writer to focus their narrative on the perpetrator, drawing the reader's attention away from the women. Assunta Martin (2007) recognizes the use of euphemism to re-dress old words or replace more familiar ideas. Novel euphemisms are created to shed negative social connotations that are associated with old phrases (Martin, 2007, pgs. 59-60)⁵. The most common code words for DV/VAW I found center on two main themes: immaturity and trouble. This language works in conjunction with the 'just another scandal' conflation, described in the previous section, to minimize acts of gendered violence.

A man's immaturity comes up often as a way to excuse his behaviour. In doing so, it becomes coded language for violent acts. When speaking about an incident involving his son, John Elway says, "A kid made a bad decision, but he'll learn from that" (Price, 2015, pg. 54). In this case, the kid to whom Elway is referring is his 24-year-old son. The bad decision? Dragging his girlfriend from a car by her hair and shoving her to the ground (Price, 2015, pg. 54). Price makes no attempt to further explain, critique, or refute Elway's assessment. Price actively applies the immaturity label in his 2016 article that includes sexual assault allegations about NHL player Patrick Kane, "So Good and So Far To Go", and his 2017 article on the potential reformation of NFL quarter Ben Roethlisberger, "What We Think About When We Think About Big Ben." The immaturity label belittles acts of violence, chalking them up to mistakes by immature young men while ignoring the impacts they have on women who experienced violence. It also ignores the likelihood that they will go on to commit further acts of DV/VAW.

⁵ Martin (2007) refers to a popular mayor to show the use of euphemism to replace a familiar idea. When the mayor was involved in a casino scheme he was accused of 'passive corruption.' This term was used to replace the more familiar idea of '(suspected) accomplice'. Accordingly, blame and responsibility are removed from the mayor and he becomes a victim who gains sympathy and can be more easily forgiven or excused for his possibly criminal behaviour (pg. 60).

The “trouble” label is most evident in Klemko’s (2019) article about Antonio Brown, entitled “History of Trouble”. This title could easily have been “History of Violence” had Klemko opted for a more familiar and accurate word-pairing. Brown’s various misdeeds, highlighted in the previous section and including multiple accounts of sexual assault, are all captured under this label. Referring to a perpetrator as “troubled” also appears in Kaplan’s (2016) article about Johnny Manziel. Other phrases Kaplan (2016) uses to describe Manziel’s behaviours, which include acts of violence against his girlfriend, include “checkered past” and “self-destructive habits” (pg. 34). Each of these euphemisms reduces the negative impacts of referring to violence and drug use. A variation on this label is seen in Dan Greene’s (2017) article, “Cowboy Down.” The story of Joseph Randle describes four arrests for incidents relating to DV/VAW, including charges of aggravated battery, property damage, and criminal threats (Greene, 2017, pg. 56). However, these are summed up in euphemisms like “off-field misdeeds” (pg. 54) and “tumultuous career” (pg. 56). In all of these instances, the language used to encapsulate various behaviours diminishes acts of violence. The focus on the lives of perpetrators also works to minimize the experiences of women.

It is interesting to note that the term “immaturity” is used for Naughty Boy characters while the term “troubled” appears with Bad Apple characters. In the next chapter, I detail how Naughty Boys are able to “overcome” the obstacle of DV/VAW to become Real Men while Bad Apples are inherently doomed to fail. The apparent relationship between the terms “immaturity” and “troubled” with these two characters can inform readers about the best way to interpret a man’s actions because they invoke the narratives related to the Naughty Boy and Bad Apple.

4.2.3 Favouring perpetrator perspectives

Articles most commonly focused on men’s perspectives of violent incidents and the consequences they faced. This supports patriarchal ideals that value men over women. As a

site for the reproduction of hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity, I find it unsurprising that *Sports Illustrated* articles are centered on men's versions of events. The literature review noted a reliance on police as the primary source for DV/VAW incidents (Cullen, 2019; Hawley et al., 2018; Meyer, 2018). However, Hawley and colleagues (2018) also recognized that the primary source for DV/VAW incidents can change over time. I correctly anticipated that *Sports Illustrated* would include a wider array of sources. What I did not predict was that these sources would predominantly support men's accounts.

Favouring the male perspective works to silence women's voices and detract from their experiences. These articles focus on quotations and perspectives of the men and their family, friends, and supporters to bolster their account of what happened. This also supports stories constructed around 'underdog' and redemption narratives that focus on men, further explored in Chapter 5. The voices of women who experienced violence are also used in some instances to support men's accounts. Centering the narrative on men can recast them as a victim of circumstance.

One of the clearest cases of this is in Price's (2016) article on Patrick Kane. Part of the reason the prosecutor provided for dropping the case was that the victim's testimony did not align with that of other witnesses. The alleged incident occurred after the victim and her friend accompanied Kane and his friend back to his apartment after meeting at a bar. When discussing the inconsistencies in the case, the prosecutor directly states that the victim's testimony did not align with testimony given by Kane's friend (Price, 2016, pgs. 67-68). There is no reference, either within the body of the article or quotes selected by the prosecutor, as to whether or not testimony from the victim's friend aligned with either of these versions. The accounts given by both Kane and his friend supported one another, effectively discrediting and diminishing the woman's articulation of her experience.

Favouring perpetrator perspectives forces women's experiences to become secondary or non-existent within the story. In Dan Greene's (2017) article about Joseph Randle, DV/VAW incidents and arrests contribute to the larger story about how Randle faced mental health issues and was not supported by his employer (the NFL). DV/VAW becomes a symptom of Randle's mental illness and the woman's experience is ignored. Lee Jenkins' (2015) article on the relationship between college basketball star Jalen Brunson and his father Rick Brunson, an ex-NBA player, supports the account that sexual assault allegations against Rick were actually a misunderstanding and part of an ongoing affair (pgs. 62-63). Based on the Brunson version of events, Rick gets recast as the victim with his innocent family having to face repercussions from the accusation, such as Jalen fielding questions about his father after basketball games, his wife having to work from home, the family facing scrutiny, and Rick not being able to get any job interviews (Jenkins, 2015, pgs. 62-63). Not only is the act diminished from sexual assault to misunderstanding, the impacts of the incident on the woman involved are not considered.

Concentrating on male perspectives is also used to support the theme that an athlete's past should not define him. This can be seen in Jonathan Jones' (2017) article "Chief Concern" and Price's (2018) "Prospect and Pariah". Jones describes an incident that involved NFL player Tyreek Hill when he was still a college athlete. When Hill's pregnant girlfriend received a text about him "hitting on high schoolers" he threw her phone and laptop into the hallway and shut her out of his room. When she re-entered, he hit her in the face, choked her, and punched her in the stomach (pg. 44). Hill pleaded guilty to battery by strangulation in 2015 (Jones, 2017, pg. 44). At the time the article was written, January 2017, readers were asked to determine whether Hill's athletic abilities – which contributed to his team making the playoffs that year – were substantial enough for his past acts to no longer define him. Jones (2017) provided the legal and career consequences of Hill's actions, including a three-

year deferred sentence and a university transfer (pg. 44-45) before noting he was ultimately drafted to an NFL team. Speaking to the hardships faced and overcome by Hill in the aftermath of his actions again diminishes the violence experienced by the woman and the outcomes she faced in favour of Hill's narrative.

Price (2018) writes about college pitcher Luke Heimlich, who pleaded guilty to a felony charge of molesting his six-year-old niece when he was 15-years old. Despite the plea, Heimlich maintained his innocence (pg. 32). Heimlich's reassertion of innocence is present throughout the article, including a large inset quote that spans two pages that states, "Heimlich says pleading guilty to sexual contact with his niece gave him **'the best chance for a normal life'**" (pgs. 36-37, emphasis in original). Readers are also presented with accounts from various Heimlich family members who support his innocence and agree that pleading guilty was the best way for their family to move forward. Price (2018) does note that there is a minimal relationship between Heimlich and his brother, the father of the girl involved. However, the narrative quickly switches back to Heimlich, who becomes recast as the victim of a faulty justice system. Because Heimlich was 15 at the time of the offense, the guilty plea should have been part of his juvenile record and not public. Accordingly, the position he found himself in – defending his decision to plead guilty – was one he never chose or expected. Focusing on Heimlich being a victim of the justice system redirects attention away from the girl, diminishing her role in the narrative and her experience of violence for the more suitable narrative of an athlete overcoming his past.

4.2.4 Multiple victims

Articles that focus on DV/VAW as a key component seem to require accounts from multiple women or multiple instances in order for DV/VAW to be seen as a substantive issue. About half of all substantive articles with DV/VAW as a key component had multiple victims or acts of violence. Requiring multiple acts for violence to be taken seriously or to be

presented as an issue diminishes each individual experience or instance of violence, indicating that a single act of violence is not enough to warrant examination. Only exceptional single acts of violence are worthy of coverage. This trend aligns with the findings of other scholars, as discussed in the Literature Review. A higher volume of victims or incidents may contribute to the sensationalism of a case and raise it to the level where the audience may have an interest. I suspect that a hierarchy of celebrity status exists within the realm of professional sport, which may result in men with a lower status requiring multiple offenses before their acts of violence become newsworthy.

The need for multiple victims to create a story is seen in violent acts committed by individuals athletes (Greene, 2017; Price 2017a; Wertheim & Bernstein, 2017; Wertheim, 2016) and within athletic institutions/organizations (Wertheim, 2019; Rosenberg, 2018; Jacoby 2017; Price, 2016; Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016; Kaplan 2015). Single instances of violence can be easier to cover-up, deny, or erase. This is likely due to one woman's testimony being easier to discredit. Multiple acts are seen to increase the validity of each incident; however, the requirement that multiple acts are needed to bolster the legitimacy of allegations belittles each individual experience of victimhood.

This is evident in Wertheim's (2019) article, "Truth and Consequences", about MLB whistleblower Nick Francona who brought multiple cases of sexual assault allegations within the Dodgers organization to light. The first incident that was covered up by the Dodgers occurred in February 2015. It included two members of the Dodgers minor league organization and a 17-year-old girl (Wertheim, 2017, pgs. 85-86). Wertheim writes about the incident,

Outside of Dodgers insiders and Glendale law enforcement circles, the incident remained largely secret for two years. But in retrospect it was the first act in a long-running (and ongoing) Shakespearean baseball drama, pitting an unlikely whistle-

blower – Francona – against the institution that functions as his family business, and against a self-styled baseball iconoclast who in his own way has pushed against the game’s rigid structures (pg. 86).

This quote makes it clear that the main narrative of the article is centered around the men, casting Francona as the hero. The incident involving the girl is only the first of three main allegations that lead to Francona revealing how the organization covered up these instances of DV/VAW. The need for more cases – which included the violent sexual assault of a hotel housekeeper and several players confronting female guests and stalking them through a hotel lobby (Wertheim, 2017, pgs. 86-87) – makes each case on its own not severe or valid enough to warrant attention of whistleblowers, journalists, or readers.

Diminishment of acts of violence and victimhood can allow readers to develop an apathy towards women who experience violence. Conflation with other scandals, employing euphemism, favouring perpetrators’ perspectives, and needing multiple women to create a story grants readers the opportunity to interpret acts of violence as being something that is either not as bad as women claim it to be or not newsworthy because it happens so often. This indifference towards violent acts can transfer to the women who experience those acts, discrediting and belittling their experience and victimhood.

4.3 Denial

In order to deny an act of violence, one must first reject the notion that a violent incident occurred. Journalistic choices of how an incident is presented can affect readers’ interpretations of the degree of violence carried out by men and experienced by women. Part of the control journalists have in constructing a narrative around acts of violence is treatment of the women. Calling the status of someone as a victim into question is the first step towards calling the act of violence into question. Women who are labelled as victims, and comply with the expectations that label brings, can expect compassion and respect from other

members of society Those who are not portrayed as ideal victims (Lloyd & Ramon, 2017) – innocent, suffer deeply, but are able to forgive the offender – “forsake their entitlement to compassion and respect and may even provoke anger and moral indignation” (Van Dijk, 2009, pg. 8). I have identified three ways that victimhood is questioned or denied by *Sports Illustrated* journalists: giving victim(s) different names; devaluing civil court procedures and findings; and pointing out women’s own hesitancy to report, press charges, or appear in court as proof that no violent act occurred.

4.3.1 Renaming victims

Refusing a woman’s status as the victim of violence directly calls her credibility and reliability into question by attacking the validity of what she experienced. This is complicated by the relationship between media and the law, in which media producers have to account for liability concerns relating to defamation and libel against individuals who have not been found guilty by the legal system. As such, some articles rightfully refer to victims as “accusers” or “alleged victims.”

In his article “What We Think About When We Think About Big Ben,” Price (2017) references two separate incidents – one that occurred in 2008 and another that occurred in 2010. The woman involved in the first incident settled her civil claim out of court; charges for the second incident were dropped by prosecutors due to lack of evidence (Price, 2017, pg. 30). Wertheim and Bernstein (2017) identify victims of sexual harassment as “accusers” due to ongoing legal inquiries. These instances raise questions about how the term victim has been coopted for exclusively legal purposes; women cannot claim to be victims unless this status has been validated by the legal system.

The victim label is even denied in some instances where the legal system has determined that a criminal act has occurred. Referring to a victim as an “accuser” when the

perpetrator has plead guilty to the crime against her intentionally avoids use of the term “victim”.

Emily Kaplan (2017) writes about a friend of an athlete who was charged with sexually assaulting two women at different parties in 2010 and 2011 (the professional athlete was later called as a witness at trial). The first trial – in which Kaplan notes there was an all-female jury (pg. 40), as if to bolster the validity of the verdict – found the defendant not guilty. A plea bargain was reached prior to the second trial, in which the defendant pled guilty to the charge of misdemeanor assault (Kaplan, 2017, pg. 40). Even with this admission of guilt, Kaplan continues to refer to the woman who experienced the second assault as an accuser, grouping both victims together. Kaplan (2017) also invokes rape myths⁶ about the women involved, especially the myth that women who come forward with allegations have ulterior motives (Hockett, Saucier, & Badke, 2016; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cephress, & Vandello, 2008). This myth is most evident where Kaplan (2017) states, “(The accusers each came forward months after the incidents occurred)” (pg. 40). Is this the case because the story is tangential to the athlete at the centre of the article? Is the inclusion meant to provide a titillating component to the story? Or illicit further sympathy for the athlete? If so, the victims of these assaults become a footnote within a side story about an athlete’s descent.

Renaming women can take other forms. A label can reduce a woman to her actions, her job title, or her relationship to the offender. This is consistent with research findings that women who exhibit characteristics that are inconsistent with the ‘ideal victim’, such as being racialized, low socioeconomic status, alcohol and/or drug use, geographical location, culture, and ethnicity are ‘deserving of violence’ (Hernandez, 2018; Pepin, 2016; Meloy & Miller,

⁶ Burt (1980) defines rape myths as “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists” (pg. 217).

2009). Alternative terms that are employed to refer to women who experience violence can invoke these characteristics.

In L. Jon Wertheim's (2019) account of a whistleblower who brought to light how a Major League Baseball team covered up sexual assaults, entitled "Truth and Consequences", three separate incidents are described. The renaming begins on the first page, where the 17-year-old girl is identified as "a runaway" (Wertheim, 2019, pg. 85). She is also referred to as "the girl" or "alleged victim", but "runaway" becomes her most used title. The girl's credibility is also called into question in the following paragraph, which describes how the incident became known to police:

A week after the alleged incident, following her arrest on a separate shoplifting charge, the girl made a more serious claim to police: that she had also been sexually assaulted by one of the Dodgers [MLB Team] players in that hotel room that night. According to the criminal police report, obtained by SPORTS ILLUSTRATED through a public records request, as the girl, under the age of consent in Arizona, lay down on a bed intoxicated, a player began "*touching her breast with his hand under her bra. She also described [the player] placing his hand down the front of her pants and using his fingers to rub her clitoris*" (Wertheim, 2019a, p.86, emphasis in original).

In addition to being labelled a "runaway", Wertheim makes the decision here to include a shoplifting charge. This suggests that her allegations against a professional athlete may have been created as a way to deflect police attention away from this charge. Using the term "runaway" and invoking the girl's own criminal behaviour also serve to limit the severity of the assault as she does not fit into the mold of an ideal victim (Lloyd & Ramon, 2017; Van Dijk, 2009). Both her required innocence and validity of her story are tainted by reference to the shoplifting charge. Wertheim is writing four years after the assault and chooses to follow-

up with the “runaway”. Although what he writes is factually accurate, its mode of presentation widens the schism between her and an ideal victim. This invites readers to see continuity of her tainted character, beginning with the shoplifting charge and progressing to criminal, potentially promiscuous, and unreliable. Wertheim (2019a) writes:

The alleged victim is now 21 years old. Public records reveal that since turning 18, she has been arrested at least three times in Arizona – for possession of meth, a class four felony; for unlawful use of means of transportation, a class five felony; and for theft, a class six felony. She has also become a mother (pg. 90).

Wertheim (2019) additionally notes that, after confirming the original account she gave to police, the victim requested payment to continue the conversation with *Sports Illustrated*, which they declined by citing long-standing policy (pg. 90). By providing this example, Wertheim works to further discredit the woman, emphasizing the rape myth that she has ulterior motives (Hockett, Saucier, & Badke, 2016; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress, & Vandello, 2008) to obtain financial gain, and reinforces that his initial assessment of her tainted character was correct.

The other two incidents described in the article reduce women to their job title and the place they were in when the incident took place. The woman involved in the second incident is referred to as “a woman on the housekeeping staff” or simply “the maid” (pg. 86). In the final incident, which included video of “stalking” behaviours, the author merely characterizes the women as “female [hotel] guests” (Wertheim, 2019a, pgs. 90-91). Neither of these incidents involved police reports or as much attention by Wertheim as the one involving the “runaway”. These two are only briefly explained, which contributes to the denial that any violence took place and the denial of victimhood for the women involved. Not only are the women’s violent experiences denied, their stories become an obligatory component needed to further the male-centric narrative.

The previously referenced article by S.L. Price (2018), “Prospect and Pariah”, falls into a number of categories. The introductory paragraph and opening sentence of the body text provide insight as to why Price does not use the term victim at all. The introductory paragraph reads:

He’s one of the best college pitchers, a first round draft talent – and an admitted juvenile sex offender whose crime, were it not for a legal glitch, might have stayed secret forever. Watching Luke Heimlich pitch stirs wonder and outrage – and questions about guilt, forgiveness and second chances (Price, 2018, pgs. 30-31).

The opening sentence of the body text states:

The first thing to understand about a baseball game involving Luke Heimlich – the Oregon State pitcher who in 2012 pleaded guilty to one felony charge of molesting, at 15, his six-year-old niece, who nevertheless claims innocence, who this season leads the nation in wins – is just how normal it can feel. (Price, 2018, pg. 31).

The questions that Price aims to answer require readers to consider that Heimlich may not be a perpetrator (a concept that will be further explored in the next chapter). In order to question the perpetrator’s status, victimhood must be denied and erased. Price does not use the term victim to refer the child that Heimlich plead guilty to sexually molesting, instead choosing to refer to her as “his niece” or “the girl”. There are two instances in the 13-page article where she is called a victim, once in reference to a county District Attorney court document (Price, 2019, pg. 39) and in a quotation from a gang-rape survivor and consultant on issues around sexual violence (Price, 2019, pg. 34). I find it interesting that, in both of these instances, it was not a journalistic choice to refer to her as a victim because the term is only used within quotes by others; Price does not choose to refer to her as victim, instead using alternative terms. This becomes both a dismissal of victimhood as well as an endorsement of Heimlich’s accounts of events.

Child molestation is a notably abhorrent act to think about and confront. Denial of using the term victim may have been done to spare readers from having to encounter the unease of being reminded of the act to which Heimlich pleaded guilty. This would be a generous interpretation of why “victim” was not used. Avoiding the term victim does more to further the narrative Price favours, that there may not have been a crime committed at all. Price explicitly states in the introductory paragraph, quoted above, that the article will raise questions about guilt, forgiveness, and second chances. By denying the victimhood of the girl involved, readers are invited to answer the first question – doubt the guilt of the perpetrator.

Lee Jenkins (2015) titled his article, about a father-son basketball duo, “Villanova star JALEN BRUNSON was molded by his exacting father, a former pro whose work was nearly undone by an indiscretion that shook their family”. What was that indiscretion? A three-year affair that culminated with a charge of attempted sexual assault by forcing a sex act. Jenkins (2015) does not introduce the ‘indiscretion’ until page six of the seven-page article, where it is revealed that the father was arrested on charges of attempted sexual assault of a female masseuse (pg. 62). Throughout the article, the woman is only referred to as “the masseuse”. This denial of identity is reinforced by the judicial decision in the one-day bench trial that acquitted Rick Brunson of all eight charges related to the attempted sexual assault (Jenkins, 2015, pg. 63). The acquittal and subsequent omission of the term victim leads me to ask additional questions, particularly: can someone still be seen as a victim even if the alleged perpetrator is acquitted of wrongdoing in the criminal justice system; what are the liability implications of referring to the masseuse as a victim in this circumstance; and, does she still feel like a victim? Jenkins (2015) described the court proceedings:

Rick [Brunson] and the masseuse both testified to a consensual but sporadic relationship [lasting approximately three years]. According to the masseuse’s testimony, it ended in the summer of 2013. According to Rick’s testimony, it was still

ongoing on April 2, 2014. That day Rick got a massage at Life Time [Athletic], and the masseuse testified that he tried to force her to engage in sexual activity. Rick testified to activity that was consensual. He also claimed that the masseuse, who admitted having filed for bankruptcy, has been pressuring him for money (which she denied) (pg. 63).

The acquittal on the attempted sexual assault charges may leave Jenkins in the position where he is required to find a term other than “victim” to refer to the woman involved. However, use of “the masseuse” brings to mind stories of “happy ending” massages or “rub and tug” parlours that employ sex workers.⁷ It is also informative that the nature of the relationship is primarily described as sexual, which may also invite readers to reinforce the idea of a “happy ending” story. This leaves me with even more questions about the rejection of victimhood. If the woman involved is not a victim, then what is she? Is she her job, a masseuse (which can be coded language for sex worker)? How can media acknowledge someone’s victimization when the legal system says that no criminal wrongdoing can be proven?

4.3.2 Devaluing civil proceedings

The status of victimhood is also called into question by devaluing the legitimacy of civil proceedings in various articles. The main differences between civil and criminal proceedings are outlined in *Table 4.1*.

⁷ The implication that the woman involved could be a sex worker is particularly problematic. While I do not support this implication, it is important to note the amount of violence experienced by sex workers. Sex workers are a particular group of women who experience disproportionate amounts of physical, sexual, and emotional or psychological violence. The World Health Organization (2013) recognizes many factors that put sex workers at risk for experiencing violence, including: workplace violence, violence from intimate partners and family members, violence by perpetrators at large in public spaces, organized non-state violence, and state-violence (pg. 23). Additionally, violence against sex workers is not always viewed or defined as a criminal act; police may refuse to register a report of sexual violence made by a sex worker. Sex workers are often reluctant to report violence for fear of police retribution, harassment, or prosecution. (World Health Organization, 2013, pg. 24). The danger of the implication is that the woman may have deserved the violence she experienced because of her occupation.

	Civil Proceedings	Criminal Proceedings
Parties involved	Private matters between plaintiff and defendant	Public actions between State and accused
How cases begin	Statement of claim	Summons, appearance notice, or arrest
Pre-trial proceedings	Written pleadings and discovery; intended to clarify the issues in dispute and encourage settlement before trial	Disclosure and bail; lengthy preliminary hearings to determine sufficiency of the case against the accused
Burden of Proof	Plaintiff must prove case on balance of probabilities	State must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt
Objective	Provide compensation to the Plaintiff for loss or harm.	Prosecution and conviction for appropriate punishment of the accused

Table 4. 1 Difference between civil and criminal proceedings. Adapted from Wright,

Kazmierski, Appel Kuzmarov, & Bromwich (2019), pgs. 99-100

The main difference noted to devalue civil proceedings is the burden of proof (McCann & Wertheim, 2017; Price, 2016). The criminal requirement that the State must prove the accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt requires a higher threshold of proof than the civil requirement of a balance of probabilities. The higher threshold reflects the fact that an accused faces powerful state institutions that are enforcing criminal law and punishments that will restrict their freedom (Wright et al., 2019, pg. 117). Conversely, the balance of probabilities required for civil proceedings is less stringent. As Wright and colleagues (2019) explain, "[balance of probabilities] simply means a case that passes a threshold of probability. In other words the claim is not simply possible or plausible, but is more likely than not, in other words more than 50 per cent likely." (pg. 118). While the burden of proof in criminal proceedings is higher for the State compared to plaintiffs in civil proceedings, civil proceedings are the legal process whereby individuals can receive compensation (often monetary) for losses or harms inflicted by defendants.

Women who experience DV/VAW face multiple barriers within criminal proceedings. Department of Justice Canada (2019) reports that 83% of sexual assaults are not reported to

police and only 5% of assaults are reported by victims⁸ (pg. 1). The most common reasons that women do not report DV/VAW or sexual assault include: denial, fear, feelings of shame or embarrassment, lack of family support, belief they will not be taken seriously, and feeling that reporting would cause further harm (Department of Justice Canada, 2019; Spohn & Tellis, 2013). This is exacerbated by reports that the majority of women who experience this type of violence are not confident in police, court processes, or the criminal justice system in general (Department of Justice Canada, 2019, pg. 2). Of the cases that undergo criminal proceedings, less than half result in a guilty verdict (Department of Justice Canada, 2019). Cassia Spohn and Katharine Tellis (2013) note that prosecutors are unlikely to bring charges against men accused of DV/VAW. Some factors that increase the likelihood of charges being laid include: use of a weapon; occurrence of a rape (versus attempted rape); victims reporting the crime within an hour of it happening and being willing to cooperate with law enforcement as the case moves forward; recovery of forensic evidence from the victim; and the presence of witnesses (Spohn & Tellis, 2013, pg. 127). These all present women with obstacles to attaining criminal justice. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that women may choose to pursue civil proceedings to compensate for the harms they experienced.

As Wright and colleagues (2019) note, the pre-trial proceedings in civil matters encourage settlement of disputes outside of the judicial system (Table 4.1). However, extrajudicial settlements have been used as a means to maintain innocence, or at least the ambiguity of guilt, for men who perpetrate violence. Denial of victimhood raised through civil proceedings is also easier when there are only a few instances involved; a multitude of accusations or settlements can transcend the threshold of doubt of a single he-said she-said encounter, allowing readers to give greater consideration to women's claims.

⁸ The remaining 12% are reported by third parties, such as health care or social work professionals, friends, or family members.

The results of civil court proceedings are portrayed as insignificant in comparison to their criminal counterparts. This is epitomized in the case of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman who were killed by Brown Simpson's ex-husband, who was once an NFL player. While Brown Simpson's ex-husband was acquitted of murdering her and Goldman, he was found responsible for their wrongful deaths in a civil suit filed by the Brown and Goldman families. Michael McCann and L. Jon Wertheim (2017) qualify this finding in their article "Time to Be Released?," stating, "Two years [after the acquittal] – before a different jury and facing a lower burden of proof – the families of Brown and Goldman won a wrongful-death civil suit against [Brown Simpson's ex-husband]" (pg.70). A very similar line is repeated by S.L. Price (2016) who writes about a dropped criminal investigation into a sexual assault, "[the] accuser still has until Aug. 1 to file a complaint in civil court, where the burden of proof is far lower than in criminal cases"(pg. 68). The modifiers upon civil findings allow readers to maintain the perpetrator's innocence and lack of involvement in these violent acts. These types of qualifications can affect interpretations of civil proceedings as a valid form of establishing accountability for violence, perhaps due to the absence of criminal culpability and presence of remedial damages rather than jail time.

Another strategy to devalue civil proceedings is to bury the outcome within a body of text. This provides readers the chance to skim over parts of text, or at least affects their ability to remember the results of civil proceedings as a potentially vital component to help determine their feelings towards the perpetrator. The article "What We Think When We Think About Big Ben" by S.L. Price (2017) tries to determine if NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger has grown as a person over the past 7-years since his last sexual assault allegation. While the rape accusations are mentioned towards the beginning of the article, details about the civil settlement are not provided until page nine of the ten-page article. In the middle of four columns of text and a quote proclaiming how fans of Roethlisberger were

in awe of his fame every time he came to town, the following paragraph – two sentences – outlines the accusations and settlement of the case,

The first allegation, in a 2009 court filing by 31-year-old Andrea McNulty, claimed that in July '08 Roethlisberger asked the Harrah's Lake Tahoe executive casino host to come to his room to fix an unbroken TV, blocked her exit and raped her; she asked for more than \$440,000 in damages. Roethlisberger countersued, calling the sex consensual, and the terms of a '12 settlement have never been disclosed (Price, 2017a, pg. 30).

The denial of victimhood in this paragraph is multifaceted. First, the lack of any judicial decision allows writers and readers to call McNulty's status as a victim into question. The countersuit and settlement allow for ambiguity about the incident to persist; identifying the damages McNulty sought as compensation portrays her as someone trying to financially benefit from an encounter with a celebrity, which also affects the validity of her status as a victim. The juxtaposition of the paragraph beside the two-page spread quote, "I was in awe of his fame-and-fortune' says [a fan]. 'at the time, we all lived it: **Ohmygosh! Ben's in town!**" (Price, 2017, pgs. 30-31, emphasis in original) reaffirms the implication that McNulty may have brought the suit purely for financial gain.

These indirect methods are not the only place within the article that Price (2017) calls McNulty's victimhood into question. On the first page of text he includes a quote from a female fan, which appears to be a deliberate choice because DV/VAW is often viewed as a 'woman's issue' (Berns, 2004). Presenting the perspective of a female fan who questions McNulty's victimhood is more effective because women are expected to know more about, and speak with authority on, 'women's issues.' Price (2017) provides the following quote, "Were you there? Do you have proof? How do you know she's not lying?" (pg. 22). The fan goes on to explain that Roethlisberger is her favourite player, continuing "Stuff happened. I

can't say he did, and I'm not going to say he didn't. Personally, I don't believe it; it's her word against his. I like what he does on the field.” (Price, 2017, pg. 22). Including this quote on the first page sets up readers to doubt the veracity of McNulty's claims. Allusions to her desire for financial gain after a close encounter with a celebrity further authorizes readers to deny that she really was a victim of violence.

As with the Roethlisberger fan, the denial of victimhood allows fans – and readers – to like and support their favourite athletes without discomfort. Greg Bishop, Thayer Evans, and Ben Baskin (2016) cover a story about a civil suit filed against the University of Tennessee's athletics department that alleged the administration, “turned a blind eye to transgressions by athletes and created a ‘hostile sexual environment’ and ‘rape culture’” (pg. 38). Reference to the University of Tennessee's only other sexual harassment case is used to bring attention to the current article. The case, which occurred in 1996, involved NFL quarterback Peyton Manning (then a university sophomore) and Jamie Naughtright, an athletic trainer. Three weeks before the article was printed, February 2016, Manning lead the Denver Broncos to a Superbowl win. The editors opened the article with a full-page image of 19-year-old Manning in a University of Tennessee uniform with a blurred inset of a smirking Naughtright (Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016, pgs. 36-37). However, once the incident is mentioned in the article, the authors quickly add that the new suit does not add to the Manning case, Manning never faced criminal charges, and two civil suits between Manning and Naughtright have been settled for undisclosed terms (Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016, pg. 38).



Image 4. 1: Dr. Jamie Naughtright. Former University of Tennessee athletic trainer looking at her lawyer (out of shot) during an interview with the Knoxville News Sentinel. Reprinted from Bishop, Evans, & Baskin (2016, February). Culture Clash. Sports Illustrated, 124(8), pg. 37. Copyright 2016 by Time Inc.

Any discomfort Manning fans may have felt at the notion that one of their favourite players may be under scrutiny for a 20-year-old sexual assault allegation is quickly alleviated by the reference to extrajudicial settlements and lack of criminal charges. Readers may rest assured that Naughtright is merely a woman who, as Manning said in a 2003 court deposition for a defamation suit he brought against Naughtright, misunderstood a joke between teammates (Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016, pg. 38) and was out for financial gain. This assertion of Naughtright's intent is reinforced by the photo chosen to represent her (Image 4.1), which depicts her smirking as if she may have succeeded with her plan to generate a false accusation for financial gain.

The authors help to reinforce confidence readers may have in their original assessment and denial of Naughtright as a victim in the last two sentences of the article, stating, "Manning is not targeted in the Title IX suit, and it's unlikely he would be compelled

to testify. But Tennessee's most famous alum, fresh off a Super Bowl victory, is now entangled in the darker side of the school's athletic culture" (Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016, pg. 40).

There are a few instances where civil court proceedings are taken seriously enough that women are allowed to be identified as victims. However, these only occur when the volume of allegations or suits against a single perpetrator is so great that they cannot be denied. Additionally, the accusations cover a range of misbehaviours and include consistencies across victims. Wertheim and Bernstein (2017) outline multiple forms of complaints against the owner of the Carolina Panthers football team. Complaints primarily revolved around sexual harassment and racism directed towards his employees. The authors identify at least four former employees who received extrajudicial settlements that were accompanied by non-disclosure and non-disparagement clauses (Wertheim and Bernstein, 2017, pg. 60). It is explicitly noted that the purpose of these clauses was to shield the owner and organization from further liability, and that they amounted to a "vow of silence" (Wertheim and Bernstein, 2017, pg. 60). In reference to instances of sexual harassment, the authors state, "Richardson's various accusers, speaking independently, describe a strikingly similar pattern of behaviour that they say created a hostile work environment" (Wertheim and Bernstein, 2017, pg. 60). The volume, consistency, and independence of accounts increases the legitimacy of claims and makes the victimhood of those involved more difficult to deny. This may also be bolstered by the diversity in complaints; claims of racism experienced by male employees can be interpreted as more valid and, by virtue of being associated with these, sexual assault claims by women can be deemed as valid too.

The devaluation of civil court proceedings allows for the denial of victimhood. Presenting athletes as vulnerable to women who are looking to take advantage of them for financial gain aligns with the Naughty Boy character, explored in the following chapter.

When a man can be cast as an immature boy who is only guilty of finding himself in a position where a woman could take advantage of him, readers are allowed to feel sympathy towards him for being taken advantage of (Waterhouse-Watson, 2013). This also allows perpetrators to maintain a sense of innocence and fans to keep cheering for their favourite athletes without having to reckon with the idea that they may be perpetrators of violence, or perhaps simply not to care if they are.

4.3.3 Women's self-denial

Women's own actions and words can be used against them to deny their victimhood. This is often seen through the use of a woman's quotes about the incident and her decision to cease cooperation with the justice system. Eryn N. O'Neal (2016) notes that, of sexual assault victims who choose to report, between a quarter and half of victims decline to initially cooperate or terminate cooperation during case processing (pg. 1019). Richard B. Felson and Brendan Lantz (2016) identify refusals to cooperate as being attributed to "fear of reprisal, economic and psychological dependence [on perpetrator], emotional attachment, socialization that leads to tolerance of violent [partners], privacy concerns, or a belief that the criminal justice system is ineffective" (pgs. 97-98). These factors are evident in the three main reasons victims refuse to cooperate identified by Kimberley A. Kaiser, Eryn N. O'Neal, and Cassia Spohn (2015): suspect dangerousness/seriousness of offense; costs of cooperation; and likelihood of conviction (pgs. 312-314). None of these reasons connect lack or withdrawal of cooperation with criminal justice systems with the absence of a violent interaction. However, withdrawal of cooperation is presented in *Sports Illustrated* as being proof of just that.

Returning to S.L. Price's (2017) article, "What We Think About When We Think About Big Ben," the shift of presenting a woman as an alleged victim to an accuser can be seen within a single sentence:

That case soon fell apart due to a lack of physical evidence, a reportedly biased stance by Milledgeville law enforcement against the alleged victim in the immediate aftermath, and the decision by the accuser not to press charges (Price, 2017, pg. 30).

This quote highlights a discrepancy that exists within the justice system. Prosecutors rely on women to be key witnesses in presenting their case, but the justice system's treatment of them is one of the main reasons they choose not to cooperate (Richards, Skubak Tillyer, Wright, 2019). This is evident in how the paragraph quoted above continues,

“They made it very clear – her lawyer, her father, her – that they did not want the case prosecuted,” says Bright, who spent 21 years as a Georgia [District Attorney] before retiring in 2015. “But even without that, we didn’t have a case. And we knew it pretty much from the beginning.” (Price, 2017, pg. 30).

The combination of lack of evidence and the victim's decision not to cooperate with prosecutors provides enough information for readers to conclude that this was not criminal and, at most, merely a misunderstanding.

Women who choose not to cooperate with criminal prosecution or other justice system officials can be used to bolster the idea that the woman involved is not actually a victim. No prosecutors identify lack of cooperation as the only reason for not pursuing a case; however it is often communicated as being the most significant element. As in “So Good, and So Far Left To Go,”

In the following weeks the alleged victim told the [District Attorney] that she no longer wished to proceed with a criminal prosecution. On Nov. 5, [the District Attorney] announced that the lack of DNA evidence, the “material inconsistencies” between the woman and other witnesses, and the physical and forensic evidence that tended “to contradict” the claim that she was raped on [the perpetrator's] bed left the case “rife with reasonable doubt” (Price, 2016, pgs. 67-68).

Even though Price previously explains in this case that lack of DNA evidence is due to tampering with the rape kit, the material inconsistencies are related to believing the perpetrator's friend over the victim, and the alleged rape may have occurred in the bedroom but not on the bed, the decision to not pursue becomes the touchstone for denying a wrongful act occurred and the victimhood of the woman involved.

Denial of victimhood can even act as a means of protecting male perpetrators from being named in *Sports Illustrated*. In reference to the "runaway" case, Wertheim (2018) writes,

According to the document, the girl's case manager at the Arizona Department of Child Safety "desire[d] prosecution" against the Dodgers player for sexual abuse. No charges, however, were ever filed, in part because the alleged victim did not wish to cooperate. (Since no charges were filed, SI is choosing not to name the player.) (pg. 86).

This is an interesting choice that can be explained as good journalistic practice, done with the desire to protect the magazine against defamation civil suits, although it also contributes to protecting a man who would otherwise have a history of violent behaviour, allegedly. Lack of cooperation becomes another strike against the victim's credibility in this case (previously discussed in section 4.3.1). Omitting the name of the man involved signals that the accusations are not even believable enough to attach a name to, even though *Sports Illustrated* notes the player was still active and signed to the Dodgers roster at the time (Price, 2019).

Cases involving university and college level athletes present a unique set of circumstances. Administrative investigations by the academic institutions can be conducted along with or in lieu of criminal investigations. Kenny Jacoby (2017) explains the case involving accusations against a college basketball player,

According to a Northern Wyoming Community College District police report, a woman contacted police saying that her friend thought she had been drugged and raped at a party on the night of Sept. 17 [2016]. According to the report, the alleged victim told NWCCD police officer Brooke Tibbetts that she had blacked out after a night of drinking and woke up the next day naked in her bed with soreness and bleeding in her vagina, bruises on her neck and little memory of what happened. In the report, Tibbetts, quotes the woman saying she “did not want to get anyone in trouble” (In June 2017 [the perpetrator] told police that the sex was consensual. He was not charged and did not respond to multiple requests for comment) (pg. 14)

The woman’s initial request not to get anyone in trouble did not stop officer Tibbetts from pursuing an investigation into Kavell Bigby-Williams. When she could not reach Bigby-Williams for an interview, she notified the University of Oregon Police Department (UOPD) who also attempted to secure an interview. The UOPD referred the case to the University of Oregon’s Title IX⁹ official. Jacoby notes, “According to the school’s procedures for addressing allegations of sexual misconduct, upon learning of an allegation, the Title IX coordinator is to notify the schools’ director of student conduct and community standards, who has the authority to investigate accused students and issue sanctions.” (pg. 14).

However, the director of student conduct and community standards was never notified of the allegation. The Title IX coordinator for the University of Oregon cited the woman’s desire not to move forward as their primary reason for not pursuing an investigation (Jacoby, 2017). Meanwhile, Bigby-Williams averaged 9.8 minutes per game for the basketball team and helped the team reach the Final Four (Jacoby, 2017). While believed and taken seriously by police, the woman’s lack of cooperation allowed the university to deny her victimhood and protect their own interests (i.e., their reputation; a winning basketball team). Bigby-Williams

⁹ Title IX requires federally funded schools to investigate and respond to reports of sexual violence.

finally made a statement to NWCCD police in June 2017, eight months after the incident and the end of the basketball season and school year. The county attorney declined to press charges in the case, “citing ‘the victim’s wishes and some of the circumstances surrounding the facts’” (Jacoby, 2017, pg. 15). Ultimately, the woman’s original wishes she disclosed to Tibbetts seemed to have come true, the trade-off being the recognition of her own victimization.

The article by Emily Kaplan (2015), previously referenced, presents as an interesting case because of its recognition of why a woman who experiences violence may not come forward, but still uses this as the reason that allegations of sexual assault were not investigated. The article centres around Duke University, where one of the most infamous cases of false rape accusations against university athletes resulted in the exoneration of four lacrosse players (Kaplan, 2015, pg. 60). Kaplan (2015) recognizes that “in the absence of an official complaint or actionable evidence, administrators were hamstrung by due process concerns” (pg. 62) and then explains why a victim may not come forward. This representation invites readers to consider that victimization can occur without official reporting or investigation. However, this consideration is quickly overshadowed by multiple references to the falsely accused lacrosse players – their images appeared inset on a picture of the basketball coach on the first page and various references are made to accusation and subsequent exoneration throughout the article. This is the only article I found where lack of cooperation did not immediately lead to denial of victimhood. But the pervasive reference to false accusations still worked to undermine the credibility of the victims involved and feeds a trope of discrediting women while emphasizing male vulnerability.

Denial of victimhood allows readers to deny an act of violence has occurred. *Sports Illustrated* controls interpretations of an incident as violent by determining how victims are treated within a narrative. Calling the status of a woman’s victimhood into question is the

first step towards calling an act of violence into question. In this chapter, I have identified and demonstrated three ways that victimhood is questioned or denied by *Sports Illustrated* journalists: giving victim(s) different names; devaluing civil court procedures and findings; and pointing out victims' own hesitance to report, press charges, or appear in court as proof that no violent act occurred. Denial of violent acts and the victimization of those who experience them paves the way for erasing victims completely from the narrative.

4.4 Erasure

The articles I examined primarily focus on male athletes or men directly involved with athletic institutions. In order to tell stories where athletes are able to overcome the odds, prove their redemption, or strengthen their family bonds, they must be central to the narrative. Focusing on the women who experience violence at the hands of these men can draw readers' attention away from the themes the writer is trying to convey. Erasure of victims from the story becomes necessary to advance these narratives. I have identified three prominent ways that victims of DV/VAW are erased from stories: omission of their images and voices; using acts of violence as a plot point in a larger narrative; and recasting perpetrators as victims.

4.4.1 Out of sight

The first step to erasing victims of violence from a narrative is removing their image, voice, and stories. How *Sports Illustrated* chooses to represent victims of DV/VAW (or not) can impact how readers perceive and relate to victims of violence. Representations of victims and their experience are often most accurate when coming from the victims themselves; the use of victims' voices, quotes, and perspectives gives readers a chance to understand how they were impacted by violence. Images, a major component of *Sports Illustrated*, can also communicate certain messages to readers about victims, their experience, and how they should be perceived.

In all of the substantive key component articles I reviewed, there were only two that included pictures of the victims (Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016; McKnight & Wertheim, 2015). There was another article that provided an illustration of a victim (Wertheim, 2019)¹⁰. The images that accompany a story can help readers more fully engage with the article and make certain aspects of the story salient. The omission of women's images helps to erase them from the story, while pictures of men appear in almost every substantive article about DV/VAW. Attention is drawn away from the victim and put on the perpetrator, which aids in centering narratives around the perpetrators of violence.

When included, victims' voices are usually heard through the use of official court documents, such as police reports, trial transcripts, or deposition testimony (Green, 2017; McKnight & Wertheim, 2015). Social media posts by victims have been used (Jones, 2017) but direct quotes from the victims (Fuchs, 2018; Wertheim & Bernstein, 2017; Lawrence, 2015) are rarer. In cases where victims are deceased or were under-age at the time they experienced violence their voices are shared through friends or relatives (Marshall, 2019; Wertheim, 2019; Price, 2018). Overall, I found that an alarmingly small proportion of articles I read included any kind of perspective on how violence impacted the victims, their friends and family, or their communities. The decision to neglect victims' voices erases the main component of why acts of violence can be so devastating and destructive.

When readers do not see or hear from victims, they have no need to think about them at all. Erasing the victim from the story can free readers from any negative emotions that they may experience from confronting the impacts of violence.

¹⁰ Images of women include Dr. Jamie Naughton, *Image 4.1*, (Bishop, Evans, & Baskin, 2016); Monique Bradley in Michael McKnight and L. Jon Wertheim's (2015) "This is What Domestic Abuse Looks Like". Bradley is depicted smiling with her abuser/husband and bruised after one of his attacks. An illustration Althea Hayes' prone body in fetal position, with her father standing over her, is provided in Wertheim's (2019) "Jerrold Mustaf is a Community Hero: Has Anyone Ever Googled Him?" Both Bradley and Hayes were deceased when their respective articles were published.

4.4.2 Plot points

Acts of violence against women are rarely the main focus in articles that even mention or include them. More often they are used as a plot point to advance a larger narrative. When an act of violence is presented in a narrative as a challenge that a man must overcome there is no need for the inclusion or consideration of victims. In these cases, victims of DV/VAW are erased as the incident of violence is used as a means to achieve an end.

Wertheim's (2019) article "Truth and Consequences" tells the story of MLB whistleblower Nick Francona, who revealed sexual assault cover-ups in the LA Dodger's organization and openly criticized the MLB for what he believed was an "anti-military bias." The article centers around the conflict between Francona and Dodgers' Director of Player Development, Gabe Kapler. Kapler's alleged mishandling of three separate sexual assault incidents that involved Dodgers players and prospects became a site for the conflict between these two men to escalate. Wertheim writes,

These [sexual assault] incidents came to light only because Nick Francona, scion of one of baseball's royal families, was feeling wronged by the Dodgers, the sport, and not least, by Kapler. By then he had departed on either a righteous crusade or, as multiple sources independently characterized, a war against baseball (Wertheim, 2019, pg. 87).

This quote encapsulates the purpose of the article – to demonstrate how Francona is trying to damage Major League Baseball (MLB). Women, their experiences, and their voices are not necessary for furthering this narrative. Wertheim (2019) makes this clear when describing that, after the resolution of his complaint against the Dodgers (in which the MLB found that the sexual assaults were handled appropriately), "Francona had taken up another cause" (pg. 89). Francona was determined to show that the MLB was anti-military, because of their use of military imagery and rituals in marketing, but lack of programs for veterans (Wertheim,

2019, pg. 89). Identifying this second cause furthers the narrative that Francona will use any site he can to damage the MLB.

Another instance where violence experienced by women is used as a plot point can be seen in Dan Greene's (2017) article "Cowboy Down." The introductory paragraph reads, Fifteen months ago **Joseph Randle**, not Ezekial Elliot, was the Dallas back ripping off chunks of yards behind that awesome o-line. Then came a possible concussion, an array of off-field misdeeds and massive confusion about it all (pg. 54, emphasis in original)

The misdeeds Greene (2017) is referring to include charges of aggravated battery, property damage, and criminal threat against his ex-girlfriend (pgs. 54-55); pointing a handgun at another ex-girlfriend and their 13-month old child while carrying marijuana (pg. 56); stealing items from various stores in a shopping mall (pgs. 55-56); and an assault at a casino (pg. 61). These "misdeeds" ultimately culminated in an incident at a house party that began with an argument over beer pong rules and ended with Randle driving his car across the lawn, striking the party host, his sister, and another party-goer he was arguing with, resulting in charges of: criminal threat, criminal property damage, unlawful possession of a controlled substance, aggravated burglary, and four counts of aggravated battery (Greene, 2017, pgs. 61-62). Greene (2017) explains the "massive confusion" that he references in the introductory paragraph,

There were warning signs, if not easy explanations, for the spiral. A closer examination of the running back's tumultuous career reveals a complex and troubling narrative, one complicated by issues ranging from mental health to potential head trauma, from the disposability of the league's players to the inherent tenuousness of those players' support systems (pg. 56).

This explanation for Randle's "misdeeds", including the DV/VAW incidents, reveals the primary narrative of the story: Randle suffered mental health issues and trauma, which, combined with lack of resources and support from his employer (the NFL), resulted in multiple violent incidents and ultimately a criminal trial. This narrative does not leave room for women's voices or experiences, including the trauma and negative effects they experienced from Randle's "misdeeds." This also helps to ensure that any sympathy readers may feel towards Randle is not diluted by sympathy they feel for the women on the receiving end of his "misdeeds." The women who experienced DV/VAW are erased from this narrative in order to forward one that centers instead on the injustices faced by the man who inflicted violence upon them.

4.4.3 Recasting the victim

When female victims of DV/VAW are erased from a narrative, perpetrators of violence often get recast into the role of victim. In other media, this is characterized as a way to support debate and create drama by defending the perpetrator (Chancer, 2009). The victimhood frame placed on perpetrators centres on their treatment by athletic organizations, fans, communities, and media. With the victims of violence erased, readers are free to attach their sympathies to the men who, seemingly, played no part in the negative public backlash.

Men depicted as victims of fan, community, and media backlash are often ones who face few allegations and have those conflated with other types of immature and inappropriate behaviour, such as Kane (Price, 2016) and Roethlisberger (Price, 2017a)¹¹. The victimization these men face within the narratives can also become a catalyst for personal change, growth, and maturity. Erasure of victims of violence allows readers to feel sympathy for the struggles

¹¹ In the next chapter, I identify Kane and Roethlisberger as being cast into the Naughty Boy character. This character, along with the dominant narrative associated with him, requires sympathy from readers for his ultimate triumph to be effective.

perpetrators face and to hope that they will be able to overcome them to be better men, which aligns with the main redemptive narratives put forth in these stories.

Some cases also include perpetrators' families as part of those victimized by negative backlash. These families can have their voices and experiences included when the victims of violence are erased from the narrative. As in Jenkins' (2015) article about Jalen and Rick Brunson, where direct quotations from Sandra Brunson (Jalen's mother; Rick's wife) are provided,

“Every time you turned on the TV there was something else,” Sandra says. “It was earth-rattling. For me it wasn't, *This is an affair*. It was, *This is the fight of my life with my family*” (pg. 62, emphasis in original).

Rick, along with his other family members, also becomes a victim of the accusations resulting from his actions. This is explained by the strained relationship he has to overcome with his son and his difficulty finding a job as a college basketball coach (Jenkins, 2015). This shift in focus to the Brunsons as victims is bolstered by Rick's acquittal of all charges in the bench trial that resulted from the allegations. While the woman is essential in providing the narrative that focuses on the strength of family bonds, her experience and voice need to be erased so the Brunsons can overcome their victimization and become a stronger family.

Men can also be portrayed as victims of the justice system. This is the case with Luke Heimlich, the subject of “Prospect and Pariah” (Price, 2018). When a glitch in the sexual offenders database allows a journalist to discover that Heimlich is a registered sex offender, due to pleading guilty of child molestation of his six-year-old niece when he was 15, he becomes the subject of media, community, and fan backlash (Price, 2018). Using quotes that favour Heimlich's position that he was trying to protect and do what was best for his family, Price constructs a narrative around the “real world issues” associated with “living with society's most despised label” (pg. 33) – a label that should have remained sealed and erased

upon completing his probation. While the revelation of Heimlich's juvenile record should not have occurred, Price (2018) uses the hardships faced by Heimlich in the fallout, in addition to his ongoing declarations of innocence, to recast him as the primary victim in the story. The idea that Heimlich is a more worthy victim than his niece is reinforced throughout the article, with references to Heimlich's intention of protecting his family, multiple instances of casting doubt on the reliability of child testimony, and discussion of the merits of rehabilitation and change (Price, 2018). The label of victim provided to his niece must be erased in order to evoke sympathy for Heimlich, the "true victim".

Erasement of victims occurs by omitting their voices and images, using acts of violence as plot points in a larger narrative, and recasting perpetrators as victims within these narratives. Erasing victims allows writers to tell stories where athletes are able to overcome the odds, achieve redemption, or strengthen their family bonds. This creates room for readers to focus on the themes promoted in the articles, focus their sympathy on perpetrators, and release them from uncomfortable and disturbing realities of the effects of violent acts on victims.

4.5 Peculiarities: Blips & Clusters

Articles that focus on anti-DV/VAW initiatives, that I categorized under Activism, are peculiarities in how *Sports Illustrated* typically represents women in other Key Component articles. These articles are more likely to focus on women as the main subject of the article, include women's voices and images, and favour women's accounts (Bishop, 2018; Greene, 2018; Rosenberg, 2018; Standing Strong, 2018; Weishaupt, 2018). Table 3.2 details the number of each type of substantive article per year. A visual representation of substantive articles per year is shown in Figure 4.1

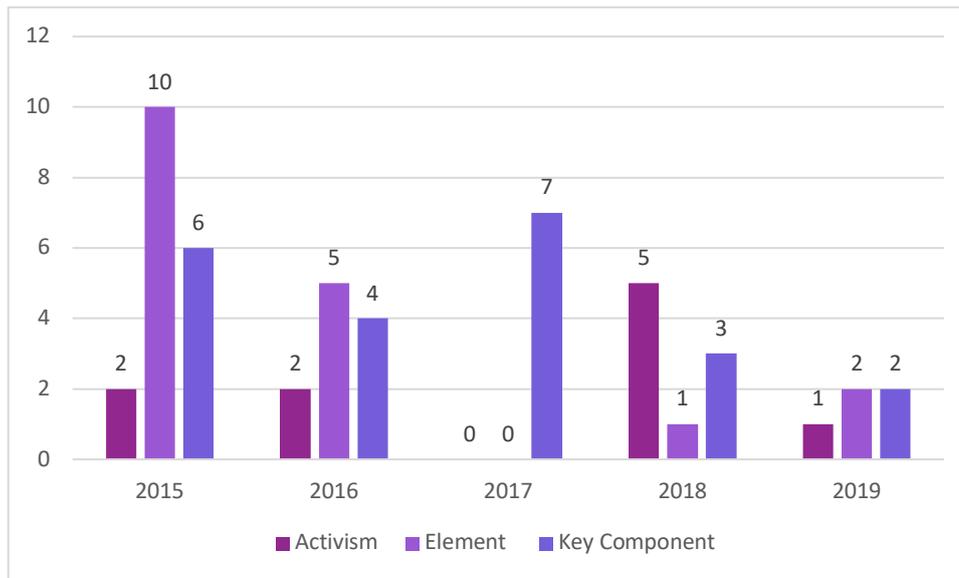


Figure 4. 1: Type and number of substantive articles per year, 2015-2019

Individual Activism articles published in 2015, 2016, and 2019 represent blips or outlier articles. It is clearly not the norm for *Sports Illustrated* to include articles that advocate for anti-DV/VAW initiatives. The 2016 articles include identifying a reporter who questioned the NFL commissioner about DV/VAW incidents committed by athletes (Introducing the MMQB, 2015) and another that mentions an NFL player who experienced DV/VAW as a child started an organization to help women and children fleeing DV/VAW (Price, 2015). The first Activism article of 2016 was written by New England Patriot's Owner, Robert Kraft, and talks about the organization's sexual assault prevention program, noting "Game Change: The Patriots Anti-Violence Partnership has a mission of preventing violence and sexual assault through training and education" (Kraft, 2016, pg. 22). The second article is a single side column that briefly reviews the purpose of the One Love foundation and the film it produced, *Escalation*, that teaches about the warning signs of DV/VAW in college relationships. The column notes that the film and accompanying workshop have been made mandatory in 61 colleges and universities in the United States (Love Lessons, 2016, pg. 26). The only activism article of 2019 focused on a male lawyer and self-described sexual assault prevention advocate who is trying to change university level eligibility requirements

for student-athletes who have a history of gender-based violence (Greene, 2019). The five Activism articles published in 2018 appear to be triggered by two societal factors. Because of this relation to societal events, I recognize these five articles as a peculiar cluster where *Sports Illustrated* representations of DV/VAW conflict with what I found in other Key Component articles.

Michael Smyth (2006) noted, “Hegemony can be challenged and changed during periods of social modulation or transformation. New ideologies emerge to compete with the hegemonic world view and may change it” (pg. 925). The emergence of the MeToo movement in 2017 and the guilty pleas to multiple counts of sexual assault against women and girls of Larry Nassar¹² in 2017/18 represented potential moments for social transformation to challenge the hegemonic narratives about DV/VAW in sport. Of the five Activism articles written in 2018, three are directly related to the Nassar case (Standing Strong, 2018; Rosenberg, 2018; Green, 2018). The remaining two included disclosure of sexual assault (Bishop, 2018) and gender-based harassment in the workplace (Weishaupt, 2018). Women in both of these articles directly referenced the MeToo movement as providing impetus for disclosure. Because of other articles published in 2018 that follow other norms of representing DV/VAW I have identified in *Sports Illustrated* and the single Activism article in 2019, I suggest that this cluster is not indicative of a change in hegemonic views – as suggested by Smyth (2006) – but are a cluster of articles that emerged in response to specific societal events.

Newsworthiness of articles relies on the seriousness of the event; presence of sensational components and criminal elements; involvement of prestigious victims or notorious offenders; and relevance to audience interests (Meloy & Miller, 2009, pg. 30). Over

¹² Nassar is not a professional athlete. He is connected to sport through his employment by the US Olympic gymnastics team and Michigan State University. Women and girls who were victimized by him were/are athletes at various levels.

100 women provided victim impact statements at Nassar's sentencing hearing (Rosenberg, 2018), where he was sentenced to 175 years for sexual assault of minors, to be added to his 60-year sentence for possessing child pornography (BBC News, 2018). Nassar can be easily 'othered' into a category that represents him as both exhibiting a specific pathology and being inherently evil (Hernandez, 2018; Meloy & Miller 2009). Presenting Nassar as this type of perpetrator means that there is no need to provide excuses for his behaviour or attempt to elicit sympathy from readers. This creates space for attention to shift to the women/girls involved in the case.

All three of the articles in the 2018 cluster that were related to the Nassar case centered on providing space for women/girls who were victimized by him to be seen, perspectives to be told, and voices to be heard. These articles also put forth new labels for women that are not seen in articles with male centric narratives. New labels for women include: athlete; winner (Bishop, 2018); advocate (Weishaupt, 2018); army of survivors, women warriors, sisters, and sisterhood (Standing Strong, 2018). This is an important distinction. Michael Papendick and Gerd Bohner (2017) identify the term 'survivor' as inherently more positive than the term 'victim.' They also note that women named 'survivors' are seen as better, stronger, and more active when compared to those labelled as 'victims' (Papendick & Bohner, 2017).¹³ These labels work against the denial, diminishment, and erasure of victims to amplify their voices, however, I am skeptical about a more widespread use of this term outside of exceptional cases.

The multitude of victims in the Nassar case validates each individual experience. On their own, I am unsure whether each of the victims would be given the same type of consideration to have their perspective heard. The use of the term survivor for these women

¹³ The term survivor necessitates the recognition that a woman experienced a type of victimization, making the acceptance of her as a victim a requirement. It is often used to refer to women who have gone through the recovery process. The term 'survivor' is preferred by many feminist scholars and women who have experienced DV/VAW as a form of empowerment and to recognize healing (Delker, Salton, & McLean).

also seems reliant upon the certainty of guilt and Nassar's conceptualization as inherently evil. Particularly because of Papendick and Bohner's (2017) finding that the term 'survivor' is often rejected in cases with ambiguous circumstances.

I did not expect changes brought on by the Nassar case or MeToo movement to result in any sweeping changes to how *Sports Illustrated* presents incidents of DV/VAW. This expectation appears to be supported by the blips and cluster of victim centric articles within the 2015-2019 timeframe. I am skeptical about whether the peculiarities exhibited in the blips and cluster will significantly impact the well-worn frames present throughout a magazine that contributes to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity without a period of social transformation to disrupt current constructions of hegemony and allow new ideologies to emerge.

5.0 Becoming a Real Man

Characters and Narratives that Absolve Men of Responsibility for Violence

5.1 Introduction

A dominant Western cultural narrative of sport is to teach boys how to become men (Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010). In this chapter I examine different ways that narrative constructs characters around male athletes who commit, or allegedly commit, acts of violence. I also explore the different primary narratives that these characters follow in their symbolic attempt to become men. It is important to note that these characters and narratives used by journalists do not accurately reflect real life. Because media and their audiences work together to create commonly accepted knowledge, media is able to subtly bend and distort the view of the world it projects (Jewkes, 2015). It is unsurprising then to see the portrayal of unattainable hegemonic masculine ideals in these characters, particularly because they are presented in a site that reproduces hegemonic masculinity (Tjønndal, 2016; Bruce 2012; Adams, Anderson, & McCormack; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)

I identified five main ways that media excuses or sympathizes with the perpetrator in the Literature Review. Four of these are also found in the *Sports Illustrated* articles I examined, including: contextualizing the violent act within life circumstances that lead the man to do it (Klemko, 2019; Marshall, 2019; Greene, 2017; Bishop, 2016; Kaplan, 2016); justifying violence as an appropriate response to a woman's actions (Jones, 2017; Jenkins, 2015); referencing the man's mental state or mental illness (Greene, 2017); and presenting male anger, and violence, as inevitable and uncontrollable (Price, 2015). The only excusing factor I did not find in *Sports Illustrated* was drug or alcohol abuse. I also note that, while the inevitable and uncontrollable nature of male anger and violence was only used once as a means to excuse DV/VAW, it appeared as an underlying theme in many articles. I primarily noticed this in the way that certain articles focus on how to respond to acts of violence rather

than stopping those acts from occurring; this trend seems to be an implicit acceptance of innate male violence.

In her book titled “Athletes, Sexual Assault, and Trial by Media,” Waterhouse-Watson identifies three main male characters that appear in narratives about sexual assault against women: Heroes, Bad Apples, and (Naughty) Little Boys. She notes that the characters function to exculpate athletes from blame for their actions (pg. 31). The Heroes are out to save the world from sexual assault; Bad Apples are a source of corruption who are responsible for negative attitudes or behaviours present in sport, they also protect sport itself from blame; and (Naughty) Little Boys do not know what rape is, so cannot be held responsible, and need to be educated (Waterhouse-Watson, 2013, pg. 54). I found evidence that these characters circulate consistently within *Sports Illustrated*. My analysis additionally suggests that these characters operate within two dominant and identifiable cultural narratives: the descent narrative or the underdog narrative.

Entman (1993) explains, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (pg. 52). Framing can be seen as the process through which the facts of an instance of DV/VAW are translated into the descent or underdog narrative. These narratives can be seen to employ a type of episodic framing that uses familiar stories, but presents each case as unique. This process allows journalists to reframe DV/VAW from a thematic social issue that affects women into challenges men face on the road to adulthood. This reaffirms the finding from the literature review that, even in articles with non-newspaper sources, there is an overreliance of episodic framing around instances of DV/VAW (Berns, 2004; Meyer, 2018; Morgan & Simons, 2018; Nettleton, 2018; Simons & Morgan, 2018; Storer & Strohl, 2017). The presence of episodic framing in these magazine

articles conflicts with the suggestion put forth by Cullen and colleagues (2019) that framing changes with the timeframe requirements of media.

The descent and underdog narratives contain recognizable elements of Maruna's (2001) condemnation and redemption narratives. Traditional coming of age narratives emphasize achievement of external milestones to show a transition to adulthood (Silva, 2012). Western cultures hold the belief that sport can help boys attain positive social outcomes, such as elevated self-esteem, improved school attendance, higher educational aspirations, and higher rates of university attendance (Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010). Because sport is considered a masculine area of social life, professional athletes can be seen as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity in Western society (Tjønndall, 2010; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Accordingly, a common hegemonic male coming of age story in western culture is likely to include participation in sport and culminate in recognizable milestones that, as Jennifer Silva (2012) notes, signal the transition to adulthood, such as: going to college, getting a good job, having a family, and becoming a father (pg. 510). Notably absent from these coming of age narratives are acts of DV/VAW. When a man (allegedly) commits an act of DV/VAW it creates a fissure in the predictable coming of age narrative. These fissures initiate the need for a suture point in the narrative. I propose that men whose coming of age narratives are interrupted by an act of DV/VAW are cast into the Naughty Boy character. The Naughty Boy may follow a descent narrative, which includes elements of Maruna's (2001) condemnation narrative, and become a Bad Apple. Alternatively, the Naughty Boy may be cast into an underdog narrative, that uses components of Maruna's redemption narrative, and become a new character, a Real Man.

5.2 Male Characters

Many of the men at the centre of narratives that include DV/VAW are cast into roles identified by Waterhouse-Watson (2013) as Naughty Boys and Bad Apples. Waterhouse-

Watson was looking specifically at newspaper and news media reports of athletes involved in single instances of sexual assault. As noted in the previous chapter, *Sports Illustrated* prefers to include male-centric articles. Accordingly, narratives often seek to establish a pattern of bad behaviour around the man at the centre of the article rather than report on single instances of DV/VAW.

Patterns of ‘bad behaviour’ are used often within *Sports Illustrated* (Klemko, 2019; Marshall, 2019; Greene, 2017; Price 2017; Wertheim & Bernstein, 2017; Golliver, 2016; Kaplan, 2016; Price 2016) and contribute to constructing men as either a Naughty Boy or Bad Apple. However, patterns of behaviour serve different functions within the narratives that surround these characters. For Naughty Boys, DV/VAW is associated with behaviours that are perceived as less serious and more easily forgivable, like excessive partying and arrogance. In these cases, elements of the ‘just another scandal’ theme, identified in Chapter 4, are used to conflate violent acts against women with these other behaviours. Patterns are established to provide context around why a Naughty Boy engaged in DV/VAW and may lead readers to believe that those acts are not his fault. Contextual elements that are relied upon to absolve men of fault related to their acts of DV/VAW include reducing the violence to a mistake or part of ‘growing up’, presenting the man as merely misunderstood, and referencing the lack of father figure or mentor in his life. This provides space for readers to feel sympathy for the Naughty Boy, who seems to have made himself vulnerable to women looking to take advantage of him with false accusations or who did not fully comprehend the severity of his actions.

Conversely, establishing patterns of ‘bad behaviour’ around the Bad Apple works to reinforce the rottenness of his character. Bad Apples’ character flaws that manifest into patterns of bad behaviours can include making poor decisions, lacking resiliency, and being easily corruptible. DV/VAW in these cases is merely another ‘bad behaviour’ within what I

refer to as the descent, a man's fall from grace within sport and society. The descent is a narrative trajectory that usually culminates in an ultimate bad act that makes it impossible for the man to return to sport (the descent narrative does not appear with Naughty Boys because they still have a chance of achieving redemption). Removing the contextual elements surrounding men's behaviour allows for the elimination of sympathy towards them. Readers are allowed to believe that the man 'got what he deserved' based on his innate characteristics. This inevitability of self-destruction absolves everyone else involved – teams, organizations, fans, readers, etc. – from any (in)actions they took in relation to the Bad Apple. Readers are able to avoid feeling sympathetic towards the Bad Apple because there are no interventions that could have stopped his path to self-destruction.

5.2.1 Naughty Boys

Naughty Boys know not what they do and, as such, do not need to be held responsible for their actions. The purpose of presenting men this way is to elicit sympathy for them in order to excuse their behaviours, which I identified as the predominant theme in media portrayals of DV/VAW in the literature review (Cullet et al., 2019; Lee & Wong, 2019; Smith et al., 2019; Hernandez, 2018; Nettleton, 2018; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Nettleton, 2011). I also identified six ways that media evokes sympathy for perpetrators, which are not necessarily present when constructing a Naughty Boy. I suggest that this is because the literature review examined articles that could prove a particular man committed the violence described. These strategies are not needed for the Naughty Boy because the violent act itself can be called into question. Subsequently, casting a man into the Naughty Boy character alone is enough to excuse and elicit sympathy for him.

Because men in this context do not need to be held responsible for their actions, DV/VAW becomes a part of how Naughty Boys 'grow up' to become what I call Real Men. A Real Man is a character that embodies key characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Silva

(2012) recognizes that some coming of age narratives can focus on overcoming a particular ‘low point’ in life (pg. 515). This changes the frame of coming of age to a triumphant narrative of overcoming a painful past. These narratives focus on psychological changes and can be bolstered by accomplishing traditional milestones (Silva, 2012, pg. 518). This is similar to the redemption narrative proposed by Maruna (2001). The redemption narrative relies on the sustained absence of a certain type of behaviour in individuals (Maruna, 2001, pg. 17). It can also be characterized as a ‘making good’ process, wherein the redemption narrative is used to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life (Maruna, 2001, pg. 87). I propose that journalists use a form of the redemption script to explain how a Naughty Boy can traverse a triumphant underdog narrative and become a Real Man.

In order to establish someone as a Naughty Boy, *Sports Illustrated* must explain why a man cannot be blamed for engaging in ‘bad behaviours’ (i.e., DV/VAW). The most common reasons given to absolve Naughty Boys from fault are emphasizing his circumstances, presenting him as misunderstood, and referencing the lack of father figure or mentor in his life. The importance of the father-son relationship appears often in articles about men who commit acts of DV/VAW and will be more thoroughly explored in Section 5.3 Just Mistakes.

Emphasizing a man’s circumstances was identified in my Literature Review as a way to excuse and sympathize with men who commit acts of violence and is also evident in *Sports Illustrated*. The subtitle of Price’s (2016) article about Patrick Kane reads,

On the ice, it all comes so easily for Patrick Kane. Life off it is more complicated, whether he’s behaving immaturely – or worse – or navigating a hometown that bred him to be the best but can also bring out his worst (pgs. 60-61).

The reference to behaving immaturely here immediately casts Kane into the Naughty Boy character. Invoking his lack of maturity invites readers to see him as a boy and therefore deserving of the same immunity offered to children when they exhibit bad behaviours. The immature behaviours? Excessive partying, posting shirtless pictures on social media, and negative comments about women (Price, 2016). The worst? Accusations of sexual assault. The subtitle also implies that dealing with his hometown (Buffalo, New York) perceptions, where these ‘bad behaviours’ are often exhibited, is as complicated as issues surrounding partying and sexual assault are. The misunderstanding of Kane’s character by his own hometown, based on their desire to dislike him because of his on and off ice actions, contributes to the circumstances that construct Kane as a sympathetic character.

Price (2016) provides a quote to describe what it was like for Kane to play in Buffalo after the announcement of allegations against him, “Kane received no benefit of the doubt. ‘It was disheartening,’ says Kevin Kerr, Kane’s youth travel team coach. Finally, after enduring the booing from a man a few seats over for a bit, Kerr turned and said, ‘What is wrong with you people?’” (pg. 62). Price elaborates,

Kane’s reputation, dinged by years of relatively minor public scrapes and savaged by the newest accusation, appeared to have achieved a critical mass – and critical masses – seemingly resistant to legal argument and strict definitions of sexual assault. Despite a lack of forensic evidence, the thinking seemed to go, *something* happened there. At the very least, Kane had placed himself in a position to taint his name, and embarrass their city. Again (pg. 62, emphasis in original).

This representation puts Kane into a position where, seemingly, any alleged misdeed would evoke the ire of hockey fans in his hometown. According to the article’s frame, the only thing that he is undeniably guilty of is the naivety of putting himself into a situation that left him vulnerable to accusations of sexual assault. This reinforces the Naughty Boy character,

emphasizing that he did not know that the situation he found himself in could cause him to be taken advantage of by a clever or devious woman.

The circumstances surrounding Sidney Gilstrap-Portley's alleged DV/VAW, officially charged as indecency with a child, are bizarre and disturbing. However, the explanation of his circumstances encourages readers to root for him. Gilstrap-Portley grew up in poverty, was raised by a single mother, and saw basketball as a means to overcome his socioeconomic condition. He was talented in high school but was deemed too difficult to coach, comments that followed him through Division III and college try-outs. Gilstrap-Portley convinced himself that he would have dominated Division I prospects and made it to the NBA if he had been more team oriented. So in 2017, after many people in Texas were displaced by Hurricane Harvey, he registered at an East Dallas high school as a 17-year-old under the name Rashun Richardson; Gilstrap-Portley was 25 and living with his long-time girlfriend and young son at the time of his enrolment (Marshall, 2019).

Gilstrap-Portley becomes a star under his assumed name, dominating basketball games while playing with 16 to 18-year-old teenagers. He also began a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old girl, who is at the centre of the indecency with a child charge. While Gilstrap-Portley insists he did not kiss anyone underage, Marshall (2019) provides a quote from a police affidavit for his arrest and summarizes the girl's witness statement,

“One day, while the [14-year-old girl] and the suspect were walking through the locker room, the suspect asked her to kiss him and so she did.” The girl's statement alleges that Sidney courted her over Snapchat and later drove her to a park, kissing her in the car, touching her breasts over her clothing and asking her to have sex, which she declined (pg. 109).

In addition to the criminal charges¹⁴, the girl’s family also filed a civil suit against Gilstrap-Portley, the school registrar, the school division, basketball coach, athletic director, and former principal for playing an active role in ‘state-created danger’ (Marshall, 2019, pg. 110). Despite these allegations, Gilstrap-Portley is still cast as a sympathetic figure in the narrative – someone who wants to do the right thing for family, but whose immaturity causes him to go about it in a misguided way.

The character created around Gilstrap-Portley is most evident in the title, introductory paragraph, quotes, and inset text provided throughout the article. Beginning with the title, “Sidney Wants to be Someone Else,” and introductory paragraph, “The streets of East Dallas will do that to a man. But when a **25-year-old posed as a teenager** and became a high school hoops star, reinvention led to a darker place” (Marshall, 2019, pgs. 102-103, emphasis in original). As seen in Image 5.1.

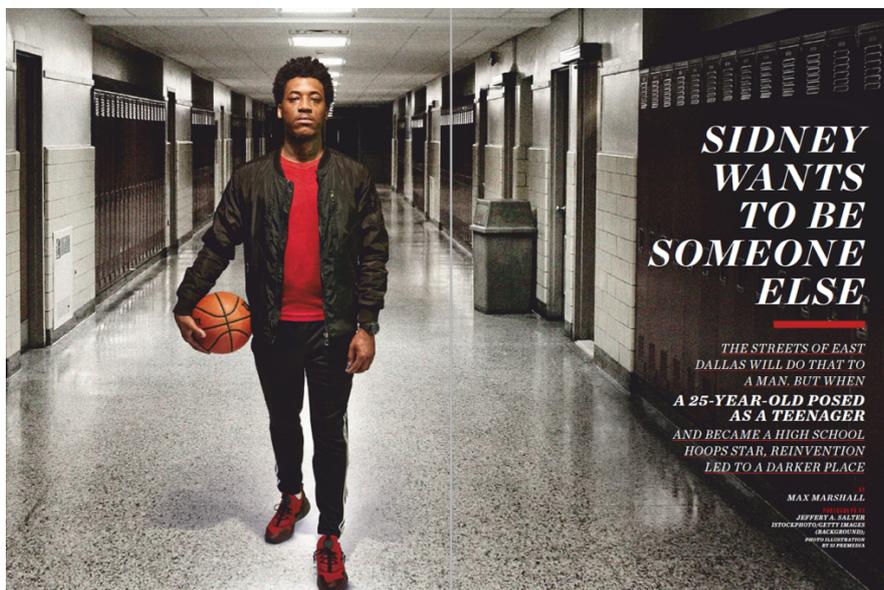


Image 5. 1: Sidney Gilstrap-Portley article opening page spread. Reprinted from Marshall (2019, January-February). Sidney Wants to be Someone Else. *Sports Illustrated*, 130(2), pgs. 102-103. Copyright 2019 by Time Inc.

¹⁴ On July 23, 2019, the Associated Press reported that Gilstrap-Portley plead guilty to indecency to a child and tampering with a government record. He received six years’ probation.

Gilstrap-Portley is portrayed here as a high school student, even though the introductory paragraph refers to him as a man and identifies him as a 25-year-old. Positioning the image within a school hallway immediately presents him as a student. This (produced) image works in conjunction with the title, that only refers to him by his first name, to reinforce the idea that he is a high school student. The exclusion of a last name further establishes Gilstrap-Portley as a Naughty Boy whose ‘reinvention’ only ‘led to a darker place’ because he lacked the maturity and education to pursue a better path.

This characterization is reinforced throughout the article, particularly in the use of inset text paired with images, and large quotes that span two pages. The next image of Gilstrap-Portley after the picture in the hallway shows him in a focused offensive leap over a defending player while attempting to score points for his team. The accompanying caption reads, “DRIVING FORCE *Sidney hoped hoops fame – 17 points here against Seagoville High in the 2018 playoffs – would lift him out of poverty*” (Marshall, 2019, pg. 105, emphasis in original). The following two pages include the quote, “One player will later describe [the high school basketball coach’s] reaction to Sidney: ‘You know what an old dude looks like when he raises his eyebrows?’” (Marshall, 2019, pgs. 106-107). These two quotes establish that Gilstrap-Portley was an asset to his team and he had ‘noble’ reasons behind posing as a high school teenager (i.e., to raise him and his family out of poverty).

Next, a picture of the Hillcrest High School sign and team mascot appears with the caption, “SCHOOL TIES *Sidney isn’t alone in his troubles. His accuser is preparing to sue the school district and four Hillcrest employees*” (Marshall, 2019, pg. 107, emphasis in original). Referencing Gilstrap-Portley as having ‘troubles’ in this way removes him as the active agent who created them. This bolsters the Naughty Boy character by implying that what is happening to him is beyond his control. It also aligns his position with the school district and its employees, naming their common enemy as his ‘accuser’ (a 14-year-old girl

with whom he had a relationship while posing as a teenager). This caption excludes the information that a civil suit was also planned to be brought against Gilstrap-Portley. This text in particular allows readers to interpret Gilstrap-Portley as someone who tried to do something for his family, but could not control all aspects of his situation and is now vulnerable to a girl's accusations of wrongdoing.

Finally coming to the point when Gilstrap-Portley was exposed, two images appear side-by-side, an action shot of Gilstrap-Portley jumping over a defender along with a newspaper clip with the headline: High school imposter faces 3 felony charges. The caption reads, "HEADLINE, BOOS *With attention on the court came scrutiny: The Dallas Morning News reported Sidney's arrest after an old coach tipped off officials*" (Marshall, 2019, pgs. 108-109, emphasis in original). It appears here that flaws in Gilstrap-Portley's own plan exposed him; the problem with gaining fame under an assumed identity is that he would eventually find himself in the spotlight, where he could easily be recognized by people who knew him before this 'reinvention.' The apparent inability to fully reason through the implications of such a plan contribute to perceptions of Gilstrap-Portley's immaturity.

The final enlarged two-page quote comes from Gilstrap-Portley's father, it reads, "'This is gonna sound crazy,' says Old Sidney, 'But I was proud of him. Because of the passion, you know, I like the strategy'" (Marshall, 2019, pgs. 110-111). This is the first explicit endorsement of Gilstrap-Portley's actions, something that had only been previously implied. It may be important that the quote comes from the man's father – the importance of fatherhood adds emphasis to Gilstrap-Portley's positive attributes. It also allows *Sports Illustrated* (which selected the quote along with its font, size, and placement) to maintain that they do not actively endorse Gilstrap-Portley's actions.

The article ends with an image of Gilstrap-Portley sitting on a basketball at an outdoor court, illuminated by bright overhead lights with the caption, "WAIT, LOSS *Sidney's future?*"

For now he's focusing on his rap game, hoping this time fame will bring an escape"

(Marshall, 2019, pg. 111, emphasis in original). In contrast to the school hallway that opened the article, this image clearly shows that Gilstrap-Portley is back on the streets of East Dallas, his attempt to gain fame finished. Marshall (2019) notes that there is still hope for Gilstrap-Portley to overcome poverty. This invocation again of the 'driving force' behind his 'reinvention' may appeal to readers' own desire to persevere over negative circumstances.

By the end of "Sidney Wants to be Someone Else" I was left with the feeling that I, too, was supposed to be hoping for Sidney to find a way to escape poverty.¹⁵ It also occurred to me that this could be the feeling many readers were also left with. While this narrative could easily showcase a Bad Apple, the story works better as a Naughty Boy story.

Marshall's (2019) story casts Gilstrap-Portley as an underdog, a trait often held by mythic heroes. Scott Allison and George Goethals' (2016) research on underdogs shows that people identify with them, root for them, and judge them to be highly inspiring when they triumph (pg. 197). Gilstrap-Portley's only barrier to triumphing in this case was himself. Unlike the Bad Apple, the part of Gilstrap-Portley that ruined his attempt was not an innate character flaw but poor planning. Because of his good intentions, he is still able to fit into a hero role, relying on the exculpatory influence of a Naughty Boy character to allow readers to forgive him for any bad behaviours he may have engaged in on his journey to overcome poverty. The criminal charges and civil suits do not mark the end of the Gilstrap-Portley story; they become another obstacle he has to overcome on his journey to escape his circumstances.

¹⁵ This was especially confusing because, based on his own quotes, I did not like or relate to Gilstrap-Portley. Marshall describes part of his last interaction with Gilstrap-Portley, starting with a question about his situation to which he responded, "I'm happy about the attention but upset about how it had to come." I protest: His girlfriend was hurt enough to kick him out of their apartment; a 14-year-old was so devastated by rumors (and possibly much worse) that she transferred schools; and now he may go to jail. *Happy?* 'At the end of the day,' he says, 'I'm getting what I want.' *What is that?* 'Attention. With all of this social media presence, financial stability and the ability to provide for my family can come from this... A lot of people have been hitting me up about my music. That's money right there. I got *This American Life* talking to me. ESPN. A movie could come from that. I can get on *Dr. Phil* or something. Get my story out that way and let them know what type of person I am."

Circumstance is not the only factor that can cast someone as a Naughty Boy. Some men who appear to be Bad Apples on the surface are cast as Naughty Boys because of some misunderstanding about their motivations or character. Identifying the misunderstanding permits readers to think the man may still find a path to redemption. This is because it offers an explanation for his bad behaviours that is based on misinformation, not rotten character.

Klemko's (2019) article about Antonio Brown, "History of Trouble", could easily use his pattern of bad behaviours to cast him as a Bad Apple incapable of redemption. The lawyer for Brown's former employee (the chef who was fired because Brown accused him of making a mafia-style threat after finding a frozen salmon head in the freezer) describes Brown's behaviour,

You'll start to see a pattern where Antonio lures people in initially, and at first he appears to be very gregarious and appreciative of whatever service he's seeking, and then at some point when the bill is due he creates division or confrontation in an effort to avoid having to meet his financial obligation ... It's an unfortunate pattern of entitlement and narcissism (pgs. 36-37).

This seemingly astute observation of Brown's behaviour is contrasted later on the same page with explanations that his 'bad behaviours' are not due to entitlement and narcissism but are the result of the way he was raised. Klemko (2019) uses quotes from a former teammate and his own explanation to explain,

"Antonio's thing is that when he gets upset he'll say to a coach 'You don't know what I've been through. You don't know where I'm from,' a former Steelers teammate told *Sports Illustrated*. 'But Tomlin is a black dude who went from William & Mary to becoming an NFL head coach. He knows that struggle. And he could say, Yes I do know where you're coming from.'

Where Brown comes from – a childhood of poverty and intermittent homelessness in Miami-Dade County – is a topic he has not often delved into. Information is scattered and uncorroborated, but it’s been reported that his stepfather kicked him out of their home during his teenage years and that he spent months at a time sleeping on teammate’s [sic] couches. His father, former arena football star Eddie Brown, was not in the picture (Klemko, 2019, pg. 37).

If Brown were a Bad Apple, his bad behaviours would be the result of an irredeemable character flaw. However, explaining that he can desist from ‘bad behaviours’ with the right guidance (such as a coach who understands what he has experienced), allows him to inhabit the Naughty Boy character. It is important to note here that being cast as a Naughty Boy does not ensure a redemptive narrative. The Naughty Boy character merely contains the aspiration of becoming a Real Man; if a Naughty Boy is unable to desist from ‘bad behaviours,’ future articles may cast him as Bad Apple and use a descent, or condemnation, narrative to explain his failures.

The lack of positive father figure during Brown’s childhood and adolescence emphasizes the importance of the father-son relationship in reaching manhood. Brown can still be cast into the Naughty Boy character because he never had a father to show him how to properly be a man. The following quote, provided by Brown’s high school coach, also reinforces this notion while inviting readers to view him as a kid,¹⁶

“I’ve been coaching for 19 years now, and all the kids that I’ve coached over the years, I still see them as kids,” Brooks says. “Tony is a person who needs that guidance. There are some kids that have been in Tony’s situation who are doing fine. You see them once in a while and they go about their business. But he needs that one person. He needs to

¹⁶ Brown was born in 1988 and was 30-years-old at the time the article was published.

have that individual in his life to say, ‘Tony you’re really hurting yourself right now.’”

(Klemko, 2019, pg. 37).

It seems that without a proper father-figure in his past or present, Brown cannot be held accountable for his ‘bad behaviour’, including alleged sexual assaults of multiple women, because he was never suitably educated. This also leaves the door open for Brown to, one day, become a Real Man.

Casting a man into the Naughty Boy character allows readers to feel conflicted towards them. This conflict arises from the tension between knowing that a man engaged in DV/VAW, often among other ‘bad behaviours’, and feeling sympathy for the poor circumstances or misunderstandings that he was unequipped to appropriately manage. This can leave readers unsure to whom to attribute blame for the bad behaviour men can engage in – socioeconomic factors, absent or poor father figures, lack of education, or women looking to take advantage of men in vulnerable situations. Conversely, readers can avoid these feelings with stories about Bad Apples because men cast into that character seem to get what they deserve.

5.2.2 Bad Apples

Bad Apples engage in bad behaviours because they possess some sort of innate character flaw. These flaws usually include being easily corruptible and an inability to deal with the pressure and responsibility of being a professional athlete (Klemko, 2019; Greene, 2017; Kaplan, 2016). The Bad Apple character usually appears with the Descent narrative, wherein their ‘bad behaviours’ become more out of control as time goes on and culminate in an ultimate, potentially criminal, ‘bad act’. The result of a Bad Apple’s ultimate ‘bad act’ is their fall from grace and, often, rejection from sport. As Waterhouse-Watson (2013) explains, Bad Apples are also presented as a source of corruption in sport and are thus used to protect the sport itself from blame for athletes’ bad behaviour.

The inability of Bad Apples to abstain from ‘bad behaviour’ and perceived lack of control over one’s actions are consistent with the condemnation narrative (Maruna, 2001). Within the LDS study, Maruna (2001) notes that the individuals narrating their own stories will blame/condemn themselves for their position and, essentially, write themselves off because they see no real hope for change (pg. 75). This is reflected in how *Sports Illustrated* writers constructed the descent around Bad Apples. Innate character flaws are used to blame Bad Apples for their fall from favour. Additionally, the absence of hope in a narrative is often what distinguishes a Naughty Boy from a Bad Apple; Naughty Boys still have the potential to desist from ‘bad behaviours’ whereas Bad Apples cannot control themselves enough to stop. Maruna (2001) also notes the importance of using terms such as ‘inability to desist’ instead of ‘persist’ because the latter is attached to terms like tenacity, perseverance, resolve, determination, pluck, and grit. These terms do not adequately capture the helplessness of condemned individuals (pg. 76). I would also add that persistence and its related terms are desirable characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Bad Apples represent the failure to attain masculine ideals and are not able to hold these characteristics.

The story of Johnny Manziel detailed by Kaplan (2016) in “The Abyss”, includes similar elements to Klemko’s (2019) article on Antonio Brown, “A History of Trouble”. However, Kaplan casts Manziel as a Bad Apple who does not have the ability to evoke sympathy from readers and who faces a bleak future. Both Brown and Manziel are described as falling into cycles of bad behaviour that include excessive partying, but, where Brown is described as being misunderstood, Manziel is consistently portrayed as self-destructive. Readers are introduced to Manziel’s main character flaw on the first page of the article, where Kaplan (2016) describes,

By midseason he had fallen back into self-destructive habits. It’s a familiar pattern: Manziel teeters between realizing his potential as a franchise [quarterback] and

reverting to the kid from Kerrville, Texas, who can't help but sabotage himself.

Manziel's pro career has plunged to new depths following another year of off-field recklessness (pg. 34).

Even though there is a reference to Manziel as a kid, the more important component is his self-destructive, sabotaging habits. Kaplan (2016) reminds readers of this character trait throughout the article, like with this story,

Those close to him describe patches when the QB "wants to get right." He will recommit himself to football, sequester himself from the spotlight and, when he has free time, binge on movies. So friends thought nothing of Manziel's sleeping well into the New Year. Two days later, on the eve of Cleveland's finale in another lost season, he vanished. Several people, including [Cleveland] Browns coaches, called him repeatedly, each time reaching his voice mail. Manziel, it turns out, was in Las Vegas, sporting a blond wig, glued-on mustache and hoodie, telling people his name was Billy (pg. 36).

In this instance, Manziel is presented as not being able to stop himself from falling, again, into self-destructive habits. Similar to Brown, Manziel is also depicted as being 'better' when he has some sort of mentor around to guide him. Manziel hired his respected high school football coach to live with him during the 2015 season. This arrangement was meant to help Manziel stay focused on football, but when Manziel fired his mentor for being too overbearing the story states that he began a downward spiral (Kaplan, 2016, pg. 37).

His descent, which includes excessive partying, insubordination, disrespect for his team, and failing to learn the plays required to do his job, culminated in an act of DV/VAW against his long-time girlfriend. As Kaplan (2016) puts it, "The last straw, as many see it, was an incident in which Manziel's girlfriend alleged the quarterback struck her" (pg. 38). A large quote from one of Manziel's friends is inset in the story that depicts the escalation of

Manziel's Descent. It states, "If Johnny doesn't have a carrot in front of him, he resorts to his default, and his default **IS NOT GIVING A S---**." (Kaplan, 2016, pg. 38, emphasis in original). The pride of place given to this quote within this particular narrative presents it as the primary reason for Manziel's descent, suggesting to readers that the descent was of his own making.

There are a few key differences between the Manziel and Brown stories. Primarily, Brown has not yet engaged in an act that seems to be 'the last straw.' While Manziel's 'last straw' was an act of DV/VAW involving his long-time girlfriend, the DV/VAW committed by Brown has been predominantly towards acquaintances. I wonder whether these differences in relationships contribute to the degree to which an incident of DV/VAW is considered 'bad.' Another key difference, that I suggest is likely related to the presence of 'the last straw', is that Brown was still playing in the NFL at the time his article was written whereas Manziel's future in the league was seen as finished at the time of publication. Brown can still be seen as the Naughty Boy who may find redemption, but Manziel is a Bad Apple who must be removed so he does not further corrupt sport. The difference in degree of hopefulness readers are intended to feel towards Brown or Manziel is evident in the last paragraph of each article. Writing about Brown, Klemko (2019) concludes,

Brown may win a Super Bowl in New England. He may not. He may face consequences brought on by those who say he has mistreated and deceived them. He may not. Considering his behaviour over the past three years, the only certainty is that Antonio Brown will remain in a white-hot spotlight of his own creation (pg. 37).

While the tone is not particularly cheerful, Klemko creates an opportunity that could let readers feel hopeful for Brown's future. No such opportunity exists for Manziel fans. Kaplan (2016) finishes her article,

And that might be the scariest thing: No one is sure when things will get better for Johnny Manziel. But almost everyone seems resigned to the fact that things will get worse (pg. 40).

Even though the future for Manziel is presented as certainly being scary and getting worse, readers are not led to feel sympathy towards him. Instead, they are allowed to assume that Manziel got what he deserved because of circumstances that were his own making. However, this is not equal to culpability for his actions. The character traits that cause Bad Apple characters to fall into the descent narrative are still portrayed as being beyond their control: they simply cannot help themselves from doing ‘bad things’. Even if there are some contributing contextual elements, the source of the bad behaviour is ultimately some innate flaw that the man himself cannot control. This tragic inevitability can alleviate readers from feeling sympathy towards Bad Apples because they are seen as the source of their own unavoidable downfall.

Joseph Randle’s spiral and the key character flaw that lead to his downfall are tidily provided in the third paragraph of Greene’s (2017) article, “Cowboy Down,”

But by that October he had begun his quick and strange tumble out of football. In rapid succession he would lose his starting job, and then his roster spot altogether. He would be arrested four times for an array of increasingly serious and worrisome crimes. As the charges and incidents accumulated, a familiar and tidy narrative took hold, that of the young athlete who simply lost control and “let the whole situation [get] bigger than him,” as one family friend put it (pg. 56).

Greene (2017) does provide the family’s perspective on why Randle fell – one that focuses on mental health decline, the perceived disposability of NFL players by the league, and inadequate player support systems (pg. 56). However, it is the ‘tidy narrative’ that Greene uses to frame the story, with Randle cast into the role of Bad Apple.

Greene (2017) provides glimpses of what could have been Randle's Naughty Boy story,

On Nov. 10, 2015, a week after being cut, he was officially banned for four games by the NFL for the alleged [DV/VAW] incident at the hotel in Wichita. But the sudden loss of employment in the midst of his personal turmoil was a jarring fissure. "The kid never really got a chance to try to put his feet around the [mental health stuff] before he had to deal with not having a team," Haley says. "After that, it's like his whole life just went to crap" (pg. 61).

This quote includes elements expected in a narrative focused on a Naughty Boy: referring to him as a kid,¹⁷ attributing bad behaviours to his circumstances, and presenting problems as being outside his control. At this point, Randle still has the opportunity to transform into a hero by overcoming these obstacles. The character flaw does not emerge until the narrative discusses Randle's response, which is to descend further into the spiral until he ultimately engaged in an act, in February 2016, that resulted in his arrest, facing charges of criminal threat, criminal property damage, unlawful possession of a controlled substance, aggravated burglary, and four counts of aggravated battery (Greene, 2017, pg. 62).

The NFL was already distancing itself from Randle based on his previous acts of DV/VAW and the suspension for the DV/VAW allegations. This fits with the Bad Apple narrative; leagues need to distance themselves from Bad Apples so they are not corrupted by them and so the sport itself cannot be shown as the source of bad behaviour (Waterhouse-Watson, 2013).

Greene (2017) supports the notion that Randle, not the sport, is at fault for his actions. He presents Randle as having incongruent components to his personality that dated to before he was cut from the NFL. One story begins with, "The first public glimpse of the *other*

¹⁷ Randle was born in 1991 and was 24 when he was cut from the NFL in 2015.

Joseph Randle came on Oct. 13, 2014.” (Greene, 2017, pg. 57, emphasis in original). The story goes on to talk about how Randle stole several low value items from a shopping mall because, as Randle explained to the officers who caught him, “he hadn’t paid for the items because he didn’t want to take the time” (Greene, 2017, pgs. 57-58). This story works to demonstrate that an innate deviant side of Randle seemingly exists. Randle’s lack of control over this part of himself is also essential to the condemnation narrative (Maruna, 2001). This allows readers to think that, no matter what negative circumstances Randle may have faced, he would eventually fall and complete the Descent.

There is evidence that both Naughty Boy and Bad Apple characters are present within *Sports Illustrated* articles that include DV/VAW. Each of these characters are used to exculpate men from their bad behaviours but work in different ways. The Naughty Boy cannot be held accountable for his bad behaviour because he does not fully understand why what he did was wrong. He is protected by immunity usually reserved for children who behave badly. Articles that use the Naughty Boy leave readers feeling hopeful that the boy can evolve into a Real Man. A Naughty Boy can become a Real Man by overcoming the obstacles set before him. The Bad Apple is cast into a descent narrative. His bad behaviours become more out of control as time goes on and culminate in some sort of ultimate bad act or situation which results in his fall and rejection from support. The major downfall of the Bad Apple is some sort of innate character flaw, which primarily manifests as the inability to overcome hardships placed in his path. In this sense, the Bad Apple is what a Naughty Boy may become if he fails to achieve an underdog narrative. However, if he is able to defeat the adversity he faces, the bad behaviours of an athlete’s past can be categorized as a mistake that was made on his journey to become a Real Man.

5.3 Just Mistakes

Naughty Boys who avoid the descent narrative and becoming a Bad Apple, have the chance to fulfill the underdog narrative. He can only achieve full embodiment of masculinity, becoming a man, if he is able to overcome challenges, learn from his mistakes, and experience the transcendent effects of fatherhood. Within this underdog narrative instances of DV/VAW become 'just mistakes' in the coming of age stories of athletes who transform from boys to men. Incorporation of 'just mistakes' into an underdog narrative also mirrors an element of the redemption narrative, which "requires the beliefs that one's *mistakes* can make one a stronger person" (Maruna, 2001, pg. 98, emphasis in original). Maruna (2001) also identifies that, upon desistance, the most individuals have to show from their involvement in 'bad behaviours' is the wisdom they gained, which is subsequently turned into a strength in the redemption script (pg. 98). This supports the idea that Naughty Boys do not know 'bad behaviours' are wrong when they commit them but are able to gain knowledge from their 'mistakes' to become a better person.

The reason I chose the term 'just mistakes' is two-fold. First, because a male act of violence against a woman becomes just – or merely – a mistake he made on his journey to manhood. Second, because the narrative justifies these 'mistakes' – creating a just mistake – as being necessary obstacles that a boy must overcome to gain the knowledge needed to become a proper man.

Research on underdogs shows that people identify with them, root for them, and judge them to be highly inspiring when they triumph (Allison & Goethals, 2016). The use of an underdog narrative in *Sports Illustrated* invites readers to feel sympathy towards men who are deemed to have been treated badly, cheer for their ability to defeat challenges, and be inspired by those who are able to achieve success. It can be difficult for readers to determine whether someone who commits an act of DV/VAW truly had a learning experience and

change of attitude towards women in the aftermath of the incident or if they are engaging in image management for their careers. The character and narrative choices of the journalist can influence which option readers choose. The emotions evoked by an underdog narrative allow readers to cheer for the Naughty Boy's transformation, instead of suspecting the transformation may not be genuine.

5.3.1 A Good Word

Sometimes, all it takes for writers to suggest that a man has learned from his mistakes and moved on is a good word by another man. This implies that the word of someone who is already a Real Man can grant a Naughty Boy tentative status. It is only tentative because the status can be stripped away by any future bad behaviour. This was the case for Aroldis Chapman, who was given Real Man status after a conversation with Theo Epstein,

When Epstein needed to fortify his bullpen in July he traded for Aroldis Chapman from the Yankees, but not before, he says, satisfying his concerns about Chapman's character. Chapman served a 30-game suspension at the start of the season for his behaviour in a domestic incident on Oct. 30, 2015, in which after an argument with his girlfriend, he fired eight shots from a gun in his garage. Epstein and owner Tom Ricketts insisted on speaking to Chapman on a conference call before agreeing to the trade. They told Chapman they held their players to a high standard and needed to hear from him that they could fully expect him to meet those standards. Chapman assured them he had learned from it and would meet their expectations (Verducci, 2016, pg. 120).

Chapman notes one of the main components needed to transform from a Naughty Boy, saying that he had learned from his mistakes. While Epstein and Ricketts give him tentative status as a Real Man, only his athletic performance with his new team and lack of future bad behaviour can really secure it.

A similar situation is depicted in Bishop's (2015), article, "Nine Days, Seven Players, \$200 Million and 100-Plus Steaming Cups of Joe." Mike Maccagnan had been named the new General Manager for the New York Jets and signed Todd Bowles as the new head coach. While scouting, Maccagnan learned that Brandon Marshall's team was looking to trade him. Bishop (2015) explains what went into the Jets' process to acquire Marshall,

While the teams exchanged proposals, the Jets dug into Marshall's background, which included a history of domestic violence allegations (no criminal charges have ever been filed), skirmishes with teammates and a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. Marshall had been playing for the Dolphins in 2011 when Bowles, then an assistant, became Miami's interim coach late in the season. Bowles liked that the receiver arrived before teammates most mornings and never dropped his intensity. So he vouched for him (pgs. 28-29).

Marshall does not have to prove that he has learned from his acts of violence (because no criminal charges have ever been filed). However, this blemish on his record still bars him from being a Real Man. Bowles offers him the opportunity based on Marshall's past expressions of desirable masculine characteristics, hard work and intensity. In this case, a positive relationship with a Real Man is all that is required to attain tentative Real Man status.

Not all Naughty Boys, particularly those with highly documented mistakes, are able to access this fast track for becoming a Real Men. Many have to fully traverse the underdog narrative to achieve Real Manhood.

5.3.1 Overcoming the DV/VAW Obstacle

In the Literature Review I identified that single instances of DV/VAW rarely become newsworthy. This trend can be seen in *Sports Illustrated*. Reference to acts of DV/VAW are more likely to arise as a component in an article that centres on an athlete. Accordingly, the act of DV/VAW he was allegedly involved in is portrayed as an obstacle the Naughty Boy

must overcome to complete the narrative of becoming Real Man. Reconceptualizing DV/VAW as an obstacle is consistent with the redemption narrative. Rebecca Stone (2016) explains, “the narrative theory of desistance is fundamentally one of ‘narrative repair’ of spoiled or stigmatized identities, wherein desisting individuals ‘mine’ their past experience for evidence of moral agency and recast negative experiences as redemptive suffering” (pg. 957).

Reparative language consistent with transforming DV/VAW into an obstacle is demonstrated in Jones’ (2017) story about rookie returner Tyreek Hill. Jones’ (2017) introductory paragraph reads, “KC rookie Tyreek Hill is an electrifying return man. He is also guilty of domestic abuse. Should his past still define him?” (pg. 44). The question Jones poses seems to ask the reader if Hill is still a Naughty Boy or if he has evolved to a Real Man. Based solely on this information, it is difficult to determine which role Jones has cast Hill into.

Hill pleaded guilty to battery by strangulation of his girlfriend and received a three-year deferred sentence with probation, along with requirements to participate in a domestic-abuse evaluation, an anger management course, and a year long ‘batterers intervention program’ (Jones, 2017, pg. 45). The Kansas City Chiefs had to defend their decision to draft Hill in the Fall of 2016, Jones (2017) reports,

After Kansas City picked Hill the team’s Twitter account was flooded with negative comments. In response general manager John Dorsey said, “I just want everybody to understand that we have done our due diligence with regards to full vetting each one of our draft-class members,” and coach Andy Reid expressed admiration for how Hill was “trying to make the effort to right the wrong.” Hill was quoted as saying that “I’ve just got to better at choosing my friends.” After being questioned by reporters Hill then said

that was “the very wrong way to look at it” and that he blames no one but himself (pg. 45).

The sentiments expressed by Dorsey and Reid appear to endorse Hill’s status as a Real Man. This quote also demonstrates Hill’s hard work and ability to accept responsibility for his actions, two desirable values of hegemonic masculinity and Real Men. Hill’s initial statement and subsequent reflection also show his ability to learn and grow, something that a Naughty Boy must go through on his journey. This suggests that Jones is trying to portray Hill as a Real Man, however, he provides a final condition for Hill to overcome Naughty Boy status (along with a warning to other athletes who may engage in bad behaviour),

Hill, who is on probation until August 2016, has avoided any legal trouble since his guilty plea; if that continues, the felony charge will be expunged. He made \$500,000 this year, though he would have earned at least \$500,000 more in guaranteed money as a third-round pick (pg. 45).

Hill’s final obstacle to becoming a Real Man in the underdog narrative is finishing his probation without legal trouble. His reward for completing the journey will be a clean record, the felony charge having been expunged. Jones (2017) seems to include the discrepancy in income (Hill was selected in the fifth round) as a warning of the financial burden of the Naughty Boy-Real Man journey.

Presenting DV/VAW as a narrative obstacle one must overcome is also apparent in Price’s (2018) article about Luke Heimlich, “Prospect and Pariah.” The second sentence of the introductory paragraph reads, “Watching Luke Heimlich pitch stirs wonder and outrage – and questions about guilt, forgiveness, and second chances” (pgs. 30-31). Before even starting the article, readers are invited to see Heimlich through the lens of someone deserving of a second chance, someone deserving of an opportunity to move on. The article reiterates these questions throughout, often following up with examples of Heimlich’s behaviours since

the plea, none of which can be deemed the bad behaviours of a Naughty Boy. The guilty plea was entered in 2012, Heimlich's record was exposed in June 2017, and in February 2018 his probation was completed and criminal record was erased. Immediately, Heimlich began denying his niece's account in public. Price (2018) uses this to create two different interpretations of Heimlich,

The first is Luke of horrible accusation and subsequent admission, the Luke of prosecutors and legal pleas and carefully parsed statements released by his lawyer. The first is Luke the perpetrator, the confessed child molester who from 2012 to '17 diligently paid his societal debt and by all standards of American jurisprudence – if not society- has reformed, statistically poses little threat and is entitled to get on with his adult life. There's every reason to believe that Luke is real (pgs. 34-35).

The second Luke, who first appeared on Feb. 1 in a lengthy story by the twice-weekly *Portland Tribune*, contradicted the first Luke. Neither second Luke nor his family was quoted in the piece. But their account, confirmed by Heimlich to SI and reportedly bolstered by family released court therapist reports and polygraph test results, described a Luke who consistently denied the accusation to family and counselors, and who accepted a plea deal only to avoid a trial and jail time and to keep his schooling and baseball on track (Price, 2018, pg. 35).

A quote is inset on Price's (2018) competing Lukes, “‘What's [**Heimlich**] supposed to do now?’ says a D-I coach. ‘**Kill himself?**’” (pgs. 34-35, emphasis in original). No matter which of his Lukes is the real one, it is clear that Price sees Heimlich as a Real Man. In the story of the first Luke, Heimlich embodies the quintessential Naughty Boy-Real Man journey – also showing readers that this common narrative has its basis in real events. In this version, Heimlich really is a 15-year-old boy. Arguments about immaturity and childhood forgiveness can be accurately applied to discussions about his culpability. This version also exhibits

characteristics of hegemonic masculinity throughout Heimlich's journey to 'pay off his debt to society': diligence, hard work, respect, and honour. This is the ideal path to completing the underdog narrative and becoming a Real Man. The path of the second Luke is not as desirable, but still ends in the same result.

Price's second version of Luke benefits from the most influential elements of Kane and Gilstrap-Portley's Naughty Boy characters. First, if this version's account is true, then the only thing Heimlich becomes conclusively guilty of is finding himself in a position that leaves him vulnerable to accusations and staying quiet about his innocence for six years. His age at the time accounts for the first discretion, agreeing to plead guilty. The explanation for pleading guilty in court, while maintaining his innocence everywhere else, and staying quiet about it is similar to Gilstrap-Portley's – he had to do it, but for the 'right reasons.' The large inset quote that spans two pages explains, "Heimlich says pleading guilty to sexual contact with his niece gave him **'the best chance for a normal life'**" (Price, 2018, pgs. 35-36, emphasis in original). The second version of Luke is able to demonstrate a commitment to family, loyalty, determination, and perseverance. These are all qualities that Real Men possess, and are consistent with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Price (2018) dedicates over half of the 13-page article to exploring his second version of Luke and its potential implications. This strongly indicates which version of Luke he believes to be most accurate.

Whether Heimlich is a juvenile offender who completed his sentence or someone who plead guilty to protect his family and future, Price makes it clear that he is ready to move on. Many examples are provided to prove Heimlich's status as a Real Man, each one providing an opportunity for readers to move on with him.

5.3.2 Father-son Relationship

The presence of a father-son relationship can accelerate the achievement of Real Man status. Fatherhood is identified as evidence of the transition to adulthood in coming of age

narratives and can be used to bolster triumphant, redemptive narratives that require individuals to overcome a painful past to reach adulthood (Silva, 2012; Maruna, 2001). Becoming a father can also be characterized as a ‘positive’ action for women within hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pg. 840).

The role of fatherhood as a catalyst for a Naughty Boy’s transformation can work in two different ways. A Naughty Boy may be inspired by his own father figure to reform and overcome obstacles by emulating a positive role model of masculinity or he can become a father himself. In stories where a Naughty Boy has a child, his new status as a father can help facilitate his redemption; fatherhood can allow a Naughty Boy to realize the ‘mistakes’ of his past and incite change in behaviours so that he can become a ‘good father’. While not required, ‘good father’ status can expedite actualization of the Real Man character. Perhaps appropriately, the absence of a father figure, poor examples of fatherhood, or being a poor father are almost always present in narratives about Bad Apples (Klemko, 2019; Greene, 2017; Kaplan, 2016; Bishop, 2015).

Wertheim (2019) establishes a contradiction within the character of Jerrod Mustaf at the very beginning of his article, “Jerrod Mustaf is a Community Hero. **Has Anyone Ever Googled Him?**” and introductory paragraph, “The former NBA player will be forever linked to the **murder of his girlfriend**” (pgs. 108-109, emphasis in original). The article opens with a scene that describes Jerrod Mustaf receiving the Wizards Care Community Assist Award for “his exemplary level of dedication and commitment to community” (Wertheim, 2019, pg. 110). The opening goes on to explain that, “Mustaf has spent the greater part of his adult life working with (and now running) Take Charge, a program designed to keep local teens – most of them male, most of them African American – out of the criminal justice system” (Wertheim, 2019, pg. 110). Perhaps because he had a positive example of a Real Man in his own father, Mustaf appears to take on the role of a surrogate father figure for male teens in

his community. Maruna (2001) identifies the need to be productive and “give something back” to society as a display of gratitude as a key theme within the redemption narrative, particularly to recipients of the next generation (pgs. 87-88). There appears to be nothing that would suggest that Mustaf is not a Real Man. However, the link to murder presented in the introductory paragraph suggests there is more to Mustaf’s character.

Mustaf was drafted by the Phoenix Suns into the NBA in 1990 and played in the league until 1994, when he says he was ‘black balled’ for his connection to the murder of Althea Hayes, his girlfriend mentioned in the introductory paragraph (Wertheim, 2019). While he was never criminally charged in connection with Hayes’ murder, Wertheim (2019) outlines Mustaf’s ‘bad behaviour’ towards women leading up to it,

In college Jerrod allegedly assaulted and threatened a girlfriend whom he’d impregnated. (The charge was dropped; Mustaf admitted to shaking the woman but denied knowing she was pregnant.) In Phoenix he allegedly fought with his then fiancée, Psasha Luke, when she was eight months pregnant, and fired a gun through a wall near her. That dispute began when Luke received a letter from a woman in Florida claiming Mustaf was the father of *her* child. Police filed an assault charge, which was later dropped. Luke gave birth and became pregnant again a year later but sought an abortion, she told investigators, after Mustaf threatened her once more. She later had a second child with Mustaf. Soon after, she obtained an order of protection against him (Wertheim, 2019, pg. 112, emphasis in original).

Wertheim (2019) introduces Hayes to the story by describing her as a “27-year-old acquaintance of Mustaf’s” who “believed she was carrying his baby” (pg. 110). The use of the term acquaintance, instead of ‘girlfriend’ (as she was named in the introductory paragraph), works to distance Mustaf from her by implying they were not that close.

Wertheim (2019) also explains that Mustaf suggested Hayes get an abortion, which she

declined. He then offered her \$5000 to abort the baby, but she declined again. Wertheim further explains their relationship,

Separated from [Psasha] Luke but living with a different woman in the spring of 1993, Mustaf would allegedly meet Hayes at various Phoenix hotels – until she told him of her pregnancy. After that, she told friends, his demeanor changed. He threatened to stop talking to her if she didn't have an abortion. The two nurses who examined Hayes would later tell investigators that when she mentioned Mustaf, she became “emotional, upset and concerned about her well-being” (Wertheim, 2019, pgs. 112-113).

Mustaf's cousin, Levonnie Wooten, was convicted in 1996 and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Althea Hayes. While Mustaf did not face criminal charges, he settled a wrongful death civil suit with the Hayes family, in which they claimed that Mustaf had “summoned Wooten to Phoenix for ‘the express purpose of carrying out a plan to kill Althea Hayes’” (Wertheim, 2019, pg. 114). The question Wertheim's narrative now has to answer is: how does someone who is connected to the murder of their pregnant girlfriend become a ‘Community Hero’?

I propose that this is partly answered through the narrative power of the father-son relationship to signal transformation and change in a character. Before getting into Mustaf's bad behaviours and the Hayes murder, Wertheim (2019) establishes Mustaf's connection to his father and their commitment to social and community change. Describing the time after Mustaf had been drafted into the NBA, Wertheim (2019) writes,

Mustaf was distracted by the usual trappings available to those transformed overnight into millionaires: women, fast cars, clothes. But he also poured money into Take Charge, a program founded in 1990 by his father, and opened an Afro-centric bookstore on Phoenix's south side, Moostaf's Connection, that he stocked with Malcolm X T-shirts and memoirs by the likes of W.E.B. DuBois and Frederick Douglass. The shop

allowed Mustaf to start a literacy program and provide jobs to friends and other young African-Americans. “That [store is] for the people,” Mustaf explained at the time.

“Once you understand that, then you might understand me” (pg. 112).

This section establishes both Mustaf’s connection to his father and his commitment to community. It also implies that this may be the true essence of Mustaf’s character – suggesting to readers that, to really understand him, one must understand these relationships.

After Mustaf’s professional basketball career ended in 1996,¹⁸ Wertheim (2019) describes how he attempted various initiatives to create jobs and enterprise in the black community. However, Wertheim (2019) also notes,

[Mustaf’s] problems with women continued. In February 2001 he was charged with second-degree assault for allegedly attacking his wife, Shalamar. A month later he was arrested for violating her protective order. (Court records show that charges were dropped when Shalamar did not show up for a hearing. According to public records, the couple divorced in ’03) (pg. 117).

While Mustaf is attempting to overcome the obstacles he has faced, he is still depicted as a Naughty Boy at this point in Wertheim’s narrative. He has exhibited some characteristics of a Real Man but has not shown that he has learned from his ‘mistakes’. However, the charges related to the attack on Shalamar seem to be the last bad behaviour in which he engaged.

The narrative about Mustaf’s transformation after the 2001 assault jumps quickly through time as he continues his journey to becoming a Real Man. The catalyst to his ascent comes in 2011 with the death of his father. Wertheim (2019) explains,

Mustaf dedicated himself full-time to Take Charge, the organization his father started.

When Shaar Mustaf passed away, in 2011, it only hardened the son’s resolve to

“become a leader in the black community.” Thousands of kids have been through the

¹⁸ Mustaf played in the NBA from 1990-1994. He then played professionally in Europe until 1996.

program. And while the success rate is hard to quantify, the sheer volume of testimonials and acclamations says plenty (pg. 117).

At the point of his father's death, Mustaf can either ascend to Real Man status or commit an act that would cause him to fall into the Bad Apple narrative. His commitment (and apparent ability) to replace his father by becoming a leader solidifies his position as a Real Man. As an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity in his community, who was able to overcome challenges and learn from his mistakes, Mustaf's role as a leader and Real Man positions him to model those masculinity traits for other young men – as demonstrated by the high levels of participation in the program and the volume of positive testimonials. Mustaf's success story allows readers to feel pride in his ability to overcome the odds, become a Real Man in his father's absence, and teach the next generation of Real Men.

Fathers can be role models for Real Men in an athlete's life. They can also model the antithesis of what a real man is. Price's (2015) article, "It Would Hurt More Not to Play," tells the story of Jason Witten, who could have become a Naughty Boy. Throughout the article, Price depicts Witten as possessing desirable masculine traits, including: dependability, toughness, hard work, perseverance, intelligence, athleticism, and devotion to family. Price's (2015) explanation of Witten's quality characteristics is evident in the introductory paragraph, "It's just the way he was raised" (pg. 59). The compelling part of this story is that Witten was able to be cast as a Real Man despite his own father being an abuser. Price (2015), describes some of Witten's childhood,

Jason says he can't remember his father laying a hand on him, but he witnessed abuse of his mother and [older brother] Ryan. Mostly, [his father] Eddie's rage left Jason bewildered: *Didn't we have fun at an Orioles game two days ago?* "I was stuck there, and I saw my dad do some horrific things to people I love," Jason says. "It was a tale of two different men. Like, *Who is this guy?*" (pg. 62, emphasis in original).

The article suggests that Witten, like his father, may have grown to become an abuser as well if not for the intervention of a Real Man, his grandfather.

When Witten's mother decided to leave her husband, she took her children to live with her parents. Her father, Witten's grandfather, was a high school football coach – this puts him in an ideal role to teach the boys about the proper way to express masculinity, to become Real Men. Price (2015) describes Witten's grandfather (Dave Rider) and his relationship with his grandsons,

At school his grandsons called him Coach. At home, with his wife Deanna, Dave was different: loving and open. In quiet moments he spoke of how he'd never known his own dad. The boys would sit with him while he studied game film and ride with him the five miles to school, so, yes, they learned quickly that you played with a busted nose. But they also learned to call their elders *sir* or *ma'am*, to open doors for women, to treat wives and children like treasure (pg. 62).

This is a direct contrast to the previous role model Witten had been learning from. Price (2015) also adds the influence of Witten's older brother, Ryan, on his development, "If his grandfather set the example for manhood, Ryan modeled the way forward" (pg. 63). The narrative depicts someone who, against the odds, was able to become a Real Man instead of falling into a pattern of behaviours that could have cast him as a Naughty Boy or Bad Apple. Witten even goes beyond what is expected of a Real Man and does things that seem to atone for his father's misdeeds,

In 2007 Witten created the Score-keepers Program to assist families roiled by domestic violence. The initiative, which spread to six Texas battered-women's shelters and includes four learning centers in Texas and Tennessee, also provides for six full-time male counselors and is estimated to have touched the lives of 5,000 children "whether they've been abused or not," Witten says, "because they've seen it. Their life has been

disrupted much like mine was – and probably a lot worse. The purpose was to provide a resource for these kids. To be a male mentor. To be Dave Rider. To be there to inspire, to push, to hug, to listen.” (Price, 2015, pg. 66)

Again, Witten invokes the name of his grandfather and the role he played in his journey to become a Real Man. This also left me wondering, where would Witten be if not for his own father? Within this narrative, the abuse experienced by Witten’s mother becomes a necessary component to bring him closer to his grandfather and a better type of male role model.

It is concerning that witnessing/experiencing DV/VAW as a child becomes a requirement in this narrative to achieve the status of Real Man. There is a suggestion within desisting narratives that individuals who are able to overcome their past are in some ways morally superior to others who do not have those experiences (Maruna, 2001, pg. 99). This may also be exacerbated by Witten’s behaviours that seem to be an attempt to atone for his father’s ‘bad behaviours.’ I wonder whether having the additional childhood obstacle of overcoming DV/VAW – that Witten experienced through no fault of his own – may elevate his status of a Real Man higher than those who did not have to overcome it.

Having a Real Man as a role model is not the only way a Naughty Boy can experience the positive effects of the father-son relationship. For some, becoming a father (especially to a son) can expedite the transformation from Naughty Boy to Real Man. This is most evident in the article, “What We Think About When We Think About Big Ben.” The article speaks about Roethlisberger’s past bad behaviours, transformation, and how he exhibits the characteristics of a Real Man, but Price (2017) starts the article with a skeptical tone about whether or not Roethlisberger has truly changed,

Roethlisberger has been good for nearly seven years now – *good* here being descriptive of public behaviour, not morality, the way it’s applied to a heedful child or a docile dog. By all appearances the Steelers’ quarterback has acted like a cordial, civilized

adult off the field, while on it he has proved to be one of the singular talents in NFL history. Whether that combination signals maturity – much less true redemption – is anyone’s guess (pg. 22, emphasis in original).

This implies that Price may still see Roethlisberger as a Naughty Boy; however, after a quick summary of Roethlisberger’s history of alleged sexual assaults, entitlement, and partying, he employs fatherhood, among other things, to cast Roethlisberger as a Real Man,

Since the summer of 2010 no women have come forward to accuse Roethlisberger of sexual assault, unwanted advances or so much as an off-color comment. There have been no reports of run-ins with police, not even a speeding ticket, and his name no longer serves as a synonym for noxious entitlement on the Pittsburgh bar scene. He has been married since ’11 to Ashley Harlan, a physician’s assistant of deep Christian values from nearby New Castle, Pa., after first talking to her two brothers and asking her dad for permission. They have three children, and Big Ben does seem to dote. When his now-four-year-old son, Benjamin, wove through a scrum of reporters in the locker room to tug on Dad’s pant leg after the season’s home opener, Roethlisberger’s façade melted.

“How’d you sneak up on me, huh?” he said, voice softening and rising, eyes wide, lifting the boy up high. “Did you see my interview?”

Indeed, if Roethlisberger has declined – as he did with SI – all requests in recent years to reflect on his walk from self-centered boor and alleged predator to family man, revered team leader, and future Hall of Famer, he is hardly a ghost (Price, 2017a, pg. 23).

While Price (2017) begins with a skeptical assessment of Roethlisberger, the inclusion of a detailed, tender moment with his four-year-old son seems to provide the alternative option to readers and allows them to eradicate any doubt they had about his transformation.

This tension exists between what Price explicitly states his opinion is, skepticism about the authenticity of Roethlisberger's transformation, and the examples and quotes he includes that demonstrate the legitimacy of Roethlisberger's changes. After describing many of Roethlisberger's bad behaviours in detail, Price (2017) returns to the idea that the transformation to Real Man may be fake. A few choice quotes from both Roethlisberger, and his own father, seem to alleviate any doubts about the authenticity of Roethlisberger's Real Man status. Speaking about the days following the District Attorney's decision to drop a criminal case of sexual assault against Roethlisberger, Price (2017) notes,

[Roethlisberger's agent] Tollner met with a few crisis-management types. "There is kind of a blueprint for rehabilitating a celebrity's image" he says. "I ran through that with Ben, and he said, 'No. I don't want to do any of it. I want to be who I am and live my life and earn people's trust every day with the way I carry myself, not by trying to convince anyone to like me'" (pg. 31).

This rejection of an image rehabilitation strategy suggests that Roethlisberger truly was willing to change. This is bolstered by, upon hearing Roethlisberger admit "how far he had strayed", his own father "cried and said, 'I'm glad to have my son back'" (Price, 2017a, pg. 31). This part of the narrative proposes that Roethlisberger's true character is of a Real Man; he had "strayed" into the Naughty Boy character when given fame, money, and others' inability to say no. The sexual assault allegations could have been the last straw in a Bad Apple Descent narrative, however, as a Real Man, Roethlisberger is portrayed as using them as a signal that something needed to change. One of the biggest changes he undertook was getting married and becoming a father, hastening his progression to becoming a Real Man.¹⁹

¹⁹ My interpretation was that Price used examples of changed behaviours to overcome doubts about Roethlisberger's transformation. It is interesting to note that the implication that changes are disingenuous was enough to elicit criticism from at least one fan. In a Letter to the Editor Rudy Popolis (2017) wrote, "I was disappointed in S.L. Price's story on **Ben Roethlisberger** (*Big Ben*). Price presented the quarterback's positive changes in such a way as to raise doubts about the legitimacy of his growth. Roethlisberger has been a model citizen, teammate, husband and father for some time. Why not give credit where credit is due?" (pg. 12,

There are many iterations of the father-son relationship in stories that involve Naughty Boys and Real Men. Fatherhood can function as a role model of Real Manhood, a cautionary Bad Apple tale, or an identifier that true transformational change has occurred. While father-son relationships can help the transformation of a Naughty Boy, it is not the only path one can take within a narrative to become a Real Man.

5.3.3 Roads for Real Men

When the word of a Real Man is not enough or the use of the father-son relationship is not attainable, there are two main paths that Naughty Boys can take to overcome obstacles to become Real Men. Redemption for past bad behaviours can be found either within or outside of sport. As previously noted, sport – and its real or perceived positive outcomes – can be integrated into hegemonic coming of age narratives for boys in Western society (Silva, 2012; Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010). Men cast as Naughty Boys characters can access the immunity of childhood for their ‘bad behaviours’ (Waterhouse-Watson, 2013). I propose that these characters are also able to benefit from cultural narratives that consider sport a key contributor to the transition from child to adult.

A Naughty Boys’ contributions to sport, both in the game and within the sport culture, can help him overcome obstacles. *Sports Illustrated* articles exhibit a theme of sport educating athletes to become better men (and in some cases, Real Men). This theme is present in even the most heinous cases, specifically, Wertheim’s (2016) piece, “Interstate Killer”. The introductory paragraph to the article reads,

With the 428th pick in the 1974 draft, the Green Bay Packers selected... one of the most violent killers in U.S. History. No one is saying football led Randall Woodfield down

emphasis in original). This single response may not be applicable to all readers (*Sports Illustrated* chooses which letters to publish), but it exhibits a quick defense of Real Man status, suggesting either an uncritical willingness to embrace Real Man status when certain attributes have been attained or that once the Real Man status is achieved, it cannot be questioned or taken away.

his dark path – but did it perhaps deter him from it, at least for a while? (Wertheim, 2016, pg. 109).

This paragraph suggests that sport can help even violent serial killers from engaging in bad behaviours. Wertheim’s depiction of Woodfield’s story clearly follows a Bad Apple character – a former coach warned a scout about Woodfield, stating “It’s a point of character. Woodfield doesn’t have that” (pg. 110) – who is traversing a descent narrative (his crimes escalate to the point of multiple murders, rapes, arrest, and imprisonment). However, his depiction of the power of sport here is important. If sport is so powerful that a man charged and convicted of multiple rapes, murders, and other violent crimes can use it as a way to avoid engaging in those acts, then what can sport do for a Naughty Boy character attempting to overcome an alleged sexual assault?

Wertheim (2016) notes that Woodfield was cut before the NFL season began, and, “With his ambitions of being a pro football player killed off, he drove back to the West Coast. And then the rampage started” (pg. 113). After detailing Woodfield’s crimes, Wertheim returns to talking about sport, questioning its impact on Woodfield and alluding to prominent bad acts from the time of writing that he could expect his readers to understand. “*Football did this* has become the quick-and-easy explanation for all sorts of antisocial acts, from slugging a fiancée in a casino elevator to running a dog-fighting ring.” (Wertheim, 2016, pg. 117, emphasis in original).²⁰ Wertheim (2016) provides the following, alternative explanation to how football impacted Woodfield’s life,

But in the case of Randall Woodfield, it’s not merely an oversimplification to blame football; it’s at odds with the facts. If anything, football was a temporary source of salvation, delaying Woodfield’s horrific behaviour. Survey the time line and it’s easy to

²⁰ In 2014 NFL player Ray Rice punched his then-fiancee Janay Palmer in a casino elevator. A video of the assault surfaced, and the incident became well known. In 2007, NFL player Michael Vick was indicted on federal charges related to an interstate dog fighting venture he was part of.

make the case that football, beyond being a driving motivation for him, was also a distraction from a primal instinct that had, perhaps always, churned within. Only when football was no longer part of his life did he take a truly dark turn. (pgs. 117-118).

Following Wertheim's logic, if sport was powerful enough to temper a killer's innate urge to commit violence then it must be powerful enough to effect transformational change.

Price's (2017) article about Roethlisberger, detailed earlier, provides another example of the transformational power of sport. While Roethlisberger's transformation is aided by his ascent to fatherhood, sport also becomes a key site for his metamorphosis into a Real Man. In addition to on-field performance, Roethlisberger was committed to becoming a better teammate. One player recalls Roethlisberger taking him for a steak dinner and asking him how he can become a better teammate. A three-hour conversation followed, focused on how Roethlisberger could show his teammates he cared (Price, 2017, pg. 26). A year after that conversation, and being named a team captain, Price (2017) notes that, "As an NFL quarterback and leader, if not as a man, his evolution was all but complete" (pg. 26). He continues to describe the transformed Roethlisberger,

[He was] one who sought out teammates, and now with a lesson to teach. "He always is challenging me about responsibility, doing things the right way," [rookie wideout Antonio] Brown²¹ says. "He taught me a lot. He was suspended four games, and when he got back he told me, 'No matter what happens with you in this league, when you become a star, always keep your head and stay level-grounded. Keep the right people around you'" (pg. 26).

The failings of Roethlisberger's mentorship with Antonio Brown aside, the examples Price provides of Roethlisberger's evolution allow readers to view him as a Real Man.

²¹ Yes, THAT Antonio Brown from "History of Trouble" (Klemko, 2019). As a rookie, he was drafted to the Pittsburgh Steelers and played with Roethlisberger.

Other roads to becoming a Real Man exist outside of sport. The path to redemption could include things like Jerrod Mustafa's focus on community betterment (Wertheim, 2019), Luke Heimlich's quiet commitment to complete his probation and protect his family (Price, 2018), or John Elway's promise that his son will learn from his mistakes and be better (Price, 2015). While the specifics can take many different forms, the narrative remains the same: a Naughty Boy must overcome his past mistakes by exhibiting transformational change in order to become a Real Man.

There are many ways that authors can portray Naughty Boys embodying masculinity to become Real Men. Characters who are able to follow the underdog narrative can elicit feelings of sympathy for how they were treated and feelings of triumph when they succeed. In these cases, acts of DV/VAW, the women who are directly affected by them, and the ripple effects of the violence are reduced to just mistakes. In these narratives, it seems that the creation and perpetuation of more Real Men – and hegemonic masculinity – are far more interesting stories than having to deal with the real-world effects of their just mistakes.

6.0 Conclusion

I began this thesis with a quote from William Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure." It speaks to the ability of a man to transcend his faults, even to become morally superior than others who do not have faults to overcome. Upon first reading the quote, I was struck by how accurately it encompassed the themes I was seeing in *Sports Illustrated* stories about DV/VAW and the way it depicts perpetrators. These narratives provide a snapshot of the feedback loop between law and culture that contributes to the production of social meanings. Themes that excuse men and erase women in these narratives contribute to the perpetuation of DV/VAW as a tolerable, and at times desirable, component of society.

Human interest in how a man can use the conquering of his own faults to become an exceptional person seems to have held appeal for at least four centuries, if not longer. This suggests to me that the change within men that facilitates their redemption for past mistakes is genuinely possible. I like to think that we live in a world where authentic change and personal development can occur. However, the themes that emerge in narratives targeted towards men appear to jump to the conclusion of personal development without a thorough critical examination of whether genuine change has occurred. The issue I grapple with is that the portrayal of these narratives often come at the expense of including those, predominantly women, who are on the receiving end of actions resulting from faults. The favourable treatment given to men in addition to the devaluation of women supports the perpetuation of dominant patriarchal social understandings of DV/VAW.

It comes across as exceptional when a man is able to undergo changes that allow him to change his naughty ways, but appears as the norm to have women on the receiving end of violence. Is her ability to overcome acts of violence not heroic? Are these stories of less interest or importance to a predominantly male audience? In a feedback loop that supports patriarchal social structures and meanings, the answers to these questions seem to be 'yes.' I

found so few positive representations of women going on to thrive after experiencing violence that they are negligible to any conversation about trends in *Sports Illustrated*. The appetite for journalists to report on women centric stories and the audience's desire to consume them seems virtually absent.

The reason for the erasure or omission of women seems to be a result of the relationship between sport and patriarchy. Sport as a site for the reproduction of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity necessarily favours stories that focus on men. Patriarchy requires the constant reinforcement of the dominance of men over women along with the construction of a hierarchy of masculinities. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that there is an absence of women from narratives that aim to portray a man as an underdog hero who is able to overcome a difficult past to embody the idealized form of masculinity. Additionally, the absence of stories that centre on women – even if they are professional athletes – who are able to survive and thrive after experiencing DV/VAW is also expected. The patriarchal culture that permeates sport belittles women athletes, especially when compared to their male counterparts.

A cultural shift in sport is required in order to see more comprehensive narratives that include DV/VAW. The study conducted by Simons and Morgan (2018) noted a shift in journalistic framing of DV/VAW from episodic to thematic only when their key source, law enforcement, changed their approach to understanding DV/VAW. Accordingly, it could be the case that the representation of men and women in sport media will remain unchanged until there is a shift in the cultural valuation of men and women within sport. While this may seem bleak, it does not mean that journalists cannot strive to provide better representations of women and audiences can demand these stories before such a change can occur.

One of my biggest struggles throughout this project was dealing with the tension between recognizing that violence has occurred and the presumption of innocence. While it

may be clear that a woman has experienced violence, the absence of criminal conviction allows the denial that any wrongdoing took place. This leads me to consider a few different conclusions: the incident occurred but was perpetrated by an unknown party; the woman has fabricated the story; or it happened as alleged but cannot be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. I find each of these conclusions unsatisfactory because they do not allow for full recognition of what women experience and limit the accountability of violent men. This seems to be exacerbated by wider cultural understandings of law and the criminal justice system as the ultimate truth finder. The tension between presumption of innocence and recognition of violence seems to exist in an area of subtlety that *Sports Illustrated* is unwilling to consider. It appears that it is simpler for *Sports Illustrated* journalists to rely on criminal justice system determinations of guilt than to consider the implications that a professional athlete may have done what was alleged, even if it cannot be criminally proven. In lieu of criminal culpability, the presumption of innocence stands and therefore women's experiences of violence go unacknowledged. This aversion to nuance seems to be the origin for the need to diminish, deny, and erase women from narratives of DV/VAW.

The sale of *Sports Illustrated* in 2018 from Time Inc. to Authentic Brands Group and its reduction from a weekly to monthly publication raises hopes, questions, and concerns. Fewer publications with presumably fewer articles may allow for more in-depth, critical articles that include instances of DV/VAW. While these types of articles have not been a priority in the past there may be a greater appetite for more comprehensive articles of athletes who are or are not able to desist from engaging in 'bad behaviour.' The primary advantages of magazine coverage are that journalists have more time to create stories between publication cycles and can create more in-depth, nuanced stories because of the long-form articles. The takeover by a new company may also result in personnel changes. This could create opportunities to decrease the reliance on journalists who have previously reported on

stories that involve DV/VAW (e.g., Price, Wertheim). It may also allow for expansion to include journalists with more diverse perspectives and backgrounds. As I have been completing this project throughout the spring and summer of 2020, there seems to be a cultural shift or upheaval that is occurring. This has the potential to align with Smyth's (2006) observation that hegemony can be challenged and changed within periods of social modulation or transformation. I am hopeful that these current changes may allow for either incremental or transformational change in how DV/VAW is incorporated into narratives, even beyond *Sports Illustrated* to other types of male dominated media.

I have some concerns about the new ownership of *Sports Illustrated* and the reduction in publications. Primarily, the lower publication rate appears to be directly related to a decrease in readership, and potential societal relevance, of the magazine. Any positive changes that may occur in relation to DV/VAW portrayals in *Sports Illustrated* may be less relevant if they are reaching a smaller audience. Particularly when these changes are not guaranteed. Editors and decision makers at *Sports Illustrated* may strengthen their commitment to traditional patriarchal portrayals of athletes, allowing for continued trends in representations that I identified or the complete elimination of articles that may be considered tangential to sport. This concern is supported by the 2018 cluster of articles surrounding the Nassar case. I am concerned about the ability for future publications to develop clusters of articles that supported women's experiences of DV/VAW to develop into trends for representations of women in *Sports Illustrated* because this was not seen in 2018-19 following the Nassar case.

The decline in magazine readership in addition with current demands for instantaneous gratification and information leads me to question what new locations audiences will go to for their sports news. I am curious about what new mediums and sites for telling these types of sports stories will emerge. Cable television still appears to be a popular

source for sports news, however, there also seems to be a rise in the number of on demand services (e.g., podcasts, on demand radio, YouTube channels) and social media as primary sources for news information. A concern across all of these sources is that their rapid and continuous publication cycles encourage episodic, 'just the facts' reporting. On demand services raise particular questions about what representations of DV/VAW may look like because they are not necessarily affiliated with larger media production companies. This means they are not inevitably beholden to specific journalistic or media standards. I am curious whether this will allow for transformational representations of DV/VAW to emerge with individuals who do not subscribe to patriarchal structures and the size of the audiences who are interested in these narratives. Separately, I question how traditional patriarchal hegemonic portrayals will continue to persist, and potentially thrive if these are stories that can captivate loyal audiences.

I also have questions surrounding the need for sport reporters and journalists with the rise of social media, which allows fans direct access to their favourite athletes and teams. This access has likely increased the need for individual athletes and professional sports organizations to employ public relations and image management professionals, whose primary job is to portray athletes in a favourable light. This could eliminate the ability for audiences to even consider alternative perspectives to a DV/VAW incident that do not support the version put forth by athletes. In addition to direct access to athletes, connectivity via social media and internet allows fans to have more dialogue directly with each other. This shift removes the need for communicating via a publication (e.g., via Letters to the Editor) and creates the potential for echo chambers of specific types of cultural reproduction to emerge. For example, fan of Athlete X who allegedly commits an act of DV/VAW may first hear the story from Athlete X's social media page. In order to gather more information about the incident, the fan may then listen to an on demand radio segment that supports Athlete X's

version of events. Finally, the fan may engage in an online forum with other like-minded individuals to discuss Athlete X's innocence. At no point during this scenario are professional sports reporters involved or is Athlete X's version of events challenged. The questions this leads me back to are similar to those that initially inspired this project.

How do men communicate to each other about DV/VAW? How do narratives about male perpetrators of violence contribute to the perpetuation of DV/VAW? These questions remain difficult to answer because of the constantly evolving media landscape. The insight I have gained from examining articles that talk about DV/VAW in a male targeted magazine over a five year period suggests that the stories men tell each other reinforce dominant patriarchal conceptions of masculinity. DV/VAW is often expressed as an unavoidable consequence of patriarchal society that is easily glossed over. Until transformative social change occurs, I predict that these trends in man to man stories of violence against women will remain.

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Appendix A: Patterns and Themes within Articles

Pattern/Theme	Key Component	Element	Activism
Reliance on Police/Court records	9	3	
“Bad Apple”	2	2	
“Sport Corrupts”	4	4	
Mentions of DV/VAW in title/subtitle	12	1	1
“Stick to Sports”	2	4	
Conflation with other “Bad Behaviour”	6	5	1
Code Words	7	7	
Move on/overcome	3	6	
Father-Son relationship	5	2	
Reference to Ray Rice	3	3	
SI True Crime	4		
“Just Another Scandal”	1	9	
DV/VAW + Head Injury NFL	1		
Administration punishes management	3	1	
Administration defends management	6		3
Administration supports perpetrators	7		4
Team affected by perpetrator’s absence	5	4	
Dropped for PR reasons	5	2	
Redemption/Reformation outside of sport	3	2	3
“Good Sportsman”/ “Be a Man”	3	5	
Narrative Favours Perpetrator	6	3	
Perpetrator peripheral to Sport	5	4	5
Perpetrator Retired/Inactive athlete	6	6	1
Perpetrator active athlete	8	7	
Perpetrator’s voice present – own quotes	9	4	
Perpetrator’s perspective presented – family, friends, lawyer	6	1	
Other factors used to explain DV/VAW	3	3	
Other labels for victim	6	1	3
>1 incident/victim	11		
Narrative Favours victim	5	4	5
Victim’s voice present – own quotes	6		5
Victim’s voice present – via friends, family, lawyer	1	3	1
Case dropped by victim	4		
Civil suit because unsatisfactory criminal result	1	1	
Civil suit because lack of judicial investigation	4	2	
League consequences without legal consequences	1	1	
League investigation without legal investigation	5		
VAW as entertainment/ a good ‘plot point’ to serve larger story	4	7	
VAW/DV/VAW platform for people to “bring down” athletic institutions	2		
Excusing/Sympathizing with perpetrator	4	4	
Victim Blaming	1		
Victim(s) main subject of article	3		5
Ignore social context/Focus on exceptionalism of case	3	1	
Represent the individuals involved as the main issue	9	8	

“Women can be violent too”	1	1	
DV/VAW diminished	6	6	
Passive voice to describe DV/VAW	4	2	
Gives moral advice	5	1	
Evokes sympathy for perpetrator	4	3	
Evokes confusion/conflicted attitude towards perpetrator	5	2	
Use of “alleged” for diminishing reasons	2		
Use of “alleged” for legal reasons	13	7	

Table 1. Substantive Articles

Pattern/Theme	Obligated to include in Background	Combined with other Scandals	Reason for player’s suspension/absence
Other terms for victim		2	
Victim mentioned (vs. omitted)	5	5	
Perpetrator peripheral to article	8	8	8 (all)
Perpetrator main subject	5	2	
“Bad Apple”/Character Issues	3	2	
Someone else’s DV status (victim/perp) as point for character development. Something to overcome/advocate for		4	1
“Just Another Scandal”	5	15 (all)	
Mayweather DV conviction	4	1	
Ray Rice as Flashpoint/Poster Boy		3	
SI True Crime	1		
Perpetrator Inactive/Retired athlete	4	3	
Perpetrator active athlete	8	4	8 (all)
DV/VAW as component of “The Descent”	2	6	2
In Brackets	3	2	2
CTE + DV/VAW mentioned together		6	
Code words for DV/VAW	4	1	
DV/VAW used for shock value	2	2	
Entertainment/ plot point	3	8	1
VAW as joke or punchline	1		
Reference to biological essentialism		1	
“Women can be violent too”		1	

Table 2. Mentions Articles

Pattern/Theme	Number of Articles
Use of other factors to explain DV/VAW	2
Favours Perpetrator’s account/perspective	2
Coded language	3
Reference to Ray Rice	2
Father-son narrative	1
Redemption outside of sport	2
DV/VAW as part of other crime	2
Reference to Police/Court records or reports	1
Biological essentialism	1
“Women can be violent too”	2
VAW as joke or punchline	1
Entertainment/ ‘plot point’	3

Table 3. Absences Articles

Pattern/Theme	Number of Articles
Supports Victims	1
Supports Perpetrators	1
Critical of journalist/magazine	4
Outrage/shock	1
'Get over it'/ Too sensitive	0
Critical of perpetrators	2
More coverage or exposure needed/ "make it a bigger deal"	2
Sadness	1
Anger	1
Support journalist/magazine	2
Critical of leagues/organizations/ administrations surrounding perpetrator	2

Table 4. Letters to the Editor

Pattern / Theme	KC	E	A
1. Release in Peter King's records	9	3	
2. "Bad Apple"	2	2	
3. Sport Concepts	4	4	
4. Mention of in Title column	12	1	
5. "Stick to Sports"	2	4	
6. "Catcher of other 'Bad Apples'"	6	5	
7. Catch Words	7	7	
8. Talk on television	3	6	
9. Father - Son	5	2	
10. Ref. Ray Rice	3	5	
11. SI True Crime	4		
12. "Just Another Scandal"	1	9	
13. Talk about injury etc.	1		
14. Victim's Personal report	3		3
15. Victim's friend report	6		4
16. Victim's support group	7		
17. Motivated by blame	5	2	
18. Dropped by PR	5		3
19. Exchange of information outside the sport	3	2	
20. "Good Sportsman" in a law	3	5	
21. Famous Prep	6	3	5
22. Prep. Dispersed to sport	5	4	1
23. Prep. External/Inherent Athletic	6	6	
24. Prep. Athletic activities	8	7	
25. Prep. Value - academics	9	4	
26. Prep. Preparation - physically/psych	6	1	
27. Other factors in explanation	3	3	
28. When blame for victim	6	1	
29. SI incident/faction	11		
30. Favored Vict.	5	4	5
31. Vict. Victim's own	6		1
32. Vict. Victim's friend/family	1	3	
33. Can dropped by victim	4		
34. Call out the cover story	1	1	
35. Call out the lack of journalistic integrity	4	2	
36. Large consequences with legal consequences	1	1	
37. Large consequences with legal consequences	5		
38. Victim on television and social media	4	7	
39. Why/How Platform for paper to "drop the" articles	2		
40. Excusing/Justifying of Prep	4	4	

Theme	KC	E	A
41. Victim Blaming	1		
42. Victim's own support	3		5
43. Victim's social network	3	1	
44. Victim's support network	9	8	
45. Victim can be victim	1	6	
46. Victim's character	6		
47. Victim's voice to	4	2	
48. Victim's moral choice	5	1	
49. Victim's sympathy for	4	3	
50. Victim's consequences	5	3	
51. Use of platform for	2		
52. Use of platform for	13	7	

Image 2. Poster 1 (back)

Other Articles

Mentions n=39

obligated to include as player's history Background n=15

Combined of other scandals n=16

Reason for player's suspension / absence from team n=8

Pattern / Theme	B	S	R
1. Other teams for victim		2	
2. Victim's background (as mentioned)	5	5	
3. Prep. Prepared to article	3	3	8 (also)
4. Victim's own support	5	2	
5. "Bad Apple" / character issues	5	2	
6. Victim's social network	4	1	
7. "Just Another Scandal"	5	15 (also)	
8. Inappropriate / bad character	4	1	
9. Ray Rice on TV / sport / film / etc.	1	3	
10. Victim's friend / family	4	3	
11. Victim's support group	3	4	9 (also)

Theme	B	S	R
14. Victim's background	3	2	2
15. Victim's social network	4	1	
16. Victim's support network	4	1	
17. Victim's character	2	2	
18. Victim's voice to	3	8	1
19. Victim's moral choice	1	1	
20. Victim's sympathy for	1	1	
21. Victim's consequences	1	1	

Letters to Editors n=9

Pattern / Theme	# of Articles
1. Support Victim	1
2. Support Prep	1
3. Critical of "journalism"	4
4. Outrage / Shock	1
5. "Get over it" / too sensitive	2
6. Critical of Prep	2
7. More coverage / deeper probe / more in depth	2
8. Scolding	1
9. Praise	1
10. Support journalist / bloggers	2
11. Critical of "journalism" / covering prep	2

Absences

Pattern / Theme	# of Articles
1. Use of other teams in caption etc.	2
2. Victim's support network / preparation	2
3. Catch Language	3
4. Ref to Ray Rice	3
5. Father - Son narrative	2
6. Rehabilitation narrative of sport	1
7. Victim on part of other crime	2
8. Ref to Peter King records on report	1
9. Biological / environmental	1
10. Victim can be victim too	2
11. What is up in journalism	1
12. Entertainment / "Plot Twist"	3

Image 3. Poster 2