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## Counseling Perpetrators of Violence: Applying the Invitational Approach to Male Professional Ice Hockey Players

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# Counseling Perpetrators of Violence: Applying the Invitational Approach to Male Professional Ice Hockey Players

## Abstract

Aggression and violence are common characteristics of professional ice hockey games. While hockey players are encouraged to be aggressive on-ice, these behaviors are not welcomed off the ice. Instances of athlete aggression occurring outside the context of professional sporting events have been documented, particularly within interpersonal relationships. In order to address this issue, the process of counseling professional male ice hockey players must be considered. The invitational approach, as outlined by Alan Jenkins, can be used to take into account the contradictions of violence and aggression in professional sporting contexts. Rather than label perpetrators of abuse with psychological shortcomings, invitational practice brings forth the politics of power relations within institutional settings. Narratives from former ice hockey players will be examined and the invitational approach will be applied from a counseling perspective. The institution of the National Hockey League (NHL) will be deconstructed in terms of power relations and practices. Four themes will be examined: fame/approval, masculinity, gender relations, and alcohol consumption. The goals of restorative practice allow for the cessation of violence and abuse, restitution for harm done, and help reclaim a sense of integrity for the perpetrator.

## Keywords

restorative practice, counseling, hockey violence, male-dominated sports, invitational practice, Alan Jenkins

## Author Statement

I am currently a graduate student in the M.S. Counseling & Guidance program at California State University, San Bernardino. I work as a graduate assistant for the Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling. I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Calgary (Alberta, Canada).

## Cover Page Footnote

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### **Counseling Perpetrators of Violence: Applying the Invitational Approach to Male Professional Ice Hockey Players**

Often, sports are associated with masculinity in Western culture. The dominant discourse of professional ice hockey players is that they should be physically strong, and characterized as “aggressive” and “tough”. Physical fighting between players on the ice, during broadcast games, is literally applauded by spectators in the National Hockey League (NHL). While these particular characteristics are celebrated on-ice, the NHL does not condone violence elsewhere – violence is only appreciated and deemed appropriate during the context of a hockey game. The NHL takes a polarizing stance when it comes to violence. In sporting contexts, violence is celebrated, however, in personal lives, it is not. There is an invisible boundary along the edge of the hockey rink that allows for aggressive and violent behavior. Any violence outside this invisible boundary is considered unacceptable by society.

Despite these boundaries, there have been numerous NHL players who have recently become the center of police investigations for reasons of domestic and intimate partner violence (FOX Sports, 2015; Perez, 2016; Rush, 2016). Allegations of partner violence perpetrated by NHL players present a challenge for the league itself. As the NHL capitalizes from its all-star players, the institution is quick to dismiss allegations against these players, particularly when the victim was not harmed within the context of the hockey arena. A recent example occurred when the NHL conducted an independent investigation pertaining to an all-star Stanley Cup champion (Perez, 2016). The

NHL released a statement deeming the allegations against the player as “unfounded” (Perez, 2016). Representatives of the league refused to comment further, abruptly closing the case mere weeks before the team’s playoff run (Perez, 2016). The mass media has referred to such allegations against NHL players as “distractions” (Rush, 2016). The league was aware of the fact that any negative media attention would divert from the excitement surrounding the upcoming playoffs, prompting them to dismiss the matter quickly.

While the NHL may view these disputes as individual issues, it is important to consider the role of the institution itself in perpetuating violence outside the hockey arena. It is critical to address the issue through a counseling framework, specifically when counseling the individual who perpetrated the abuse. The question that I shall address is how such counseling should be done. I would argue that it is not adequate for counselors to treat such violence as unrelated to the sport of ice hockey. It does not take place simply as a result of deficiencies or abnormalities within the individual’s mind. Rather, ice hockey players are participants in a career that encourages them to engage in aggressive, and sometimes violent, behaviors.

The invitational approach, as outlined by Alan Jenkins (2009), will be discussed as a potential framework for counseling professional hockey players who have abused. It is chosen here because it is a non-blaming approach that consists of respectful intervention practices. It also takes account of contextual influences that

support personal violence. As hockey players, the influence of the dominant cultural institution of the NHL cannot be overlooked. The cultural ideologies that are perpetuated through the NHL are likely to have limiting and/or restricting effects on an individual's journey towards respectful ways of living. These limitations include the power and privilege supplemented with fame, the discourse of masculinity, and gender inequalities that may lead to the sexual objectification of women. The journey towards respectful living may be further impacted if the client struggles with addiction issues, such as alcohol dependence.

### **Invitational Practice**

Invitational practices recognize that, through abusive actions, harm is done to individuals and communities, and that an ethical journey toward respectful relationships is one that is located within a broader context of a restorative project (Jenkins, 2009). The restorative project assists individuals in moving forward by focusing on new life and capabilities, rather than reclaiming what has taken place in the past. According to Jenkins (2009), the aims of restorative project include:

1. The cessation of violence and abuse: The counselor will assist the client in ending the abusive behaviors. Through the process of *becoming ethical*, the individual is invited to discover ethical ways of living that promote respect for themselves and for others. The individual discovers how he wants to live, how he wants to relate to others, and the kind of person he wants to become.

2. Restitution for harm done: Restitution involves a process of broadening one's understanding of the harm that one has done. The individual acknowledges his abuse of power and considers those who have been harmed by his actions. When he takes an interest in understanding and respecting the experiences of others, he is provided with opportunities for new realizations and practices.
3. Reclamation of a sense of integrity: Through restorative practice, one's ethical foundation should be connected to one's own preferences. The counselor has a responsibility to reposition the shame associated from previous abuse behaviors. Jenkins explains that the experiences of shame are shifted from having a disabling effect towards an ethical journey of enhanced integrity.

### **Political Understandings**

Invitational practice highlights a political stance of understanding, rather than a solely psychological explanation. It is informed by a political analysis of violence, whereby these everyday acts are regarded as integral to the interplay of power relations that shapes all aspects of our lives and relationships (Jenkins, 2009). Rather than viewing the individual as perpetrating violence as a result of psychological deficiencies, invitational practice starts from the assumption, on the ice or in domestic relationships, of violence being an expression of power relations, which are viewed as political in nature and shaped by cultural institutions (Jenkins, 2009).

For example, a psychological explanation for the perpetration of

violence may be that hostility and aggression are internal traits and, therefore, the individual must have an anger disturbance. The assumption would be that the individual lacks the capabilities to deal with anger appropriately. In reality, however, many aggressive behaviors result from circumstances in which the individual fears being potentially hurt or humiliated (Jenkins, 2009). When counseling a professional ice hockey player who has abused, it is, therefore, important to understand the ideologies and context of the NHL. Professional male ice hockey players are often applauded on-ice for engaging in fistfights with opposing teammates. If the player refuses to fight, or performs poorly, he is likely to receive criticism from the audience, which may lead to feelings of humiliation and/or shame. Rather than view this player as having a psychological disturbance, the external pressures that require him to act in a hostile and aggressive manner on the ice must be considered. These pressures become especially problematic for hockey players when they are carried over to their personal lives, particularly when they engage in intimate partner violence.

The importance of political understandings is highlighted in recent research examining anger disturbances among perpetrators of intimate partner violence (Eckhardt, 2008; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Eckhardt (2008) found that the majority of partner-abusive men do *not* present with anger-related disturbances. This finding suggests that violent behaviors are not necessarily caused solely by psychological deficiencies. A meta-analytic study concluded that it is difficult to find the exact relationship between intimate

partner violence perpetrators, anger, and hostility (Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). The results of these studies suggest that internal factors, such as anger-related disturbances may not be critical factors in motivating the perpetrators to initiate intimate partner violence against women. By considering the context of power relations, we may be provided with greater understandings as to why individuals perpetuate violence. The invitational approach informs us with political understandings that take into account the institutional settings in which men participate (Jenkins, 2009). By understanding the cultural context of these behaviors in the counseling process, rather than focusing solely on psychological shortcomings, such as anger disturbances, counselors may gain a greater understanding as to how violence is supported in the context of daily life.

### **Principles of Practice**

Invitational practice requires counselors to embark on a *parallel journey*, as described by Jenkins, towards becoming ethical. This requires counselors to take part in a journey alongside their client, a journey that involves continuous reflection of their own ethics and the effects of actions upon others. Principles of practice for the counselor include *safety*, *responsibility*, *respect*, *fairness*, and *accountability*. Previously, these principles were made to address the behavior of men who have abused. Now, these principles exist as a guideline for counselors in their own parallel journeys towards becoming ethical.

## Safety

Throughout restorative practice, the safety and well-being of those who are at-risk of being harmed must remain a priority. The counselor must take every measure to ensure that the safety of others is not compromised throughout the intervention practices. If the client poses a risk to someone (whether it be a family member, partner, teammate, coach, and so on), the counselor would first privilege the safety of those individuals. Acting accordingly may involve breaches of confidentiality. Limits of confidentiality are discussed at the beginning of the counseling process, allowing the counselor to privilege the safety of those who are at-risk of being abused (Jenkins, 2009). If the individual discloses to the counselor that he plans to harm a partner or teammate, it is the counselor's responsibility to notify the parties involved of any concerns pertaining to their safety. If the individual claims to have made significant changes to his behavior, the counselor reserves the right to confirm this with his abused partner (or whoever has been the recipient of his violence in the past).

## Responsibility

The concept of responsibility means that the ongoing ethical journey is based upon one's own ethics; it is not based upon general moral codes or standards from an outside source. The counselor acts as an activist to "create and support community environments which can support and enable the acceptance of responsibility by individual men" (Jenkins, 2009). As counselors, we are required to resist those institutional practices that fail

to hold men accountable for their actions (Jenkins, 2009).

For example, the institution of the NHL encourages players to be aggressive on the ice. This aggression may lead to violence, although violence is only accepted within certain boundaries. An example of the accepted violence within the NHL would be fistfights between players on-ice. While NHL referees will penalize the teams for their participation in this violent behavior, the league itself will likely benefit from the incident. During the games, fans will reward players with applause and standing ovations for partaking in fistfights. When the game is broadcast on television, viewers may tune in to view the fights, increasing the "entertainment" value. When counseling hockey players who have experienced these situations, the counselor would have a responsibility to challenge such practices within the paradox of violence. An on-ice fistfight in the NHL both shames the player (penalty) and provides encouragement (applause from fans, increasing entertainment value). Acknowledging these contradictions and creating discussion within the community helps provide opportunities for these institutional practices to be challenged.

## Respect

According to Jenkins (2009), invitational practice requires counselors to remain respectful of the man who has abused. The process should promote respect for self, as well as respect for others. The counselor's practice of *reaching out towards the world of the other* should provide motivation for the client to invest in respect for themselves and others. *Reaching out towards the world of the other*

consists of “understanding, respecting, and appreciating the experiences of others and informs the motivations to cease violence and make restitution for harm done” (Jenkins, 2009). When practicing respect, the individual seeks new ways for actualizing his ethical preferences (Jenkins, 2009). The individual would be invited to test himself in relation to these new preferences, in order to actualize the person he wants to become.

When counseling an ice hockey player who has been a perpetrator of violence, it is critical to remain respectful, despite any previous acts of violence. In order for the counselor to be respectful, *reaching out towards the world of the other* may involve learning about other, and sometimes unexpected, aspects of the individual’s life. For example, alcohol dependence and drug addiction has been a struggle for various NHL players (Elliot & Dillman, 2015). In these cases, the player may realize the alcohol dependence has had an effect on his aggressive behaviors towards his teammates and friends. The counselor and client may explore treatment options addressing the alcohol dependence in order to promote respect for others. Additionally, they may want to explore qualities that the individual prefers in friendships and relationships. The counselor may help the player re-evaluate whether or not his current relationships fit with the qualities that he gives value to, and discuss ways in which to bring these values to his existing friendships.

### **Fairness**

The intervention practices should be experienced as fair for both the men who have abused and for those who have been affected by the abuse. Fairness is a critical

aspect of invitational practice, because it lays the foundation for promoting respectful relationships. Fairness may be at risk when one individual is provided with more power over another. In order to responsibly hold a position of power, Jenkins (2009) asserts that the individual must not impose unjust expectations.

When the client is a professional NHL player, the counselor must consider that the hockey player is placed in a prestigious position of power. The power that lies within the institution of the NHL is unevenly distributed, particularly by gender. The expectations that the league holds for female employees (who work on-ice during games) is that they should be valued for their physical appearance, rather than for their skill or talent. Since the hockey player holds a position of power, he may impose these appearance-based expectations on women, both on the ice and off the ice. The principle of fairness would have the client protest the injustice of marginalizing women, and the counselor would help the client with discovering and expressing respectful ethics that challenge this injustice. An example of this would be having the client list the qualities he appreciates about a girlfriend or partner that are non-appearance based.

### **Accountability**

The principal of accountability requires that there is an ongoing collaboration with those who have been abused or are at-risk of being abused. In order to effectively assist the client, the counselor must take into consideration the impact the abuse has on others. This may involve collaboration with community groups and services that

address the effects of abusive practices. The counselor may want to connect with organizations within the local community of the client, such as women's advocacy groups, in order to gain a greater understanding of the effects of abuse.

### Assessment Practices

According to Jenkins (2009), assessment practices are political in nature and impact the individual's commitment to address the abusive behavior.

Invitational practice consists of four collaborative, ongoing assessment topics:

1. Assessment of ethics: *What does the individual believe in?* Assessment of ethics means that the counselor remains focused on evidence of respectful ways of living (Jenkins, 2009). For example, the individual may disclose that, during his career as a hockey player, he enjoyed making trips to the local children's hospital and seeing the look of happiness on the children's faces. He would be invited to notice and reflect on this particular way of living, which is likely to accord with respectful ethics and preferences.
2. Assessment of restraining ideas & practices: *What is preventing the individual from realizing his ethical preferences?* The counselor and client could reflect on the dominant cultural ideas that led him to patterns of behavior that may include, for example, an exaggerated sense of entitlement (Jenkins, 2009). The client may disclose that, as a famous hockey player, he felt that he deserved to get "the most beautiful" girlfriend. Since Western culture values fame, the idea of fame may have been increasing the player's sense

of self-entitlement, restricting him from treating his girlfriend/partner with more respect. Additionally, he may state that his role as a hockey player requires the public to perceive him as "tough" and "aggressive". This perception may encourage him to engage in physical altercations with other hockey players off the ice.

3. Assessment of responsibility: Rather than monitoring the levels of risk, responsibility assessment protocols are concerned with safe contact between the man and the individual abused/community members (Jenkins, 2009). One major purpose of "responsibility indices" is to establish a man's suitability for entering an intervention program (Jenkins, 2009). The responsibility index addresses topics that include irresponsible behavior (that is, alcohol or drug abuse), respect in romantic relationships, and respect in broader social contexts (Jenkins, 2009). Particular attention should be paid to alcohol misuse; the assessment may serve as an indication of whether or not he is receiving appropriate treatment/support for any addiction issues.
4. Assessment of readiness: *How might these steps help the individual to address his abusive behavior, make restitution to those hurt, and reclaim a sense of self-respect?* Readiness concerns the individual's motivation and sense of agency towards his ethical journey (Jenkins, 2009). He must establish a sense of commitment in order to undertake an ethical journey (Jenkins, 2009). One of these steps may include the hockey player's willingness to arrive on time to weekly counseling sessions.



Another step may include his acknowledgement that at least some of his behavior is problematic.

### **Narratives of Former Ice Hockey Players**

The restorative practice principles will be applied to narratives of former professional ice hockey players. Their narratives will be used as examples in which invitational practice may be used when counseling a professional ice hockey player. The counselor would work with the hockey player to end his violent and abuse behaviors, hold him accountable to his girlfriend or partner's experiences, and allow him to reclaim a sense of integrity. The goal will be to enable the individual to acknowledge his abusive behavior, not because of external forces pressuring him to, but because of his own realization and desire to "become ethical" (Jenkins, 2009). The process of becoming ethical allows visions for options – new identity conclusions become possible, which may subsequently produce a greater sense of integrity (Jenkins, 2009). Becoming ethical implies openness to and respect for diversity and the embracing of difference (Jenkins, 2009). Through the process of becoming ethical, there is a shift away from the "us and them" attitude, towards a greater sense of community with our clients (Jenkins, 2009).

A study examining athlete aggression (Pappas, McKenry, & Catlett, 2004) interviewed five former hockey players (who either formerly competed at the collegiate level and/or professional level) and found that all the participants' narratives included violence and aggression *within* the hockey arena, and *outside* the arena. I will separate these

narratives into four themes of fame/approval, masculinity, gender relations including the objectification of women, and alcohol consumption. These case scenarios will then be examined through the lens of invitational practice.

### **Fame and Approval**

There is entertainment value in hockey games, particularly within NHL games that are broadcast through the mass media. Professional hockey players have the potential to influence the general public during these broadcast games, whether the audience includes spectators at the arena or those individuals watching on television. NHL players typically have celebrity-status fame, providing them a great deal of power. In Western culture, the concept of being "famous" possesses great value, with many individuals aspiring to be famous for various reasons. Fame is usually linked to success, leading to admiration by others. Fans of NHL teams will admire and look up to the team's players; they will purchase the jersey of their favorite player, follow them on social media, and cheer them on during games. NHL players have the opportunity to obtain a strong fan base, and the feedback from fans during games is valued by the players on-ice. During games, acts of violence between the players typically garner excitement from the crowd, as described by a former hockey player:

The first thing that comes into my head is the cheering every time somebody gets hit into the boards and a fight breaks out everyone stands up and cheers — that kind of thing, and when they see blood. A lot of fans came to see that and

they got bored if there wasn't some kind of violence going on. (Pappas et al., 2004, p. 302).

The narrative includes pressures placed on players through approval from the audience. He notes that approval occurs when the audience erupts in cheers and applause, a usual occurrence when somebody "gets hit into the boards" or "a fight breaks out" (Pappas et al., 2004). When observing violence is attributed to having entertainment value, it fosters a sense of value and acceptance of violence in society. With fame comes a following, and with a following comes the capability to influence others. Fame and approval are societal pressures that do not observe the boundaries that players are expected to observe within the hockey rink; these pressures occur both on and off the ice, influencing the everyday life of the hockey player. There are institutional pressures from the NHL in regards to how the players should present themselves on the rink and in their day-to-day lives. While players are rewarded with positive attention for violent behaviors on-ice, these behaviors become especially problematic when they are translated off-ice. NHL players are expected to uphold non-violent behaviors in their daily lives, and at the same time, they are encouraged to engage in aggressive and/or violent behaviors within their career.

### **Masculinity**

Identities are shaped through discourse (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008). The discourse of masculinity for professional athletes is evident in Canada and the United States; the NHL is comprised of teams from both countries.

Whether a hockey player is based in a Canadian or American team, the discourse of masculinity holds strong. The following narrative of a former hockey player highlights this notion:

I think of people that you know and hang out with ... expect you to be strong, kind of macho, and stick up or you know stick up for yourself ... someone would never walk up to you and say, hey that was a great move you made walking away from fighting that guy, I mean I probably never heard that in my life but I definitely heard a person being put down because he backed away from a physical confrontation both on the ice and off the ice. (Pappas et al., 2004, p. 303).

He describes the expectation to be "strong" and "macho" during his time as a hockey player (Pappas et al., 2004). The formation of one's identity depends on the circumstances in which the individual is placed, and the discourses available within these particular settings (Monk et al., 2008). These descriptions of "strong" and "macho" are in line with the dominant discourse of how males are expected to act and behave in Western culture. The former hockey player describes the shame in walking away from a fight, which occurred both on the ice and off (Pappas et al., 2004). The circumstances in which he was placed have formed expectations on how he should behave and (as he states) would have inflicted shame on him had he chosen to walk away from violence off the ice as well as on it.

## **Gender Relations**

Gender discourse is evident through male-dominated professional sporting organizations. In a professional ice hockey player's case, the cultural institution of the NHL, the sporting organization, produces prescriptions for physical strength, aggressiveness, and entitlement to power, all in line with dominant masculine practice. One former hockey player describes the impact of prescriptions for masculinity on the treatment of women:

I think that date rape is prevalent among the jock culture. There are things that are not violent but they just seem kind of wrong that guys do in terms of how they relate to women – off-ice. They treat women like objects — sexual objects. (Pappas et al., 2004, p. 306).

The above narrative describes a “jock culture” in which women are treated as “sexual objects” (Pappas et al., 2004). These practices have a cultural history, and are not traced back to individual men who have abused in the past (Jenkins, 2009). Rather, these ideas and attitudes can be traced back to the cultural institution - in this case, the origin of the NHL in the 1910s (NHL, 2015). It is clear that the origins of these practices are cultural, rather than individual. An NHL player who has worked for a cultural institution that continuously objectifies and degrades women may develop or learn ideas that involve disrespect towards women.

## **Interpersonal relationships.**

Adding to the notion of fame in the

NHL, intimate relationships of players are typically exposed to the public through various media outlets. Girlfriends or partners are often identified by mass media in relation to the players, with the media providing labels such as “the model girlfriend” (Rush, 2016). In popular culture, the term “WAGs” (an acronym for wives and girlfriends of sports athletes) was created specifically to describe women in relation to their male companions (Krueger & Emmrich, 2013). The term was first used by the British press to describe the wives and girlfriends of high-profile professional soccer players, but usage of the term has since expanded across the globe and across professional sports (Krueger & Emmrich, 2013). Through the use of such terms, women are positioned as secondary to men. As a result, public interest in the women is dependent on their relationship with men.

## **Objectification of female employees.**

During professional ice hockey games, male employees are valued for their skills, while female employees are valued for their physical attractiveness. The role of female employees during NHL games is most observable as a cheerleader or “ice girl” (although each team may have various names for this role). The requirements to become an ice girl are appearance-oriented. The women are required to wear minimal clothing, despite having to clean the ice during games. At the same time, male employees clean the ice in tracksuits. The ice girls are praised for their physical appearance, and are often subject to sexual remarks from heterosexual men in the audience. Women must satisfy the standard of beauty set by the dominant cultural ideals, although

these conditions are implicit and unspoken. Complicity with these conditions is considered normal and acceptable by patriarchal institutions, such as the NHL.

The role of the ice girl is named the “Power Player” for the Anaheim Ducks, an NHL hockey team based in California (Anaheim Ducks, 2016). The official website states that the “Power Players” support the Ducks through greeting fans, sweeping the ice during timeouts, assisting with promotions, and making sure fans have an overall good experience (Anaheim Ducks, 2016). There is no mention of their most obvious purpose, which is to appeal to the fantasies of heterosexual men. One of the strongest examples of this is the 2015-16 Power Players Calendar that is advertised on the website. The calendar, which is sold by the official Anaheim Ducks Team Store, consists of sexualized images of the Power Players posing in bikinis. The power relations at play are evident through the misleading descriptions of their purpose; their most fundamental role is not directly stated on the website, rather, it is implied through images. Through this process, the male-dominated hockey organization objectifies the female employees in order to gain financial profit.

The objectification of women is a consequence of living in patriarchal societies; it has been widely accepted and celebrated by male-dominated institutions, with the NHL being one of them. Every day, we position ourselves, and are positioned, within hierarchies of power that constitute dominant forms of masculinity (Jenkins, 2009). The expectation that women should be valued for physical attractiveness has become entrenched within Western culture.

Women are pressured to oblige these expectations imposed upon them (for the purpose of employment opportunities), while those who question or resist them will likely be directed elsewhere. In the context of power relations, it is evident that the hockey player, or male employee, is provided with far more power, within these cultural hierarchies, than a woman would be.

### **Alcohol Consumption**

Alcohol intoxication weakens the inhibitory processes that typically function to restrain inclinations toward aggression, thus increasing the potential for conflict to escalate when it arises within relationships (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015). Hockey fans are encouraged to consume alcohol during NHL games, whether or not they are present at the arena. At the games, there is no shortage of beer and various alcoholic beverages. Viewers at home are frequently exposed to advertisements for alcoholic drinks at almost every commercial break. Unfortunately, alcohol consumption has become embedded within the sport of professional ice hockey. While it is a common assumption that hockey fans will consume alcohol during games, the players are not immune to these pressures. The following former hockey player notes:

I think it just adds fuel to the fire — if you’ve already got a kid who’s aggressive by nature and you throw a catalyst in there [alcohol], it just makes everything worse —especially with hockey as there’s a lot of drinking that goes on with it. (Pappas et al., 2004, p. 305).

The narrative lists how “alcohol adds fuel to the fire”. Therefore, if the hockey player struggles with alcoholism, this must be addressed during the assessment procedures of invitational practice. During the assessment of responsibility, evidence of recent criminal and/or irresponsible behavior includes alcohol or drug abuse (Jenkins, 2009). Any issues with alcohol and/or drugs must be considered during the counseling process, especially when the hockey player may participate in a context that involves heavy drinking (as noted in the fourth narrative, alcohol consumption was involved in his experience of hockey). During the assessment of readiness, it is important for the individual to feel that the necessary steps towards sobriety are achievable and that the pathway is safe for him to pursue (Jenkins, 2009). A path towards intervention, for example, will likely require the support from other family members and friends.

### Restitution

Jenkins (2009) describes restitution as an expression of accountability, entailing realizations in these six steps:

1. Naming abusive practices: The individual is invited to name his abusive practices in a gradual progression. During this progression, he must come to an adequate “ethical realization” and demonstrate readiness to understand the implications of such actions before he labels them abusive. The stage provides the client the opportunity to understand the effects of his abusive behavior, allowing him to move forward with his ethical journey. For example, if a hockey player has been treating women as
- “sexual objects” (as noted in the narrative above), he will need to come to his own ethical realization before naming the objectification of women as abusive.
2. Understanding the political nature of abuse: Abusive behaviors occur in a context of power relations. For example, the contrast of gender roles during NHL games creates hierarchies of power. The man (hockey player) is valued for his skill, while the woman (ice girl) is valued for her abilities to *support* the male. She is also valued for her physical appearance. The ice girl’s success is dependent on the judgment she receives from males, particularly heterosexual males; her role is dependent on whether men find her physically attractive or not. They serve as sexualized objects to appeal to the fantasies of heterosexual men. In the setting of a professional hockey game, it is evident that the male gender role is one of greater power and influence.
3. Understanding and naming the potential effects of abuse: The effects of abuse are discovered in an ongoing and developmental manner. This stage allows a shift from self-centered thinking towards understanding the experience of others.
4. Facing shame: While the individual begins to recognize and clarify his own ethical preferences, it will likely lead to a sense of contradiction between his ethics and his abusive actions. As the hockey player discovers his own ethical preferences, it places him in a position to address his own behavior that has violated them. For example, the hockey player may have grown up in a matriarchal household that encouraged the respect

of all women. Since professional male sporting events tend to objectify women, they provide a context in which the objectification of women is acceptable. When the hockey player realizes his actions do not align with his personal values, he will be better able to establish integrity through facing shame.

5. Recognizing and resisting patterns of self-intoxicating experience and dangerous ideas which inform abusive behavior: As the individual experiences shame and has established his own ethical preferences, he will then make an ongoing commitment to stand against these abusive behaviors. This commitment signifies the journey towards “becoming ethical.” In the hockey player’s account of masculinity, he stated that players have been put down for walking away from a physical confrontation off the ice (Pappas et al., 2004). In the counseling process, this step may help prevent further abusive behavior. For example, he may choose to now stand up for players who are made fun of in the locker room, and support those players who choose to walk away from violence.
6. Challenging restraining patterns of avoidance and responsibility and reliance on others: In restorative practice, abusive behavior becomes understood as complicity with dominant cultural interests (Jenkins, 2009). In the hockey player’s case, the dominant cultural interests of being a professional hockey player in the NHL have misled him (to an extent) into abusive behavioral patterns. If one has spent many years in an organization that celebrates violence

and objectifies women, this should not come as a surprise. Through the process of externalizing, the man is invited to challenge these ideas, enabling a sense of agency (Jenkins, 2009). This provides the individual the opportunity to stand apart from and challenge these particular ways of thinking that support violence, rather than challenging his girlfriend/partner (or women in general). For example, the hockey player would take responsibility not for the existence of dominant cultural power relations, but for his complicity with them. He may take responsibility for participating in locker room conversation that involves the objectification of women, or engaging in physical violence with teammates off the ice. Although these practices may be common or accepted in the context of hockey, by accepting responsibility for his actions, the individual takes a stand against these ideas of violence and gender inequality. The counselor could discuss ways in which male-dominated sports have valued women mainly for their sex appeal. The individual would have the opportunity to challenge this assumption, allowing him to foster his own values towards women. He may decide to advocate for his female colleagues by creating discussion around gender roles within the NHL. Standing apart from these ideas of violence and gender inequality leads to externalization: viewing the problem as the problem, rather than the person as the problem (Monk et al., 2015).

### **Reclaiming Integrity**

When applying invitational practice as a counselor, it is imperative for

the perpetrator of violence to reclaim a sense of integrity (Jenkins, 2009). By demonstrating actions that align with his new ethical preferences, the client is able to establish integrity in his day-to-day life. As a counselor, it is critical to ask questions that provide opportunities to extend these realizations (Jenkins, 2009). For example, the counselor may inquire about individuals who have noticed these new actions that align with his ethical preferences. Whether it be treating a partner with respect or refraining from fistfights on-ice, it is likely that others will notice and document these actions. The hockey player may be better able to reclaim a sense of integrity when the counselor provides opportunities for others to notice and appreciate these new changes.

## Discussion

When counseling professional ice hockey players that have been perpetrators of violence, particularly within intimate partner relationships, it is important for counselors to consider the context and power relations that perpetuate such violence. The invitational approach, as outlined by Alan Jenkins (2009), provides a useful practice for addressing intervention in terms of power relations and participation within institutional settings. The aims of the approach include cessation of abuse, restitution for harm done, and reclamation of a sense of integrity. In the context of professional ice hockey in North America, the National Hockey League remains the dominant cultural force in which both players and fans participate in a paradox

of violence. It is not adequate for the counseling intervention to overlook these acts of violence as unrelated to the sport of ice hockey. Rather, the institution and culture of professional ice hockey must be examined in terms of fame, discourse of masculinity, gender relations, and alcohol consumption.

Violence is celebrated on-ice when players engage in fistfights that are met with applause. In order to gain sense of approval, players may engage in these violent behaviors on-ice. When they are translated off-ice, however, they may result in intimate partner violence. The discourse of masculinity brings about unequal power relations between men and women, best demonstrated by their within their roles in the NHL. The counselor may invite the hockey player to stand apart from these aspects of the league, potentially fostering new values and ethics regarding the treatment and value of women. While the NHL encourages and promotes the consumption of alcoholic beverages during games, many NHL players struggle with alcohol dependence. Alcohol dependence must not be overlooked during the counseling process, particularly when the player participates in a context that involves the consumption of alcohol. By considering these political structures impacting perpetrators of violence, the counselor will be better equipped to partake in a *parallel journey* alongside the client. Further research on counseling perpetrators of violence, while applying the invitational approach, is required in order to fully support and understand its applicability to ice hockey players.

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