“The mad Russian”: Representations of Alexander Ovechkin and the creation of Canadian national identity

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Abstract

The paper argues that the Canadian media’s representations of National Hockey League (NHL) player Alexander Ovechkin work to locate Canadian national identity through its contrasts with the hockey superstar. Even though the press celebrates Ovechkin as a challenge to Cold War understandings of Soviet hockey players as lacking passion and heart as well as physical play, they also present Ovechkin as a ‘dirty’ hockey player who is wild and out of control. By assessing reports from two Canadian national newspapers, the Globe and Mail and the National Post, from 2009 to 2012, and comparing these documents to reports on two Cold War hockey contests, the 1972 Summit Series and the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championships, this article demonstrates how the Canadian media’s paradoxical representations of Ovechkin break with and re-articulate Cold War understandings of Russian/Soviet athletes. Furthermore, when the press characterizes Ovechkin and other Russian hockey players as wild, unpredictable and out-of-control, they produce Canadian players as polite, disciplined and well-mannered. Through these opposing representations, the media helps to locate Canadian national hockey identity within a frame of appropriate masculine expression.

Keywords
Alexander Ovechkin, Cold War, Ice Hockey, Hockey, Sidney Crosby, Canada, Russia, National Identity, Soviet Union, Masculinity, National Hockey League

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A large banner hanging above the ice pad in Michael McGowan’s 2010 film *Score: A Hockey Musical* proclaims, “HOCKEY IS AIR•HOCKEY IS WATER•HOCKEY IS LIFE.” Writers and other Canadian culture makers often present hockey as Canada’s “national religion” (Kidd & MacFarlane, 1973, p. 4), forwarding common sense notions that proclaim Canada as the premier nation of hockey – while ignoring the ways this idea works to privilege a narrow vision of Canadian national identity. As Mary Louise Adams (2006) states, “If hockey is life in Canada, then life in Canada remains decidedly masculine and white” (p. 71). Robert Pitter (2006) extends this argument, noting that “(t)he larger story of hockey in Canada is told as if Aboriginal Canadians, black Canadians, and Asian Canadians were simply not here” (p. 128).

Canadian national identity, as it is linked to ice hockey, does not only work to marginalize the views of those others who do not or cannot support this particular notion of Canada (i.e., a vision of Canadian national identity that privileges straight, white men who express masculinity in culturally dominant ways), it also works to erase the various ways that representations of other hockey nations both construct and challenge Canadian identity.

In this paper I examine the role of the Soviet/Russian ‘other’ in the construction of Canadian hockey-style masculinity by drawing on Edward Said’s (1979) pivotal examination of identity construction and the process of ‘othering’ and Pietz’s (1988) use of this concept as a means of understanding the West’s relationship to the Soviet Union/Russia. Said (1979) argues that through endless examination and scholarship the West invents the East in order to secure its own
identity in opposition. He further states that this relationship is imbued with relations of power, wherein the West unfailingly constructs itself as superior.

As the Canadian press constructs Canada as superior to the Soviet Union/Russia, it is important to note that this process is complex and contradictory, drawing on a long history of positioning Canada as the home of hockey. In spite of Canadian efforts to claim the game of ice hockey as solely our own, there is a long history of international participation and interest in the game. For example, the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) was founded in 1908, before the advent of the National Hockey League (NHL) in 1917. Even Canada's historical position as the best hockey nation in the world is spurious. Hart Cantelon (2006) argues that by the mid-1950s, the taken-for-granted assumption that Canadian national teams could easily win all international competitions was “seriously challenged” by international competitors (p. 216), and no event demonstrates this better than the Canadian loss to the Soviet national team at the Olympic Games in 1956 – the very first time the Soviets competed in the event. This began a long and tense Cold War hockey rivalry that deeply influenced notions of what it meant to be Canadian and express an appropriate style of Canadian hockey masculinity (or a style of play based on hard physical contact and confrontation). As Cantelon (2006) documents, the Soviet Union’s entry to international ice hockey in the mid-1950s shook Canada’s understanding of itself as the best hockey nation in the world, as the Soviets beat Canadian international teams with regularity from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s. During the 1970s and 80s, interactions between the two were marked by violent exchanges, which helped to generate a popular understanding of
appropriate hockey masculinity in the Canadian imagination – specifically, one that was secured through its opposition to a Soviet/Russian hockey ‘other’. Although Canadian hockey commentators often describe European teams and their players as hockey ‘others’, with the political tensions associated with the Cold War, and the overt challenge to Canadian national hockey identity, I argue that the Soviet Union, and now Russia, holds a special place in the Canadian hockey imagination. A position echoed by Canadian journalist Rick Salutin (2009, May 8):

    Though we’re aware of the U.S. border, Russia is our other neighbor and rival. It is our obverse. Flip us over at the top and there’s Russia. It has always given Canada palpitations. Those hockey cataclysms in 1956 and 1972⁴ weren’t the first time we were shaken by comparing ourselves with Russia. (p. A14)

Even though there was an influx of Russian players to the NHL after the collapse of the Soviet Union,⁵ many in the Canadian press still imagine these athletes as ‘others’, albeit sometimes in much different ways than in past eras. Using the NHL’s Russian superstar Alexander Ovechkin as an example, I analyze the ways representations of Soviet/Russian hockey players have shifted in the 21-century. I show that although the Canadian media often claim that Ovechkin is a player whose style of play and off-ice persona represent a break with Cold War-era players, this claim is not entirely supported by their complex and contradictory representations of him, which duplicate Cold War tropes of Soviet/Russian hockey players in some instances and depart from them in others. While the Canadian press often depicts Ovechkin as a boisterous and exuberant fan favourite, they also represent him as a ‘dirty’ player who is wild and out-of-control. In this paper, I map the ways the
Canadian media produce these seemingly opposing images of Ovechkin (e.g., Ovechkin as a player who is an NHL saviour vs. Ovechkin as an unscrupulous, unmanageable liability to the game). I argue that descriptions of Ovechkin in the Canadian press speak to the ways the media produces notions of Canadian national identity, specifically as they pertain to Canadian hockey. I demonstrate that although Canadian national identity constructions (and their opposition to various national ‘others’) appear natural and durable, they are in fact in flux and often reflect changing political climates.

The importance of understanding the ways Cold War discourse continues to shape our knowledge of Russia is especially important today. Since the conclusion of the Sochi Olympics and Russia’s military intervention in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the West has increasingly conceptualized Vladimir Putin’s Russia using the language of the Cold War, with numerous newspaper reports calling the escalating tensions the “New Cold War” (Tisdall, 2014, November 19; Schuman, 2014, November 20; Martin, 2015, February 3) and Wikipedia even devoting an entry to “Cold War II” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War_II). Russia’s involvement in the crisis in Ukraine; the crash of Malaysian Flight 17, shot down over disputed land between Russia and Ukraine; and even Russian ‘flybys’ in the Canadian and U.S. Arctic have prompted new concerns about Russia and its lawlessness in the Canadian press, amongst politicians, and within the Canadian public (MacKinnon, 2014, July 31; Chase, 2014, June 19). Talk of competing “values” between Canada and Russia dominated a speech by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, where
he explained that “in the mind” of Putin, the Cold War is not over (Levitz, 2014, September 16).

In light of these new political tensions, it is instructive to examine the ways Russian hockey players are conceptualized in the Canadian media. This paper demonstrates that many Canadian sports reporters from the 1970s and 80s until very recently drew liberally on Cold War language to understand, and more importantly construct, the seeming differences between Canadians and Soviets/Russians. As tensions between Russia and the West continue to escalate, we cannot be certain how Russia (and Russians) will be conceptualized in the Canadian press. However, this paper demonstrates that Cold War language is still routinely mobilized today, although in a somewhat modified and contradictory way. As a result, it is important to consider the ways that contemporary uses of Cold War language have the potential to intensify existing political tensions both within the realm of sport and beyond. Given this, in this paper I highlight the significance of being attentive to these changes and considering the wider impact of these shifts in the construction of dominant notions of Canadian national identity.

I begin this paper by introducing Ovechkin and explaining his significance to North American hockey. I then provide some contextual information about the ways national identities are constructed, their link to dominant expressions of masculinity, and the significance of the Cold War in galvanizing a sense of Canadian national identity against a Soviet/Russian other. In order to analyze how Cold War discourse has shifted over the past forty years, I then examine the ways the
Canadian media represented Russian athletes during two significant Cold War hockey contests – the 1972 Summit Series and the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championships in Piestany, Czechoslovakia. I then study representations of Ovechkin in the Canadian press. Drawing on Said’s (1979) work, I argue that as men’s elite-level Canadian hockey is premised upon passion, physicality and being the best, Ovechkin’s position as a Russian hockey player possessing those aforementioned qualities (or one who might, in the words of hockey icon Vladislav Tretiak, be considered “half-Canadian” (quoted in McGrath, 2010, April 9, para 8)) puts the specificity of those qualities in question. Ovechkin challenges Canadian representations of Russian hockey masculinity that are problematically premised on dispassionate, if not disinterested, play and an unwillingness to hit (Allain, 2008). As the Canadian press often represents Russian hockey players as wild, unpredictable and out-of-control ‘others’, Canadian players implicitly become polite, disciplined and well-mannered in contrast. These opposing representations of Russian players (i.e., as both dispassionate and out-of-control) help to locate an appropriate sense of Canadian national hockey identity – one that may have been (temporarily) displaced by Ovechkin and his style of play.

**Introducing “Ovie”:**

The 1989-1990 NHL hockey season is pivotal in Soviet-North American hockey relations. During this season, North Americans witnessed Soviet stars joining NHL teams, with superstar players such as Alexander Mogilny, Calder Trophy winner Sergei Makarov, Igor Larionov, and Vyacheslav Fetisov competing as professional North American players. Since 1989 there have been many successful
Russian athletes in North American professional hockey, including Sergei Fedorov, Pavel Bure and Alexei Kovalev. Exceptional Russians playing today include Pavel Datsyuk and Evgeni Malkin. In spite of this, Ovechkin arguably holds a special place in the minds of North American fans, media, and advertisers. Indeed, since his entry into the NHL in 2005, Ovechkin (or “Ovie” as he is sometimes called) has been the subject of articles in American magazines including *GQ* (Idov, 2009), *Men’s Journal* (2009, December 11) and *Maxim* magazines (Jordan, 2009). His image circulates in television advertisements for the NHL, ESPN, and Mr. Big chocolate bars. In 2008, CCM Sporting Goods put his name on a line of clothing, while his likeness adorns the cover of several popular video games, including EA Sports NHL 2007 and NHL Sports 2K10. In 2011, Bauer Performance Sports signed Ovechkin in the hopes that his celebrity status would increase their market share in Russia (Robertson, 2013, November 28). Ovechkin’s position as a superstar is linked to his exceptional hockey ability. He won the Calder Trophy for best rookie in 2005-2006, and has multiple league scoring titles and most valuable and outstanding player awards. His superstar status is also linked to his unique sense of style, marked by flamboyance off the ice and dynamism on it.

As Ovechkin and his marketing team push to make him a sports icon, transcending the bounds of North American hockey, it is important to examine how he is represented within the Canadian press. The Canadian media tend to characterize Ovechkin’s style, both on and off the ice, as a break with Cold War stereotypes of Soviet athletes. In the words of Stephen Brunt (2009, April 30), Ovechkin “has single-handedly killed every knee-jerk stereotype about Russians and
hockey” (p. S1). This is because, as a writer for the American magazine Maxim states, “Most Russian players have a reputation for being passionless drones, technically proficient but selfish, indifferent, sour, without heart” (Jordan, p. 46). In contrast, Roy MacGregor (2009, May 6) claims, “Children love [Ovechkin’s] absolute joy of playing. They love the leap into the boards after every goal... Perhaps it is because his Stone Age features give him the look of an action figure - one whose every stride and shot is so instantly recognizable...” (p. S1). Indeed, Ovechkin’s style of play and personality mark him as a different kind of player, and celebrity, than other successful Soviet/Russian hockey players, seemingly confounding dominant Canadian (and Russian) understandings of hockey and national identity.

As the Canadian press widely contextualizes Ovechkin using nationalist discourse, in the next two sections I will explore the relationship between Canadian national identity and ice hockey, demonstrating that this relationship is based on a particular (and somewhat contradictory) understanding of appropriate Canadian masculinity. I will examine the connection between the construction of Canadian national identity and hockey in the context of the Cold War, analyzing the kinds of discourse that were authorized and circulated in Canada by the press during this time. I will pay particular attention to the ways this discourse relates to Canada’s relationship with the Soviet Union and Russia.

**Canadian National Identity and Hockey:**

Scholars generally understand national identity as a force that attempts to draw people together into a sense of belonging that transcends other competing
identities (Bauman, 1992; Anderson, 1983). Nationality theorists such as Benedict Anderson (1983) and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) respectively describe the creation of national identity as an imagined community or an invented tradition, highlighting the amorphous character of these identities and their ability to adapt to cultural change. An emphasis on community belonging, as well as various technical apparatuses including print media (Anderson, 1983), the novel (Brennan, 1990), and more banal practices such as flag waving (Billig, 1995) create and strengthen national identities. As Anderson (1983) points out, the ties created through national belonging are so strong that community members are willing to fight, and sometimes die, in the name of their nation. Yet it is important to remember that relations of power imbue themselves within national identities, as some ideas of the nation become privileged over others. Gellner (1983) argues that the construction of national identity is not an inclusive process, as it often fails to include all members of the nation. To address the needs of some groups, powerful actors and institutions within the nation will exclude or marginalize other groups. Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins (2001) state, “National identity is always a project, the success of which depends upon being seen as an essence” (p. 222).

One of the ways power operates through national identity construction is the privileging of national sports (i.e., sports that primarily celebrate the achievements of fit, young, able bodied men) as a way to construct and reproduce national identity. Billig (1995) and Hobsbawm (1992) stress the importance of sport, particularly its coverage in the media, as a significant part of modern nation building after the Second World War. Hobsbawm (1992) argues that national sports have
come to represent the nation in ways once reserved for gladiatorial contests. He contends that sports are linked to national identity for two reasons. First, the athlete and his/her sport become symbols of the nation. Second, sport represents an important point of identification for those belonging to the nation as sports fans. Hobsbawm claims that “everyone” understands and identifies with sports because we all once wanted to be good at them. Although this last claim is problematic, it is clear that the relationship between sport and national identity is an important one.

In Canada, various actors and institutions position hockey as an enduring and universal (although not uncontested) feature of national identity.11 This overtly romanticized understanding of the sport stems from an articulation of hockey as an outgrowth of Canada’s climate. In the words of Stephen Leacock, “Hockey captures the essence of Canadian experience in the New World. In a land so inescapably and inhospitably cold, hockey is the chance of life, and an affirmation that despite the deathly chill of winter we are alive” (quoted in Gilbar, 2005, p. 140). As many Canadian politicians, reporters, and others circulate an understanding of Canadian hockey as a natural phenomenon, they mobilize particular dynamics of power, marking some citizens as more authentically Canadian than others. Jay Scherer and Lisa McDermott (2011) provide an example of this. Their work shows the ways the Conservative Party of Canada, and specifically Stephen Harper, has mobilized hockey as a symbol of “ordinary” Canadianness or a sense of Canadian identity linked to “patriotism, masculinity, and normality” (p.109). Michael Robidoux (2002) reminds us that positioning hockey as something quintessentially Canadian speaks to certain understandings of race, class, gender, and sexuality. However, even as
Peter Gzowski (1981) declares hockey “the game of our lives,” Adams (2006) asks us to consider whose lives we are talking about. Adams, and others, such as Pitter (2006), remind us that positioning hockey as something quintessentially Canadian speaks to certain understandings of class, race, gender and sexuality or specifically an understanding of appropriate nationalism that is tied to the bodies of straight, middle-class, white men. Richard Gruneau and David Whitson (1993) point out that the relationship between hockey and Canadian national identity is an uneasy one and “At the very least, hockey's enduring link to the idea of 'Canadianness' is something to be analysed rather than romanticized” (p. 7).

Studies by Kristi Allain (2008 & 2010) unpack the relationship between Canadian national identity and hockey, demonstrating that this relationship is one that is tied to the celebration of men's hockey practice and particular (although contradictory) expressions of masculinity. Allain argues that as Canada presents itself, both to itself and the world, as a nation that has survived its supposedly harsh northern environment, the sport of hockey becomes publicly understood as a natural extension of Canada's geographic position. Work by Rene Hulan (2002) asserts that the connection between Canadian national identity and the North is one that privileges men and rugged expressions of masculinity, where the North is seen as an obstacle that an adventurous, durable, and robust spirit is needed to overcome (or expressions of gender that are commonly linked to men and dominant understandings of masculinity). Within the Canadian imagination, Canadian hockey masculinity is connected to a sense of masculine style linked to decorum and good manners off the ice and an ability to smash and grind on it (Allain, 2008 & 2010).
Robidoux (2002) argues that these seemingly contradictory representations of Canadian hockey identity come from Canada’s colonial history, wherein non-Indigenous Canadians looked to construct a unique sense of Canadian identity through the sport, drawing on the fact that hockey was considered by the public a truly Canadian invention. However, even as the sport is understood as violent on the ice, off the ice players are expected to express a sense of masculine style centered on ‘gentlemanly’ masculinity. Although these two different expressions of masculinity appear to contradict one another, they both work to structure a sense of Canadian national identity (Allain, 2010). Allain (2008) finds that the consequence of this construction is often the marginalization of others who cannot or will not express masculinity in this way.

Given this, it is worthwhile to examine how members of the Canadian press construct Canadian hockey identity and how this construction has changed over time. It is further important to evaluate how some Canadian reporters use representations of ‘others’ in order to situate notions of Canadian national identity, even when this identity is linked to an ever changing (and often contradictory) ‘other’. Although Canadian national identity is oftentimes located against American national identity (Mason, 2002; Jackson, 1994), in the case of elite-level men’s ice hockey, Canada has drawn first upon the Soviet Union, and then Russia, in order to construct a sense of appropriate Canadian national identity. In the words of prominent Canadian author and reporter Roy MacGregor (2012, January 4), “Forget the eagle, the real enemy is the bear” (para 1).
**Ice Cold War:**

In order to understand the ways Canadian hockey identity is conceptualized today, it is important to begin with an examination of Canadian-Soviet relations during the Cold War. The Cold War was a post-WWII escalation of tensions and arms between the West (dominated by the United States) and the Soviet Union, ending in the early 1990s with the fall of Soviet Russia (Cavell, 2004). The media, the government and even the public widely understood these tensions as hatred between the two nations. Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse (1994) explain that Canadians understood the Cold War in language drawn from WWII and their assumed collective repulsion of Nazi Germany. Specifically, “(w)ar time propaganda conditioned Canadians not merely to mistrust but to hate the enemy” (p. 8). Although Canada’s position during the Cold War was one of “junior partner” to the United States (Whitaker & Marcuse 1994, p. 114), it is wrong to assume that Canada understood the Cold War in identical ways to its American neighbor. Whitaker and Marcuse (1994) point out that although Canada did not have a practice analogous to American-style McCarthyism, this did not mean, as is commonly alleged, that Canada was more tolerant of political difference and dissent during this time. In fact, Whitaker and Marcuse (1994), drawing on the work of sociologist S. D. Clark, argue that the Canadian political climate allowed for more control of popular opinion and less public dissent, and therefore no need for McCarthyism.

Similarly, Richard Cavell (2004) asserts that Canada’s Cold War was in some ways different than that of its southern neighbour. Citing the 1951 Massey
Commission, which focused on the state of art and culture in Canada, Cavell finds that in Canada, the Cold War had a “particularly cultural dimension” (p. 5). Specifically, Canada’s intellectual elite drew a connection between the development of Canadian cultural identity and national defense. Accordingly, it is not surprising that during the Cold War, sport in general, and ice hockey in particular, became an important cultural symbol of Canada and Canadian national identity. Scherer, Gregory Duquette and Daniel Mason (2007) note that unlike America, Canada had a Cold War relationship with the Soviet Union marked by a number of cultural, technological and scientific exchanges designed to include the Soviet Union in international affairs as opposed to alienating them.

One such event, examined by Scherer and Cantelon (2013), was the 1974 Summit Series – a hockey contest played between the World Hockey Association All Stars and the Soviet National Team. Scherer and Cantelon found that although the Canadian government looked to Cold War sport contests to develop diplomacy and good will between Canada and the Soviet Union, these contests often produced the opposite effect. In the case of this largely forgotten series, they assert:

...the 1974 Summit Series...ended in violence, politicking, and accusations of unsportsmanlike conduct that did little to improve sporting relations between Canada and the USSR or offset the already well-tarnished perception abroad of Canadian hockey players as thugs and goons. (p. 31)

Furthermore, Scherer and Cantelon (2013) note that even though the Canadian government may have attempted to use sport as a tool for political diplomacy, Cold
War attitudes about Canadian and Soviet players, and the politics of their home countries, were mythologized in the Canadian press in ways that celebrated Canada while vilifying the Soviet Union. For example, they found that reporters overlooked (sometimes dramatic and obvious acts of) violence and misconduct by Canadian athletes and focused instead on the misdeeds of the Soviet team. They conclude that at the level of political event, this series worked to produce a sense of Canadian national identity that was linked to hockey while doing very little to positively engage with the Soviet Union.

Given the profound and persistent impact of the former Soviet Union on life in North America during the Cold War, there is a surprising lack of scholarly work on Canadian understandings of Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union. As David Foglesong and Gordon Hahn (2002) state, it is a myth to believe that Russia is “no longer an important international player” (p. 11). From 2001 until 2014, Russia appears to have moved from a place of central importance in the West’s identity to a place of little importance, particularly after the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. Hammond (2005) contends that the “vilification” (p. 136) of the Balkans became a proxy for the Cold War between the dismantling of the Soviet Union and 9/11, with Al-Qaida specifically and some Islamic countries in general, standing in as ‘other’ in the post 9/11 context. Specifically, “(I)t may be that with the rise of the ‘Axis of Evil’ this usage of the Balkans is no longer required, that the oppositional vacuum created by the end of the Cold War has been filled with a more effective antitype” (p. 150).
In spite of this, work by Iri Cermak (1996) shows that Cold War stereotypes in Canada and the US did not actually disappear after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Cermak (1996), whose dissertation examined the various ways the media commented on Soviet and Russian hockey at the Olympic Games in 1980, 1992, and 1994, demonstrates that after the end of the Cold War, Russian athletes were still conceptualized by sports reporters using the ideological language and stereotypes of that era. Although there have been some changes in the ways the North American media constructs Soviets and Russians, they still had a propensity to conceptualize the team as the “Big Red Machine” (p. 174) and to describe their playing style as sneaky, ‘dirty,’ and devious.

In this next section, I will describe the methods and sources I used to conduct this examination of shifting Cold War representations of Soviet/Russian hockey players in the Canadian press.

**Method and Sources:**

This research began in another project involving an investigation of representations of Canadian hockey superstar Sidney Crosby during a 2009 NHL playoff series between Ovechkin’s Washington Capitals and Crosby’s Pittsburgh Penguins. The series generated an abundance of images around the myth of Canadian national identity. At that time, I noticed that these images were often posited against a Russian ‘other’, wherein Canadian national identity was not only located through the qualities thought to be embodied by Crosby but also through their dissimilarity from characteristics associated with Ovechkin. In this study, I
expand on my previous work by examining representations of Ovechkin directly in order to assess whether my earlier findings hold true when analyzed over a longer period of time.

As this work focuses on representations of Ovechkin and their relationship to Canadian national identity, I examined Canadian national newspapers, specifically the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*.\(^{12}\) I selected these papers for their national scope and broad readership, and because there is a popular perception that they differ in political orientation.\(^{13}\) The *National Post* has a national daily readership of approximately 420,000, while the *Globe and Mail*, Canada’s most widely read national publication, has a daily readership of approximately one million. For this part of the study, I searched Proquest’s Canadian Daily Newspapers database for the word “Ovechkin” in both newspapers from January 1, 2009 until December 31, 2012. In the *Globe and Mail*, this resulted in 132 discrete articles (51 articles in 2009, 47 in 2010, 10 in 2011, and 24 in 2012) and in the *National Post* this resulted in 202 discrete articles (108 articles in 2009, 46 in 2010, 24 in 2011, and 24 in 2012).

All articles containing the word “Ovechkin” were loaded verbatim into the qualitative data analysis software program *Nvivo 10*. To analyze this data, I used qualitative content analysis, wherein I used an inductive approach to look for recurrent ideas, themes, words and images in the articles I gathered (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). When I found what I determined to be a persistent theme I marked these themes into coding groups. Or specifically, I first read and coded the articles,
searching for general themes, then repeated this process in order to ensure consistency in the selected themes. Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon (2005) refer to this technique as “conventional content analysis”. Using this approach, I found the following themes: 1) Ovechkin’s relationship to Sidney Crosby; 2) his status as a star hockey player; 3) physical play; 4) dirty play; 5) disappointing play; 6) exuberant play; and 7) numerous mentions of Ovechkin’s character, where he is described as a showman, wild and out-of-control.

In order to comprehend the relationship between these representations of Ovechkin and previous understandings of Soviet athletes, I conducted a supplemental content analysis, examining the ways the Canadian press reported on two prominent Cold War hockey contests: the 1972 Summit Series and the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championship. For the 1972 Summit Series, I examined reports in the Globe and Mail leading up to, and for the duration of, the competition in Canada. To locate these articles, I searched Proquest's Historical Newspapers: Globe and Mail database. Using the search terms “hockey” and “Soviet” or “Russia” from August 29th until September 29th, 1972, I found 244 articles. In order to make this data more manageable, I then restricted my search to the beginning part of the tournament when the matches were played in Canada, searching for articles from August 29th until September 11th, 1972. This resulted in 127 discrete articles (after reviewing these articles for relevancy, 46 were included in this analysis). When examining the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championships, I studied coverage of the event in Canadian newspapers across the country. For this data set, I searched Proquest’s Canadian Newsstand for the word “Piestany” between December 26 and
January 31, 1987, finding 67 articles (all of these articles were included in my analysis). Like the first set of data, the data on the 1972 Summit Series and the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championships were loaded verbatim into *Nvivo 10*. The data was coded into two general research themes – representations of Soviet identity and representations of Canadian identity.

In the following sections, I will begin to unpack this data, examining the various ways the Canadian media represent Cold War hockey contests and Alex Ovechkin. Through these examinations, I will demonstrate how the media both still circulates Cold War language and ideology in their representations of Ovechkin and also how it breaks with this language and ideology. I will argue that despite diverse, albeit patterned, representations of Ovechkin in the Canadian press, these representations still work to secure a specific understanding of what it means to be Canadian.

**Soviet-Canadian Hockey Competitions:**

Russians/Soviets have played hockey since the 1930s, and Russian bandy, a game similar to hockey played on ice with a ball and stick, pre-dates North American ice-hockey (Klein, 2010, January 29). The Soviet Union’s first hockey players were drawn from bandy, and given the similarities between the two sports, in a short period of time they became able to successfully compete in international hockey tournaments (Edelman, 1993). By the 1940s Soviet citizens began to show a real interest in the Canadian game (Edelman, 1993). However, Soviet officials stressed that their version of the game was uniquely their own:
Hockey in our country develops by its own path and has nothing in common with foreign versions of the game. There, players follow the worst example of Canadian professional hockey, try always to fight, and replace technique with crude physical force. (Savin, quoted in Edelman, 1993, p. 116)

With their own way of playing the Canadian game, the USSR became a hockey powerhouse, winning the gold medal in their first Olympic appearance in 1956, an episode “viewed [in Canada] as a national disaster” (Edelman, 1993, p. 139). As Cantelon (2006) notes, the Soviets continued to excel in international ice hockey competition, often winning at the expense of the Canadians.

By the 1970s, Canada, angered over rules limiting the ability of professional players to play internationally, withdrew from international hockey competition (Cantelon, 2006). It is within this context that hockey officials from Canada and the Soviet Union organized the 1972 Canada-Russia Hockey Series (or Summit Series). According to Donald Macintosh and Donna Greenhorn (1993), in the 1970s the Canadian government hoped to use sport as a tool of foreign policy, developing an International Sports Relations Desk in 1972. The government created this post to promote Canadian social values abroad and to increase diplomatic contact with both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth nations. In 1972, a time Macintosh and Greenhorn (1993) argue was “ripe” for discussions about Canada’s return to international hockey, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau held a series of meetings with Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin. Both leaders agreed that hockey represented a unique bond between the two nations and could be used as a tool of
goodwill and diplomacy. Officials arranged for an eight-day tournament, played in both Russia and Canada. For the first time, Canada was able to send its best professional hockey players to compete against the best Soviet players.

In Canada, the national press and the public generally expressed unrestrained enthusiasm and confidence in the weeks leading up to the tournament. They believed that this tournament would demonstrate Canada’s hockey supremacy, with “Team Canada” easily dominating the Soviet squad. Globe and Mail journalist Dick Beddoes (1972, August 29) proclaimed, “So make it Canada 8 games to 0. If the Russians win one game, I will eat this column…” (p. 34). Canada won the tournament (by one goal in the final game), ‘vindicating’ Canada’s position within the world of hockey. However, the contest generated fear and hostility between the participants, in the media, and within the Canadian public. During the tournament there were times when the Soviet military clashed with Canadian hockey officials. Canadian players made death threats against members of the Soviet team. A heightened sense of paranoia led to the Canadian team accusing the Soviets of eavesdropping and bugging their hotel rooms (Macskimming, 1996; Esposito & Goldenbock, 2003). This suspicion, that the unscrupulous Soviet team was cheating and spying on the morally upstanding Canadians, perpetuated Cold War ideologies and Canadian national mythologies.

Russell Field (2012) argues that the press coverage of the ‘72 Summit Series produced a series of binaries such as “good versus bad, right versus wrong, justice versus injustice, West versus East, us versus them” (p. 41). The media’s construction
of these binaries attempted to create a unified sense of Canadian national identity (or a pan-Canadian identity) that erased various identity differences within the nation more generally. For example, players on Team Canada represented various Canadian identities – such as immigrant identities and Anglo- or Francophone identities. However, the label “Team Canada” was used to identify all of the Canadian players. Field asserts that identity differences were downplayed in order to maintain a unified sense of national identity and construct the nation in contrast to the Soviets.

These themes repeated during the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championship in Piestany, Czechoslovakia, commonly known as the “punch-up in Piestany.” The so-called punch-up makes reference to a bench-clearing brawl that took place between the Canadian and Soviet teams during their final game of the tournament (Davidson, 1987, February 11), making front-page news in Canada for over a month. Fighting in international hockey is rare and discouraged\(^\text{15}\) and a bench-clearing brawl is highly unusual (Halberstadt, 1987, January 5). In the coverage that followed, the Canadian press focused on assigning blame for the incident, with several news stories debating whether responsibility lay with the Canadian coach, the Soviet players, or the inexperienced Norwegian referee (\textit{Toronto Star}, 1987, January 5; Ovenden, 1987, January 16; Robertson, 1987, January 5). In examining the media’s response to the incident, Nancy Theberge (1989) states that, in general, there was strong support for the Canadian team. She quotes Alan Eagleson, once an important figure in professional (NHL) and international hockey and a popular
player agent;\textsuperscript{16} he claimed, "the players and coaches ‘did what any red-blooded Canadian would have done’” (p. 249).

These reports present a particular style of Canadian masculinity as it pertains to ice hockey. As Theberge (1989) argues, Eagleson’s “red blooded Canadian” was almost certainly a man who is willing to “battle” with a foreign hockey team. Eagleson and others constructed the Soviet team as a team of ‘dirty’ players that used their position in the tournament to knock the Canadian team out of medal contention.\textsuperscript{17} The Canadian press frequently characterized the Soviets as sneaky and unscrupulous cheaters; MacLeod (1987) stated, "Oh, the Soviets indulge in subtle forms of combat – kicking, impaling with the stick-ski [sic], or spitting – but they execute all this in a refined way and only the victim was aware of what had happened" (January 7, p. C2). The media focused on the Soviet team’s record as the most penalized team in the tournament, ignoring the fact that many of their penalties were for bench minors,\textsuperscript{18} a penalty not generally associated with ‘dirty’ play (Toronto Star, 1987, January 5; Globe and Mail, 1987, January 5), and overlooking the Canadian team’s brawl with the American team earlier in the competition (Globe and Mail, 1987, January 2). Like the Summit Series, the newspaper reports exclaimed, “...[Canadian-Soviet] Politics led to brawl” (Globe and Mail, 1987, January 7, p. D2) and described the contest as a “war” (Windsor Star, 1987, January 5, p. A1).

The 1972 Summit Series and the 1987 World Junior Championship exemplify the ways many in the Canadian press understood Canada-Soviet contests and
players during the Cold War. These presentations are not entirely absent from the media’s depiction of hockey superstar Alexander Ovechkin. In this next section, I examine the ways Ovechkin has been characterized in the Canadian press. Keeping in mind the representations discussed above, I demonstrate that depictions of Ovechkin are contradictory, representing both a re-articulation of Cold War stereotypes and a new way of understanding Russia and Russian hockey players.

While drawing on Said’s (1979) concept of Orientalism, I argue that representations of Ovechkin need to be conceptualized within the framework of Canadian national identity construction, considering specifically how that process is produced through difference and how it is linked to notions of appropriate masculine expression.

**Alexander Ovechkin and the New Cold War:**

According to Edward Said (1979), the West constructs the East (in this case Russia) by “inventing” it as its inverse, while at the same time constructing an identity for itself that is dependent on the ‘other’. Said (1979) claims that this is a self-interested practice, and this act of Orientalizing has more to do with those who construct than those who are constructed.

Pietz (1988), whose work draws on Said’s, states that during the Cold War, the West used the idea of Russia as a totalitarian state in order to construct it as uncivilized and barbarous. Using the work of several notable analysts of Russian-style communism, including George Kennan, George Orwell, Arthur Koestler and Hannah Arendt, he claims that the depiction of Russian totalitarianism was composed of “nothing other than traditional Oriental despotism plus modern police
technology” (p. 58). This argument can be extended beyond the Cold War. Paul (2001) explains that the construction of Russia as uncivilized circulated in the West for almost 500 years. As Cermak (1996) notes and Paul (2001) confirms, stereotypes about Russia that were situated in Cold War understandings did not entirely dissipate after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. I argue that a large percentage of present-day Canadian hockey commentators (as well as some members of the media more broadly) construct Russia as lawless, dangerous and out-of-control, not unlike their construction of Ovechkin.

When examining the ways the Canadian press represents Ovechkin, it is first important to note that his status as a Russian is an important factor in his coverage. In fact, reporters mention Ovechkin’s nationality constantly, with approximately 26.5% of the articles from the *Globe and Mail* and 17% of the articles from the *National Post* referencing his ‘Russianness’ outside of discussions where knowing his national identity provides context for the article (such as articles about the Olympics, World Hockey Championships and other international play). Ovechkin’s nationality is often placed as a synonym for his name, when reporters comment on his play in the NHL. For example, a headline in the *National Post* states, “It’s impossible not to watch Russian superstar” (Arthur, 2009, March 25; also see Grange, 2009, January 10). Discourse about Ovechkin’s status as a *Russian* hockey player serves to construct him as a traditional hockey ‘other’. While discussing the 2008-2009 NHL Hart Trophy finalists, a list which included Canadian Sidney Crosby and Ovechkin, the *Globe and Mail* (2009, May 12) comments,
Canada needs Russia. It does not matter how good the Czechs or Finns or Swedes or Americans are... Russian skill and speed induce in Canada's teams that special pitch of adrenalin, that defending-our-game-and-our-way-of-life intensity, that it's-1972-all-over-again feeling. It is Russia, and only Russia, that brings out the best in Canadian hockey. (p. A16)

Using the Summit Series as a point of reference, MacGregor (2009, May 6) describes the changes in Russian players, particularly Ovechkin:

It is hard to believe that a generation ago Russian players – then known as Soviet Union players – were routinely dismissed as "robots." It was a knock that began in the 1972 Summit Series and lasted through to Glasnost... It was said then that what would always separate Canadian hockey players from Russian players was "heart."... But then everything changed. (p. S1)

These quotations demonstrate how writers frequently place Ovechkin in conversation with the past, using his image to both articulate continuity with the past (e.g., Ovechkin as a player whose status as Russian reminds Canadians that we have a historic rivalry both in sport and politics with the former Soviet Union), and to suggest that the type of player coming from Russia has changed in some fundamental ways.

One important change in the way the press represents Russian hockey players in general, and Ovechkin in particular, is that today there is a more overtly celebratory feel. Reporters from the Globe and Mail and the National Post consistently describe Ovechkin as a "star", focusing on his remarkable achievements in the NHL, sometimes constructing him as an NHL savior.19 MacGregor (2009, May
explains, “Ovechkin is not only good for the game, he is becoming the game, just as only Gretzky has done previously” (p. S1). Reporters celebrate Ovechkin for his passionate play, marked by unorthodox goal celebrations, showmanship, an eagerness to be on the ice and a love of hitting or playing the body – characteristics rarely associated with Russian hockey players in the past (for example see Gordon, 2010, April 16; Richer, 2010 February 12; MacGregor, 2009, May 6).

Despite this coverage, the press frequently describes Ovechkin as a figure that cannot live up to expectations. Following the 2008-2009 season, where he was a dominant force in the league, reporters often presented Ovechkin as a struggling player whose “magic wither[ed] away” (MacGregor, 2012, February 25, p. S2), constructing him as a selfish superstar and coach killer. An article by David Shoalts (2011, November 29) titled, “Coaches pay price when players quit”, calls Ovechkin and some of his teammates “lollygaggers” (p. S3). Speaking of an early playoff exit in 2010, Wayne Scanlan (2010, April 30) comments that “Some will call him selfish for trying to do so much on his own” (p. S5; also see Arthur, 2011, December 1).

The media oftentimes links what they see as Ovechkin’s inconsistent and disappointing play to his status as a Russian hockey player. MacGregor (2010, March 5) jokes about Ovechkin ‘not showing up’ to the 2010 Olympic Games, and goes on to explain that although there was considerable talent on the Russian team, the problem was a lack of “chemistry”; “Ovechkin...was supposed to provide the Russian team with the first driven leader... since Pavel Bure...” [emphasis added] (p. S2). MacGregor’s language re-asserts a popular understanding of Russian hockey
players as lacking passion and heart, especially when it matters. More than one article uses Winston Churchill’s comments about Russia, where, during a 1939 BBC broadcast, he referred to Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” to contextualize Ovechkin and the seeming problem with the Capitals’ (Russian) hockey players and their uneven play. Arthur (2011, December 1) calls Ovechkin “The Great Enigma” (p. B7), a sentiment MacGregor echoes (2012, February 25).

Although the Canadian media tends to present Ovechkin’s play on the ice using Cold War discourse, they also often characterize him as a break from these players. Commentators and journalists cite Ovechkin’s propensity for rough physical play as one of the reasons for this break. In the words of hockey star Sergei Fedorov, “It’s definitely not a Russian style” (Grange, 2009, January 10, p. S1). Canadian reporters frequently state that Ovechkin’s spirit and ability to hit demonstrates that Russian players have broken from the stereotype that sees them as cowardly and unwilling to play the body (Cermak, 1996). However, the interpretation of Ovechkin’s style of hitting plays on an understanding of him as undisciplined and unscrupulous (Proteau, 2009, October 26). The media appears to celebrate Ovechkin’s unrelenting physical play and lack of fear, but they often frame it as ‘dirty’, focusing on his suspensions for illegal hits and depicting him as a ruthless player, prone to dangerous play. Joe O’Connor (2009, December 12) calls Ovechkin “the dirtiest marquee player the NHL has seen since Gordie Howe – and his sharp elbows – left the scene” (p. S1).

Although there is no doubt that Ovechkin sometimes transgresses NHL rules (both explicit and implicit) regarding appropriate conduct, unlike similar
suspensions of Canadian players, reporters tend to link these actions to Ovechkin’s character and status as a Russian player. For example, during the 2009 Pittsburgh-Washington second round playoff series, Ovechkin, while attempting a body check, clipped a Pittsburgh player (Sergei Gonchar) with his knee, knocking him out of competition. Although both players stated that the hit was accidental, and the league did not administer supplemental discipline, hockey commentators debated Ovechkin’s conduct. They considered this especially egregious as it showed a lack of loyalty to a fellow countryman and friend. One player commented, “Everyone likes to play hard, and play physical…but there’s a limit you can’t cross” (Orpik quoted in Arthur 2009, May 9, p. S1). These comments link with Pietz’s (1988) findings that various Western analysts of Soviet style communism portray Russians as using a “façade of civility for its own barbaric ends” (p. 59).

While the Canadian press frames Ovechkin as an undisciplined superstar, they also regularly contrast him with Canadian icon Sidney Crosby. Comparisons between the two players generated the most entries of any theme over the period of my research analysis. The press frames Crosby and Ovechkin as rivals, regularly comparing their relationship to other great sporting adversaries (MacGregor, 2009, May 14, p. S1). Images of the two have become shorthand for the national identity of each. Where the press often represents Crosby as well-mannered and disciplined, they depict Ovechkin as wild and chaotic. MacGregor (2009, May 13) states, “They are a magnificent study in contrast, the stuff of legend, novels, movies: One Canadian shy, one Russian outgoing” (p. S1). Although reporters tend to present Crosby as a model of Canadian national identity, particularly as it pertains to civility, grace and
good conduct (i.e., Crosby is often presented as a respectful, if not boring character, who is a positive role model for children) (Allain, 2010), they present Ovechkin as an unruly and undisciplined Russian. Commenting on an HBO TV special\(^{21}\) covering the Washington Capitals and Pittsburgh Penguins, Ovechkin and Crosby’s respective teams, Bruce Dowbiggin (2010, October 16) states:

Canada’s hockey version of the Timbit - Sidney Crosby - is going to be at the heart of the Pittsburgh story line. Understand: Sidney Crosby makes Bing Crosby look like a meth freak. The essence of Canadian hockey stardom, he squeaks like a toy just unwrapped from the package... Crosby's nemesis, Russian Alex Ovechkin...is the guy you bring home to snuff your Grandma...
With his Rasputin-like leer and scraggly beard, he's...a raging ball of demonic menace. (p. F4)

Another example of this sort of colourful coverage comes from a CTV television special on the two players (MacAskill, 2010, February 6). The narrator describes Crosby as a polite young man who has not been changed by “money and fame”. Conversely, the documentary depicts Ovechkin in his hometown of Moscow, partying in a limousine filled with attractive young women. Throughout the documentary, loud music and fanfare accompany clips of Ovechkin. The documentary portrays him as a wild child who “embodies that deep spirit of Russian hockey” (MacAskill, 2010, February 6) both on and off the ice.

**Conclusion: “Deep Spirit of Russian Hockey”**?

What is the “deep spirit of Russian hockey” (MacAskill, 2010, February 6)?

The “deep spirit of Russian hockey” is an amorphous specter of Canadian
nationalism forwarded liberally by national sports reporters, and used to describe an appropriate sense of what it means to be a Canadian hockey player and citizen. As described above, since the Cold War, representations of Soviet hockey players have drawn on an understanding of these athletes as lacking in appropriate masculine character or as cheaters with no sense of loyalty or respect. These representations work to locate Canadian national identity through contrast. This is evident in the words of Canadian players from the Cold War era. For example, 1972 Summit Series team Canada forward Phil Esposito states, “It was war” (Esposito & Golenbock, 2003, p. 137). He continues, “It wasn’t just two teams. It was two ways of life battling to prove which was superior” (Esposito & Golenbock, 2003, p. 137). While Cold War sports reporter Dick Beddoes (1972, September 1) focused on the way the Soviet team looked, claiming, “Russian hockey team has aggregate sameness, including red helmets” (p. 36). Beddoes’s comments link the look of the team to the communist system that seemingly produced it.

As Russian players have become increasingly popular with fans, this Cold War understanding has changed. The Canadian press, as well as the public, now widely understands Russian players as being diverse in terms of personality and style. Players like Ovechkin are capable of becoming fan favourites, media darlings and even NHL ambassadors. In spite of this, I have demonstrated that the Canadian press still routinely portrays Russian players as lacking passion and heart, unable to play consistently and come up big when it matters. Furthermore, representations of Ovechkin in the Canadian press still sometimes draw on Cold War depictions presenting him as a devious player who willingly and ruthlessly injures opponents.
Importantly, recognizing the ways that national identities are produced within popular media speaks to the significance of opposition in this form of identity construction. It is through contrast and contradiction that many Canadian reporters begin to locate, and construct, a sense of Canadian national identity. In this regard, as Beddoes (1972, September 1) complains about the similarities in the looks of the Soviet players, he also speaks about the “personality...obvious when a player goes bareheaded” (p. 36). As many Canadian reporters present Soviet players in Piestany as cheaters, Canadian players are reproduced as morally upstanding. Today, the Canadian press’s oftentimes contradictory presentation of Russia players draws on new ways of understanding Russia’s place in the Canadian imagination. Where many in the Canadian media once understood Soviet-style communism as stifling individuality, today they conceptualize Russia as a place that is willful and unruly. It is through this depiction that Canadian players (as well as the Canadian nation more generally) become constructed in the press as responsible and benevolent. These representations allow Canadians to cast admonishment on those who are not understood in the same way. In this regard, I argue that a large percentage of Canadian reporters utilize the images of players like Alexander Ovechkin and Sidney Crosby to mark these differences and celebrate a particular way of understanding Canada, as well as a particular way of conveying both appropriate and inappropriate expressions of masculinity.

These ideas not only circulate within the world of hockey but within politics as well; the Canadian media’s depictions of Putin’s Russia works to further cement this idea. For example, after Putin invaded Ukraine in 2014, then Canadian Foreign
Affairs Minister John Baird called the act “absolutely reckless” and “shamelessly dishonest” (Wingrove, 2014, August 28). This research demonstrates that the goal of these depictions of both the Soviet Union and of Russia are the same: to produce, in the words of Said (1979), “…a flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (p. 7). Throughout the 20th and 21st century, regardless of the particular representations the media (see Beddoes, 1972, September 1), fans of the game (Spencer, 1987, January 10) and Canadian hockey players (Esposito & Goldenbock, 2003) produce Canada in ways that maintain its position as a contrast to representations of the Soviet Union/Russia, i.e., as a nation of good moral conduct. It is impossible to know for sure how the press and the public will re-imagine Russia in light of the increasing tensions between the West and Putin’s Russia. We may see a shift towards and proliferation of Cold War discourse, with less flexibility in the ways Russian players (and other Russians) are represented in the Canadian press. Given this history, it is likely that the Canadian media will continue to “Orientalize” Russia, securing a favourable representation for the Canadian nation.

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1 (McGrath, 2010)
2 For example, in men’s Olympic tournaments between 1956 and 1988, the Soviet Union won gold seven times with one silver and one bronze medal.
3 A 1976 Philadelphia Flyers-Red Army Game saw Soviet officials try to put a stop to the game after a Flyer brutally body checked a prominent Soviet player. In the 1987 World Junior Hockey Championship, referees stopped play and disqualified both teams after a bench-clearing brawl.
4 1972 references the Canada-Russia Summit Series, the first time the best players from both nations competed against one another.
According to Quanthockey.com during the 1988-1989 hockey season only one Russian born player competed in the NHL. However, by the 1994-1995 season there were 59. The number of Russian born players appears to peak during the 2000-2001 season with 72 players competing.

The 1987 World Junior Championship is notable for a bench clearing brawl between the Soviet and Canadian teams.

Players such as Pavel Bure and Sergei Fedorov also captured the attention of the media, fans and sponsors. Although it is impossible to quantify which player holds the most significant place in the North American imagination, Ovechkin's timing into the league (i.e., the year after the NHL lockout) and his so-called rivalry with Sidney Crosby have contributed greatly to his understanding as one of the most interesting hockey players to play in the NHL.

Although the subject of this research is representations of Ovechkin in the Canadian press, these magazines are widely circulated in Canada.

Ovechkin won the Hart Memorial Trophy for the league's most valuable player in 2008, 2009 and 2013. He was awarded the league’s most outstanding player award (the Lester B. Pearson/Ted Lindsay Award) in 2008, 2009 and 2010. He won the Maurice "Rocket" Richard Trophy for most goals in 2008, 2009 and 2013.

The marketing firm IMG represents Ovechkin.

For an interesting discussion of the ways that Canadian hockey identity are taken up and resisted see Gruneau and Whitson (1993) and Robidoux (2012).

Both the National Post and the Globe and Mail are English language newspapers. As I do not speak French, my ability to access the French language press was limited. As a result, this work can only speak to representations of Ovechkin in the Canadian English-language press.

The National Post is widely considered a conservative newspaper, while the Globe and Mail is generally regarded as more centrist.

The 1972 Summit Series ran from September 2nd, 1972 until September 28th. I initially decided to look at newspaper articles from August 29th until September 29th, 1972 in order to analyze some of the media reports that provided context for the tournament both before it began and after it was completed.

Penalties for fighting in international hockey are more severe than in Canadian junior and North American professional men's hockey.

In the 1990s, Eagleson was convicted of various offenses in Canada and the United States related to the theft and embezzlement of players' money.

The Soviet team was out of medal contention when they played the Canadian team. At this point the Canadian team was guaranteed a bronze medal and was in contention for a gold medal if they beat the Soviets by five or more goals.

Bench minor penalties are usually assessed for coaching errors, including too many players on the ice, improper submission of lineup sheets, or directing abusive language at an official.

In this regard, Canadian superstar Sidney Crosby is also represented as a savior of the game.
“Coach killer” is a term used for players whose poor performance leads to the termination of the coach.

HBO aired a four-episode series called “NHL 24/7 Penguins/Capitals: Road to the Winter Classic” in December 2010 and January 2011.
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