Hockey dads, party boys and devoted players? Digital representations of men and masculinities amongst Norwegian and Swedish ice hockey players

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**Objective and aim:**

Men’s elite ice hockey is one of the most commercialised, popular and patriarchal sports in the global north. Research on North-American hockey has demonstrated that men’s elite ice hockey promotes and preserves certain masculinities as a norm, while other men/masculinities and women/femininities are marginalised. Yet, little is known about this in a Scandinavian context. With an overall aim to broaden the empirical scope of gender studies in ice hockey, the present study examines the online portrayals of professional male ice hockey players from two clubs in Norway and Sweden, in order to explore how expressions of masculinity varies by context. Specifically, we investigate the following research questions: (1) Which traits of masculinity do professional male ice hockey players in Norway and Sweden portray in their Instagram posts? and (2) How do the Instagram posts of Norwegian and Swedish ice hockey players differ?

**Methods:**

A quantitative content analysis of Instagram posts of 21 players from Frölunda HC and Vålerenga Hockey was conducted in order to compare the online representations of the players displayed masculinities. In total, 1580 Instagram posts were analysed.

**Findings and discussion:**

Our results demonstrate that the representations of masculinity on Instagram reflect the hegemonic masculinity traits found in previous research, but that these traits also should be regarded as complex and multifaceted. Although players demonstrate competitive and caring traits, none of the examples in our data really challenge whiteness and heteronormativity (i.e. key ingredients in hegemonic masculinity). In this way, our study shows that masculinities can be portrayed in different ways in different (national) contexts, but that the hegemonic force that contributes to the maintaining of men and masculinities as dominant, permeates both arenas.

**Implications:**

The results demonstrate the importance of a situational and contextual understanding of hegemonic masculinity and broaden the scope of the ‘ice hockey playing man’ that is often perceived as a narrow stereotype.