

Regret vs Rape: A Thematic Analysis of Online Discourse Following the *R. v. McLeod et al. (2025)* Verdict

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Background & Research Question

- **Rape Culture** (Franiuk, Seefeldt, & Vandello, 2008)
- **Masculinity and Sport** (Keener, Reichert, Khalaifa, Henry, & Wilsoncroft, 2025)
- **Media influence public perceptions of legal outcomes, including high-profile cases of sexual violence in sport** (Siefkes-Andrew & Alexopoulos, 2019)

Research Question:

In what ways do Reddit users draw on broader cultural narratives about rape myth and masculinity in response to the 2025 Hockey Canada verdict?



CBC

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RECAP · HOCKEY CANADA TRIAL

All 5 former Hockey Canada players found not guilty of sexual assault

Updated July 24, 2025 · 2:47 PM PDT

E.M. calls ruling 'devastating,' defence lawyers say Crown never should've brought the case to trial

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
1. “These dudes come up in hockey culture that says they’re entitled to women’s bodies”	
2. “You clearly don’t understand the importance of team bonding”	
3. “Regret is not rape”	3.1 “She asked for it” 3.2 “She Lied” 3.3 “She wanted the train but not the shame”
4. “What did they do that was bad? Have a gangbang?”	
5. “The only person guilty of a sexual crime was EM herself”	
6. “This is an entrenched hockey culture thing that almost no one is interested in confronting”	

Methods

- **Reddit**

- Captures public reaction to cases as news breaks, allows for real time analysis of public commentary and sense-making (Siefkes-Andrew & Alexopoulos, 2019)

- **Sample**

- Two subreddits (*r/Canada* and *r/hockey*) that posted the *CBC News* article
- 2,216 comments posted on July 24, 2025 (the day the trial verdict was released)

- **Thematic Analysis**

- Allows for a deep understanding of what people are thinking and feeling in real-world contexts (Braun & Clark, 2021)

Key Themes

**“Regret is not
rape”**

- *Impossible-Car-5203* (+200)

**“What did they do
that was bad?
Have a gangbang?”**

- *No_Calligrapher6912* (+4)

**“These dudes come
up in hockey
culture that says
they’re entitled to
women’s bodies”**

- *renomegan86* (-6)

Key Takeaways

1. Many comments posted to *r/Canada* and *r/hockey* suggest acceptance of rape culture, highlighting the influence of gendered socialization on public sense-making (Priya & Prima, 2020).

2. Many comments posted to *r/Canada* and *r/hockey* prioritize moral judgement over legal fact, downplaying the behaviour of the accused while judging the complainant's character and choices.

3. Some comments posted to *r/Canada* and *r/hockey* suggest there is a need for player education to challenge problematic narratives within hockey culture (e.g., toxic masculinity and the objectification of women) (Weinstein, Smith, & Wiesenthal, 1995; Hust, Kang, Couto, Li, & Rodgers, 2023).