

By Rodrigo Paradela Guerrero.

## Interview with Laurene Mercier



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*Laurenne Mercier graduated the Honours Program in Sociology from StFX in 2016; she won the Canadian Sociological Association Award for her honours thesis “Look Out For Him, He’s a Hockey Player”. She went on to get a postgraduate degree in Sports Business Management from Durham College. Since then, Laurenne has worked with the Nashville Predators, the Edmonton Oilers, and most recently, founded Treadstone Sports Agency, a sports marketing agency that works with elite athletes in Canada and the US. We had the opportunity to interview her to learn how the experience of studying sociology at StFX has shaped her career.*

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### **What does your job as the CEO of Treadstone look like on a day-to-day basis?**

I market the individual athlete and help them build a brand outside the team that they play for. My tag line with Treadstone is “build lasting legacies”. The projects we work on are important to the players and emphasize who they are as people, as opposed to just them in their sport. My day to day is always changing. I spend a lot of my days on the phone or in meetings. It’s exciting because each project that I work on is so unique. Each player that I work with has different passions, interests, and desires for building their brand, so I feel like I am constantly learning and adapting. There are a lot of days that I spend simply trying to figure out what to do and the roadmap on a new project. The best part of that is that I meet so many people all the time, whether it’s new brands, new athletes, athlete agents, charities, you name it. This is also my favorite part of my job: getting to know people. I feel like I have a unique relationship with all my athletes. They all have something different to offer and it is so amazing to be a part of their visions coming to life.

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### **Looking back on your time at StFX and as a sociology student, what skills and lessons did you pick up that have helped you move forward in your career? Which ones do you still use at Treadstone?**

One of the biggest things that I learned in my undergrad and into my postgrad has been the importance of networking. You never know what someone can teach you and what interactions will have a massive impact on your career. It oftentimes isn’t until later that you realize how impactful a certain interaction or person can be. While I always

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emphasize the importance of networking, even more so I emphasize the importance of being genuine with that networking. The skills I have developed in relationship-building are skills that I use every day in my work.

I loved my time at St.FX. I think I really grew as an individual, academically and personally. Being from Alberta, I was far enough from home that I could only go home during the holidays. This really taught me independence, as well as leaning on friendships and relationships. I loved the community feel of both X, as well as Antigonish. I loved how interactive and personal everything was, from the small class sizes, profs' office hours, having a "meal hall" or "library" crush" and everything else in between. Some of my closest friends to this day are people that I met at X. It's a small campus, it's a small town, and just the way people interacted as students at X: it was almost like a sociological experiment in itself. Even the way the town rallied around the school was something super awesome and unique about X.

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### **Tell me about what happens after you get your X-Ring. What has a person with a StFX Sociology Degree got to do to get to where you are right now?**

After my X-Ring, I went on to get my postgrad in Sport Business Management. My motivation here was to gain an internship in Nashville. I have always been obsessed with Nashville, but in addition, I continued to hear that an internship was the best way to get your foot in the door in sports. That initial break can often be the hardest step. Up until my internship, I continued to hear that people's success came through "who you know" and "a bit of luck". I

can attest to both of those things now, but I also believe that it requires determination and hard work. My internship in Nashville was the catalyst for my career. Not only did it help me earn a spot in the sports industry, but it also uncovered my passion for aligning my sports career with philanthropy and giving back to the community.

*"That's the cool thing about Sociology: at the heart of it, it is about human relationships, but this can take SO many forms."*

For me, I took a path in sports, but also a path in sports & their connection to philanthropy. There's such an array of options within the field. I think as a student progressing through their schooling, it is about diving into what you're passionate about and then from there learning about skills that can pave the way to creating a life or a job around it.

I believe that one of my strongest skill sets is my relationship building and people skills. I've always grown up being a people person, and likely an extrovert. This likely is part of what drew me to sociology as a major. I've always been someone that has been fascinated by relationships and the way that people interact with the world. A lot of these issues, even coming up in hockey now, really have to do with sociological perspectives. This also is something that was solidified through gaining a better understanding of the sociological landscape, particularly as it pertained to sports. My job (and my last two within the NHL) are VERY people based. I am always working with a wide range of personalities and navigating various nuances.

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**Your thesis is an exploration of the stereotype behind elite male hockey players in Canada, particularly as it pertains to nationalism, masculinity and violence. In Treadstone, you help athletes (mostly men in the NHL) build a brand around social causes they care about. Do you think that working on your honours thesis shaped in any way the work you do at Treadstone?**

Yes and no. I'm so glad I took the honours route; I didn't originally plan to. I think that my thesis was what sparked my desire to work in sports. I was doing a lot of research on hockey during the writing of my thesis, and it solidified my love for the game. I grew up watching & playing hockey, so diving into the actual literature of it, as well as a different angle around it, really piqued my interest. It also opened up an avenue that I hadn't really ever seen before. I always watched hockey, but I didn't really ever dive into the actual working behind the teams scene until I started to research a career in sports.

*“I also think aspects of my research gave me a stronger understanding of various current events and social movements in the world.”*

I do however think that my work is a much more positive spin on my thesis. Where my work and thesis might align is in acknowledging the platform that hockey players have, particularly in Canada. My work now is about leveraging that platform and their voices for good. My thesis, on the other hand, was how this platform created a negative stereotype, or built up a violence in masculinity.

**If you came back to StFX, which of the sociology courses that are currently offered, which ones would you take?**

The classes that I would take for interest's sake, would be Deviance Theory, Social Movements, and Disability and Culture. I don't know that those necessarily relate to my job or my career, but I think that they sound very interesting.

The classes I would take based on my work would be Men and Masculinities, Mental Health and Society, and Hockey and Canadian Culture. I know I sort of already took the hockey one, but I'm interested to see how it has been shaped since starting it back when I was there. I'm apparently in the presentation of the course, which I thought was very flattering.

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**Can you give current and prospective StFX sociology students a word of advice to make the most out of their experience here?**

My biggest piece of advice for young professionals is to network; but, more importantly, to network genuinely. Get to know everyone around you, hear their stories. You never know the impact you might have on others, as well as how others can impact you. Both professionally and personally, those around you have so much to offer: whether it is advice, a network, a job opportunity, or just a moment that will stand out to you post-graduation.

Soak it all up and really enjoy the present. As cliché as it might sound, the time passes so quickly and once you get launched into your professional career, you'll miss what it was like to be a student in the great little town of Antigonish and all that came with it.