

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE:
EXPERIENCES OF ELITE FEMALE ICE HOCKEY PLAYERS

by
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A Thesis
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for the Degree of

Master of Science

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**RISING TO THE CHALLENGE:
EXPERIENCES OF ELITE FEMALE ICE HOCKEY PLAYERS**

BY

JUDY LEYDEN

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: EXPERIENCES OF ELITE FEMALE ICE HOCKEY PLAYERS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the experiences of twelve Canadian female ice hockey players and in doing so, contribute to the literature on women in sport. The theory that female athletes exist on the margins of sport formed the basis of the research. A review of literature indicated that there is a lack of information on female hockey players, and a need for more sport research from a feminist perspective. An evaluation of the status of women in sport showed that inequalities towards females exist. However, through challenging the institution of sport, the situation for female athletes is improving.

The method chosen for this study was a qualitative analysis and consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews of 12 elite female ice hockey players. The interviews took place at the 1994 Canadian Senior Women's Ice Hockey Championships in Winnipeg. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were then coded in order to identify themes and categories within interviews. The emergent categories were: "Beginnings in Hockey," "Growing Up, Playing Hockey," "The Women's Game," "The Male-Female Comparison," "Finances, Awareness, Role Models," and "Visions". Links between the categories were then explained under the following themes: "Non-traditional Sport," "Systemic Discrimination," "Heterosexism and Homophobia," "The Survivors; Pursuing Elite Hockey," and "Developments". These categories and themes interconnect and in doing so, explain the experiences of these female hockey players.

In conclusion, despite the increased opportunities for female hockey players, inequalities and discrimination continue to exist. Similar challenges are encountered by female athletes throughout sport, according to the research literature. The discriminations have been entrenched in the sport institution, making it necessary to continually work towards change. Recommendations include: increasing feminist research in sport, further study of female hockey, promotion of female role models, and finally, to recognize the contribution that females make to the sport of hockey.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Sport can be a means of empowerment for women. Empowerment manifests itself in the forms of strength, power, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment, all of which may be gained from a challenging workout. I received some powerful answers when I posed the question to a group of female athletes, "What do you love about sport"?

A - "I've really learned confidence. I've really learned that I don't have to go around proving myself to people because I'm proving myself to myself every day."

B - "It's a new challenge every day, and after I go away I feel like I can do anything, and I really value that."

C - "The strength and power. It's knowing I'm strong in a world where women often live in fear, feeling vulnerable and weak just because they're women. It's great to know that there is a place where I can go to feel strong, to get stronger, and to be really appreciated for my strength."

D - "I've gotten so much from this sport. This sport has given me strength in school. It's given me strength with friendships. It's given me so much strength when it comes to men."

B - "I think being involved in sports and dedicated to sports really made me do well in other areas of my life. I see it as a way to better myself, to dedicate myself to something and accomplish things and push myself forward, and I want to be the best I can be."

Sport has the potential to open up a world of powerful feelings and experiences. Lewis (1992) calls such experiences "shining moments" in sport:

White males regard such moments as their birthright. Women, the disabled and the poor generally don't have the chance of using sports to discover the perfection within themselves (p. 35).

Women and those who are disabled, poor, members of visible minority races, and/or immigrant people are often excluded from experiencing this perfection. Many people outside of the dominant culture are marginalized in relation to sport.

The overall picture of sport shows that it is a system created by men, for men (Hall, 1982). It seems that women are an addition to the sport system, a system which was not created with them in mind. Consequently, women are often on the margins of sport. For example, the sport system has many barriers keeping women from reaping the benefits of sport, as athletes, coaches and administrators. The underrepresentation of women in all areas of sport provides a compelling argument for woman-centered sport research (Lenskyj, 1991b). I have chosen to do "research from the margins", which is essentially a form of grounded theory from a feminist perspective in that it takes into account the power relations between people (Kirby, personal communication, February 19, 1993).

The margin is the context in which those who suffer injustice, inequality and exploitation live their lives. People find themselves on the margins not only in terms of the inequality in the distribution of material

resources, but also knowledge production is organized so that the views of a small group of people are presented as objective, as 'the truth' (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 33).

In reality, there is no single, objective truth. "Research from the margins" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 17) assumes that all forms of experience and knowledge are valuable and that in the past, the majority of research has excluded people from outside the small group of primarily white, middle class males. People on the margins have a need to participate in research in order for their concerns to be addressed.

In female hockey, in areas such as senior and university women's hockey, my own involvement in the sport has made me aware that the voices of the players are being lost. The players need to express ideas of how sport should develop for females, so that changes taking place truly reflect the needs of the participants.

Women in sport issues have been studied in recent literature from a feminist perspective¹ (Lenskyj, 1992; Hall, 1982). Feminism informs the issues in this study of female experiences in Canadian senior women's hockey.

Feminism

There is no single feminist school of thought but rather a multifaceted mosaic of feminist visions and practices (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 1).

¹ A list of Canadian authors referenced in this paper who study sport from a feminist perspective includes; M.A. Hall, S. Kirby, H. Lenskyj, N. Theberge, and P. Vertinsky.

It is essential to outline the frameworks of feminism before its relation to sport can be understood. Feminist analysis of sport has a short history, and its full contribution has yet to be felt (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Feminism can be outlined, but not in one single definition. (Lenskyj, 1987; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Ruth, 1990). "Central to any feminist epistemology or theory of knowledge is the notion of taking the standpoint of women" (Hall, 1985, p. 25). One who uses feminism as a way of looking at the world acknowledges the importance not only of women, but of all classes, races, and sexual orientations as well. Feminism attempts to recognize all women in its theories. Although there is not a simple definition of feminism, there are themes found in most feminist literature which attempt to critique the status of women in society. Feminist discourse deals with issues such as power and empowerment, oppression, patriarchy, systemic discrimination, and the experiences of women within societal institutions which serve to perpetuate women's secondary status in society.

Power and Empowerment

Power has been traditionally defined as the ability of one group, person or thing to be in a position of advantage and dominance over another. Using this definition, it can be said that in sport, as in all of society, women have historically been at a disadvantage. Men have had control and power regarding sporting opportunities. Sports institutions have served to contain women and marginalize their importance (Kidd, 1990).

Empowerment, by feminist definitions, is a process that allows one to be in control, not of others, but of oneself. Empowerment gives one a sense of strength and is not intended to be used to oppress others. A feminist vision of power stresses energy, creativity, and strength--qualities that can be developed through sport. Traditionally, women did not have the opportunity to be empowered through sport (Theberge, 1987).

"The [traditional] conception of power as domination is fundamental to sport" (Theberge, 1987, p. 388). Men are encouraged to become strong and powerful through their participation in sport, whereas women are expected to fill passive roles as spectators, cheerleaders, and admirers (Theberge, 1987; Kidd, 1990). Women learn through socialization experiences--television, movies, parental guidance, and the presence of passive female role models--that they are expected to fill passive roles (Kirby, personal communication, November 24, 1992). Encouraged to be passive and weak, women are oppressed by their limited choices.

Oppression

Being oppressed means an absence of choices, therefore an absence of power (Ruth, 1990). Although the roles for women in society appear to include a vast number of options, a deeper investigation reveals that the choice is limited. Sexism, the "system by which women are kept subordinate to men" (Pharr, 1988, p. 9), serves to keep the choices for women limited. For example, it is now more acceptable for women to participate in sport than it was in the past, but true acceptance from society will only occur if

the athlete is heterosexual. The sexuality of females in a non-traditional sport is often questioned. In sport, as in society, there is extreme prejudice towards homosexuals (Lenskyj, 1991). This prejudice is expressed in the forms of homophobia and heterosexism. Pharr (1988) defines homophobia as "the irrational fear and hatred of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex" (p. 1) and states that "heterosexism creates the climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm" (p. 16). Sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia work together in keeping women from power. Regardless of opportunities that are available, the general attitude--what women learn as they grow up--is that a large amount of conformity must accompany choice-making. When a woman develops a feminist consciousness she questions conformity. It is then that she begins to question whether she really has choices. The concept of oppression is really a question of whether women have real choices or a choice of one (Kirby, personal communication, November 24, 1992).

Feminism is largely a movement to end oppression of women. In feminist theory, oppression is related to class, biological sex, and sexual preference (Bennett, Whitaker, Smith & Sablove, 1987). The concept of oppression encompasses discrimination, exploitation, and an absence of choices. There is not one universal form of oppression for women. According to Frye (1983), all women are to some extent oppressed. Ruth (1990) on the other hand, writes that while all women may not be oppressed, they are all discriminated against or exploited. The reason for this view is that women do have more

opportunities available to them than in the past. The favoured view is that women are socialized to believe that they have more choices than they really do (Kirby, personal communication, November 24, 1992). Many women do have choices regarding the direction their lives will take, but the reality that women are discriminated against and exploited is universal. Levels of oppression fall like layers upon those who are marginalized. I propose that women in sport are covered in layers of oppression that vary from person to person. The bottom layer is that she is a woman. Built upon the first layer of oppression might be another of the homophobia that exists in society. Lenskyj speaks of the further marginalization of lesbians:

In the culture of traditional, male-dominated sport, lesbians are by definition members of at least two marginalized groups--they are not male and they are not heterosexual. Further marginalization will be experienced by lesbians who are members of a racial or ethnic minority (Lenskyj, 1992).

Add onto those a physical or mental disability, visible minority, low socio-economic status, and/or other oppressions, and you can see the layers she has to peel off to be listened to, to be given a chance to participate, or to administrate sport. In feminist analysis of any kind, it is important to note the existence of all forms of oppression.

Oppression of women is one result of the patriarchal structure of society, and the perpetuation of its beliefs. It has been argued that sport is a reflection of society (Miner, 1993). Therefore, it might be suggested that the oppression of women in sport is an example of the overall oppression of women in society. Hoffman, at

the National Conference on Women in Sport (1974), offered an example of such oppression when she said:

Women as well as men in this society are immersed in a culture that rewards and values achievement, that stresses self-reliance, individuals' freedom and the full development of the individual resources. Despite the prevalence of these values, however, femininity and individual achievement continue to be regarded as two mutually exclusive ends (p. 16).

This is what Frye (1983) calls double-bind oppression. Women are trapped into conforming to traditional feminine roles which are not achievement oriented, but if they seek individual achievement through sport, they may be labelled as deviant. This is a double-bind because in both instances women are oppressed, and cannot be rewarded by societal standards. Discouraging women from sport is perpetuated from generation to generation, in a society where patriarchal beliefs are maintained through male hegemonic control. "It is fair to say that hegemonic femininity and athleticism are incompatible" (Lenskyj, 1992, p. 1).

Male Hegemony and Patriarchy

Hegemony refers to an overall system of control, the order of things that are ever changing. Hegemonic control can refer to sexual, class, and race control--one dominant group over another. This control is enabled to continue when the general public does not question the power structure. Male hegemony refers to the control of men over women.

Patriarchy also refers to the systemic control of men over women. A patriarchal system is one that benefits men at the expense of women (Humm, 1990; Kirby, 1992; Ruth, 1990; Tuttle, 1986). By participating in the patriarchy, men have privilege, solely as a result of their maleness. Patriarchy is soaked into our traditions, codified into our laws, and is consequently passed down from generation to generation (Kirby, 1992). The concepts of hegemony and patriarchy are linked. The major difference between patriarchy and hegemony is that the former is a static relationship in which men dominate women, whereas hegemony is the entire system of control that is ever changing (Hargreaves, 1990; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Male hegemony is a type of control that can never be fully realized because it is constantly being challenged (Hargreaves, 1990). The control exists throughout society. Sport is one example of an institution in society that is affected by male control over women. Hegemonic male control oppresses women therefore it is important to continually challenge the structure of power. The challenge begins with a look at how women are affected by--and can benefit from the abolishment of--male hegemonic control in the structure of sport.

Systemic Discrimination

Systemic discrimination is the result of the structure of society and is not necessarily intentional (Introduction to the Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985). In sport, systemic discrimination is evident in the inequalities that continue to exist. The inequalities

that exist in the sport of ice hockey led to the research focus for this study.

Research Focus

The focus of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of female athletes involved in the sport of ice hockey at the Canadian senior level. The aim of this exploratory research is to provide an accurate account of the experiences of the participants, and to record a vision of how they wish their sport to develop.

Assumption

There are barriers that keep women out of hockey, and keep female hockey from advancing. The experiences of the participants show that the barriers to the development of women's hockey are evidence of the oppression and discrimination against women as they have been discussed in feminist sport literature. My own experience as a hockey player has strengthened my assumption that women who play the game at the senior level face barriers to participation in and advancement of their sport. These barriers support the findings in feminist sport literature that women in sport are granted marginal status. The barriers that perpetuate the marginal status keep women from reaping the benefits of sport.

Delimitation

Delimitations are choices a researcher makes to create a workable study (Thomas & Nelson, 1990). Delimitations of this

research are; a) the use of a small number of participants (12) and b) the choice of working with only elite senior level players.

I have chosen to limit my interviews of players to women who play senior level hockey. This is necessary for the reasons of accessibility and expense. The participants of this study are a select sample of those involved in the Canadian National Women's hockey Championship in Winnipeg, in March, 1994.

There are many levels of female hockey that are developing. There are players in midget, senior, and university intramural leagues, as well as players who choose to become members of primarily male teams. I will be discussing the situation of senior women, one of the areas that is very important to the overall understanding of women's hockey.

Limitations

"Limitations are possible shortcomings or influences that either cannot be controlled or are the results of the delimitations imposed by the investigator" (Thomas & Nelson, 1990, p. 66). My choice of interviewing only elite level players limited me to the knowledge of their experiences. In an ideal study, I would hope to explore the experiences of all of the women and girls who engage in the sport of ice hockey. Also, I am limited to speaking English, therefore all of my interviews were with players who spoke English.

Rationale

Women's ice hockey has always existed and still exists on the margins of male sport. It is time that women's sport is brought to

the forefront. This study aims to promote female hockey and enables the participants to express their opinions and offer their own suggestions for improving their sport.

There is little information published on female hockey. This study will add to the limited base of research in this area. There is also a need for more research in the area of women in sport. This study will contribute to female sport literature that has been written in the past. Unlike traditional sport research, feminist methodology takes into account the oppression women face in sport. This study is based on feminist theory, acknowledging that blending feminist and sport research is an excellent method towards challenging the present structure of sport.

Increases in the number of female hockey players in Manitoba alone makes this a worthwhile study. Having played the game, and still very much interested in its progress, I am in an excellent position to do this research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to assess the status of female hockey in Canada and to relate it to feminism for the purpose of my research, the review of literature includes information on the feminist movements, problems and barriers that face women in sport, basic feminist frameworks, and feminist sport research. This review includes information from the present state of female hockey, conversations with people involved in the sport of women's hockey, media, and various publications. Due to the constant development of the sport, information about the state of women's hockey will be added to the literature review throughout the research.

The Feminist Movements

A review of literature based on gender issues in sport has brought to my attention the relation of the development of female sport to feminist movements. "An understanding of female sport involvement cannot be isolated from an understanding of both the role of sport and the role of women in society" (National Conference on Women in Sport, 1974, p. 4). At one time the two were seen as separate entities. At one time women's sport was perceived as having nothing in common with feminist movements. A closer look shows that feminist research is effective in challenging the present structure of sport. The paper written for the National Conference on Women in Sport (1974) states that "we all have the same basic goal-

-to strengthen our own self-image" (p. 64). At the conference, it was stated that the women's studies program at the University of Manitoba was going to offer a course on physical activity for women. Unfortunately, a course of this nature does not exist. It would have been a great step forward in bridging the gap between feminist movements and women's sport. In spite of the lack of course offerings in the area of women in sport, athletics is increasingly becoming a focus of study for feminist researchers. Such study will benefit women in and out of sport by helping to break down the patriarchal structure of society. The sporting world is what Kirby (1992) refers to as "the last bastion of patriarchy" (p. 17). Feminist researchers and activists working together could greatly enhance sporting opportunities for women. Men and women can work together towards advancing sport for women. bell hooks (1993) says "I don't use the term women's movement--I believe men must be part of the feminist movement" (p. 37). In sport men have more control and power and can use their influence in making sport better for everyone. Until athletics becomes more equitable the present state of oppression will continue to exist in sport.

Judging Women by Male Standards

Much of the literature concerning female sport concentrates on the roles perceived to be gender-appropriate and makes irrelevant comparisons between males and females (Basow & Spinner, 1984; Csizma, Wittig, & Schurr, 1988; Sage & Loudermilk, 1979). One way to improve sport is to change the way women are perceived. The National Conference for Women in Sport (1974) pointed out that

"women do not wish to emulate male performance and programs, but they are interested in developing viable sporting environments in which they can exist first as women and second as athletes" (p.4). Women are oppressed when their achievements are judged by male standards. It is necessary to realize that women's sport is unique and deserves opportunities that are not necessarily identical, but that are fair in comparison to that of male sport.

Inequalities in sport

Two specific areas of unfairness in sport are that the majority of funding and coaching positions are acquired by males. Examples of inequality are apparent in the area of sport funding. According to Leiderman (1992), in the United States, "men's teams receive almost 70% of the athletic scholarship money, and 77% of the operating money, and 83% of the recruiting money spent by colleges that play big-time sports" (p. 1). "Almost half of men's football teams, the ones we always hear are paying for women's sports, are running deficits averaging \$431,000" (Reith, 1990, p. 65). The women's teams are often asked to make enough money to support themselves; the men are not. Leiderman also found that in college sport, 70% of the athletes are men, whereas only 30% are female.

Statistics for university sport in Canada, according to the 1992 International Professional Development Program (IPDP) Tour, are as follows:

- 2520 women athletes currently compete at the university level, an increase of 18 per cent since 1979; male athletes number 4449, a decrease of 12 per cent,

- 50 women and 45 men coach women's teams full-time,
 - 41 women and 129 men are part-time coaches of mens teams, and
 - 4 women and 146 men are full-time coaches of men's teams
- (p. 36).

A five-year study (1978-83) of opportunities for women in the CIAU found 110 male and 71 female head coaches. The number of male coaches increased 100% from 1976 to 1978, and the number of females as coaches in the CIAU decreased by 10% in that same period of time (Inglis, Appleton, Bean, Bedingfield, & Fromson, 1982). In the years of 1976 to 1978, the men's and women's departments joined together in every conference except Ontario. The loss of women in coaching positions was attributed to the joining of male and female departments.

A similar loss of female coaches occurred in the United States after 1972, when Title IX was put into effect. Title IX is part of the Education amendments act that states that no person shall be discriminated against, for gender reasons, in any federally funded educational program or activity (Munnings, 1990). When Title IX was put into effect in the United States in 1972, the number of female athletes increased, and the number of female coaches drastically decreased (Stangl & Kane, 1991). This is evidence that "increased female participation does not translate into a movement for greater equality" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 5). Studies (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985; Greendorfer, 1989; Munnings, 1990) have shown the dramatic decrease of female coaches. Stangl and Kane (1991) suggested that one "powerful structural variable that reproduces male hegemony is homologous reproduction" (p. 59). Homologous reproduction is the

process by which the dominant group in society hires and promotes people in the group's own image. The more similar a person is to the dominant group, the more likely she or he is to be hired or promoted. In sport, this process can be seen in the numbers of male versus female coaches. Coaching and administrative positions are more likely to go to men because candidates for the positions are usually judged on experience and seniority. Males, as a group, are more likely to qualify (Williams & Miller, 1983). After Title IX was adopted, opportunities for female athletes to participate increased, but the number of female coaches did not. "A woman has been in space. Women are prime ministers. They're doing everything--but they can't coach? It boggles my mind" (Van Derveer, cited in Munnings, 1990, p. 40).

In order for females to acquire more funding and more coaching positions, the number of female participants and programs need to be increased. These numbers must be increased from the earliest stages of socialization into sport. Girls must learn, at a very young age, that sport need not belong to men. The problem of unequal participation rates of male and female athletes begins with the inequalities throughout the socialization process.

Socialization

Socialization molds our bodies; enculturation forms our skeletons, our musculature, our central nervous systems. By the time we are gendered adults, masculinity and femininity are 'biological' (Frye, cited in Douglas, 1990, p. 100).

The biological affects the sociological, and *vice versa* (Douglas, 1990). It cannot be said that biology determines society, or that society determines biology, but they certainly interact and affect one another. In sport, the stereotype of women as biologically inferior has kept them from participating to the full extent. The biology argument--that men are inherently strong, and women are weak--upholds the belief that to be involved in sport, a person must be superior and dominating. A system that accentuates physical prowess acts to exclude those who are viewed as having less physical power. The focus of radical feminist researchers and activists in sport is on seeing that such sport beliefs are changed to include people of a variety of strengths in a fun and equitable environment. Changing the values of sport would benefit women, as it would create a more welcoming environment in which to participate.

When we look at the social environments to which most young girls are exposed, it becomes apparent that they generally have neither the models nor the reinforcements necessary for long term sports involvement (National Conference on Women in Sport, 1974, p. 37).

Women are shown few role models to influence them to continue in sport. Most of the media coverage in sport is of male activities. Each positive example of females in sport will encourage young women to get involved. Silken Laumann--a rower who was severely injured seven weeks prior to the 1992 Summer Olympics, yet beat all odds by recuperating in time to win a bronze medal at those games--is a positive role model, who demonstrates that strength and determination can indeed be qualities for women. If children can be

exposed to positive models and sporting environments, we will have girls who are more eager to join and continue in sport. Women have not achieved the distances or the overall strength that men have. "Perhaps they can, but will they ever find out if they don't firmly believe it from the time they tie on their first pair of gym shoes?" (IPDP, 1992, p. 2).

Along with the presentation of role models for female athletes, the advancement of sport for women must be accompanied by many other changes. It is at this point that feminist strategies can be incorporated to bring about change. The question raised is, "What feminist strategy will enable us to change the patriarchal structure of sport?" There are many frameworks within feminism from which to choose.

Basic Feminist Frameworks

There are several frameworks within feminism. Theorists vary in their beliefs. Also, feminists do not necessarily fit into only one distinct category. Instead they often construct their views based on aspects of more than one type of feminism. According to Donovan (cited in Messner & Sabo, 1990) there are six categories: liberal feminism, cultural feminism, socialist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existentialist feminism, and radical feminism. Tong (cited in Messner & Sabo, 1990) adds the category of postmodern feminism to the list. Jagger and Rothenberg (1984) add conservative feminism and feminism for women of colour as well. Feminist sport literature tends to discuss issues in terms of three of the frameworks: liberal, radical, and socialist feminism (Lenskyj, 1991;

Messner & Sabo, 1990); those are the frameworks discussed in this paper.

Liberal feminism

A liberal feminist essentially seeks opportunities for women's advancement in the existing society through institutional changes such as education and the workplace (Ruth, 1990). The major emphasis in liberal feminism is equal rights for women. In the sport context, "liberal feminists would work towards changing discriminatory policies and programs in order to open the door to full and equal participation for girls and women" (Lenskyj, 1992, p. 1).

Radical feminism

For radical feminists, the primary emphasis is on women's oppression as women--discriminated against because they are women (Ruth, 1990). Radical feminists argue that equal opportunity in society is impossible because the system itself is patriarchal (Messner & Sabo, 1990). "They are interested in transforming sport rather than in gaining equal access to existing systems" (Lenskyj, 1992). It has been said that liberal feminists "want to secure for women a piece of the pie; radical feminists want to change the pie" (Ruth, 1990, p. 429). Sports feminists argue that the liberal view would have equal funding for men and women, whereas the radical view seeks to change sport's very structure. "Radical feminists have

been attempting, with some success, to transform and re-create what it means to be female and athlete" (Lenskyj, 1992).

Socialist feminism

Socialist feminists, like radical feminists, are very critical of the liberal feminists' emphasis on equality and believe that the existing structure should be revolutionized (Ruth, 1990; Lenskyj, 1992). Socialist feminists do not believe that equality can be achieved within the existing capitalist structure of society. They feel that socio-economic discrimination is the reason for women's oppression. "In sport, they might argue, for example, for the elimination of professional sport and private sports clubs, and for the distribution of scarce resources, equipment and facilities to men and women of all social classes" (Lenskyj, 1992). It is important to note that people often adopt ideas and practices from various schools of feminism, rather than subscribing to one. Feminism, whether it is liberal, radical, or socialist, is a necessary agent for changing sport in order to make it more beneficial to women.

Sport research

Barriers have not only been present in terms of participation in sport, but in the science of studying sport as well. Sport sociologists used to focus on research that would prove that women who competed in sport would not become masculinized. According to Hall (1988), such research was "harmful because it continued to perpetuate the very stereotypes we wished to eradicate" (p. 332).

Presently, feminist researchers like Hall support the idea that gender is socially constructed. Definitions of gender fall under what Hall (1988) calls dominant traditions "that have ignored and/or justified women's oppression" (p. 330). Feminist research seeks to adopt a critical perspective towards such tradition. I have chosen to take such a critical stance. It is necessary, in order to improve the status of women in sport and society, to question the traditional order of things.

Role Conflict Research

Much of past research has been on the conflict a woman feels between the roles of female and athlete. Allison (1991) states that "the concept of female/athlete role conflict has outlived its usefulness" (p. 50). Role conflict research may in fact support the very stereotypes that should be eradicated if women wish to move forward in sport.

Benefits of the feminist study of sport

Women are oppressed in sport, play, and games, yet little attention from feminist scholars has been given to the area. "Sport, play, and games should be the subjects of serious feminist analysis" (Bennett et al., 1987, p. 369). One feature of feminist research is that the standpoint and experiences of women are essential to it (Hall, Cullen, & Slack, 1989; Hall, 1985). Another feature of feminist research is that it challenges the way that knowledge is produced (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). For example, a feminist researcher might ask, "Whose view of the world does this information represent? Is

this knowledge about men or women or both? Was the information collected from men, and then generalized to all people, male and female?" In asking such questions, the researcher can find out what view of the world is represented by certain knowledge. There have been arguments that sport should not be studied within a feminist framework.

Arguments against researching sport, by some feminists, have been that its patriarchal structure should not be supported by women. One such argument against feminist involvement in sport is that "sport, play, and games are institutionalized forms of activity used to help maintain male cultural hegemony" (Bennett et al., 1987, p. 369). This is theorized to be a result of the patriarchal framework of sport (Theberge, 1987).

Within the sport framework, it has been found that not all increased involvement of women has been positive. Many of the fitness programs on television, in aerobics videos, and in fitness clubs are intended to increase the sexual attractiveness of women to men. "Here, the feminization of the fitness movement represents, not the liberation of women in sport, but their continued oppression through the sexualization of physical activity" (Theberge, 1987, p. 389). It is examples such as these that discourage feminist study of sport. This attitude is changing, largely because there are enough positive reasons for participating in and studying sport.

By participating in sport, women can gain strength and empowerment. To enjoy sport is to benefit the body through movement, control, and mastery of the body--to be empowered--and feminism is largely about empowerment. It is therefore logical for

women, especially feminist women, to study sport. Women can be empowered through sport, and consequently, the women's movement can benefit from advancements in sport.

"While women's leisure has always been circumscribed by social constraints and cultural sanctions, there is within women's sport the seeds of resistance and the potential for social change" (Varpalotai, 1987, p. 411). It is believed that increased female athleticism will result in empowerment and strength for women (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Thus, sport can be of help in the struggle of all women in ending their oppression. It has been said that "sport needs to be analyzed along with rape, pornography, and domestic violence as one of the means through which men monopolize physical force" (Bryson, 1987, p. 357). In support of a feminist definition of power, Theberge (1987) argues that sport experience can provide women with energy and creativity--aspects of empowerment. Conditions in the workplace, and in legal and political arenas must be improved in order to improve the conditions of women. "Although the contribution of sport to change at the institutional level is largely indirect, it is no less critical to the wider struggle" (p. 393). Sport, although critical to the empowerment of women, is a paradox. "Sport is a site for freedom and constraint: it produces new opportunities and meanings for women and it reproduces prejudices and oppression (Hargreaves, 1990, p. 300). "In sport, this paradox is best demonstrated by the fact that as women have dramatically increased their participation in recent years, they have simultaneously lost their control of women's sports to men" (Messner & Sabo, 1990). For both reasons--that sport can benefit

women, yet maintain male hegemony--a feminist critique of sport is essential to the advancement of women. The diverse types of feminism provide multiple ways of critiquing sport. Feminist theory and action may enable women to reclaim sport in order to reap its many benefits.

The most effective changes to sport have been through liberal and radical feminist frameworks. Change is effective when it begins with an entry of women into sport--as athletes, coaches, and administrators. Once involved in sport, benefitting from sport, empowered by sport itself, then women can begin to take an active, radical stance in transforming sport. An example of the effective changes that are going on in sport is the development of the Canadian Sport Coalition in October, 1992. As a result of the Dubin Inquiry, the Minister's Task Force on Sport, and Sport Forums I, II, and III, a climate for change has been agreed upon by the government and sport communities in Canada. This change is a radical one, in that it is the first effort by Canadian men and women working together to redefine sport in gender equitable ways (Kirby, Personal communication, November 24, 1992). The Canadian Sport Council states that the values of equity, fairness, safety, and fun are essential for sport. For women, this is an especially important statement because the value of safety in sport means that threats to safety in sport settings--harassment and physical abuse, for example--will not be tolerated. In this situation, a somewhat liberal perspective was taken. This is an example of men and women willing to work together within the existing sport system at this point in time, in order to change its structure from within.

Changes-Past, Present, and Future

The secondary status given to women's sport is evident in the lack of changes that have been made towards its advancement. Interest exists--women want to participate. At all levels there has been a reluctance on the part of administrators to enhance sport for women. It is often suggested, without looking at the larger structural problems, that funding is the only reason for a lack of support. This is a form of discrimination against women. It is oppressive, in the first place, not to provide as many opportunities for women as there are for men; and it is oppressive that women have had to fight for every step forward in sport, from the recreational to the Olympic level.

Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, viewed female applause as a reward for male achievement in sport (Stephanson, 1992). The sport scene of the present day has changed considerably and now includes women as athletes--fit, strong athletes. Women, it seems, are no longer content to sit on the sidelines and applaud, nor are we content to be treated as second-class citizens.

In order to break free from secondary status, action must be taken. One group that takes such action is the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS). For example, CAAWS recommended several ideas to the Minister's Task Force on Sport Policy. The suggestions were focused on expanding opportunities for women in all areas of sport.

CAAWS has been influential. The final document *Sport: The Way Ahead* (May, 1992) includes the following recommendations:

- a) Integrate principles of the Women in Sport program into Fitness and Amateur Sport branch programs,
- b) Channel funds into women's sport to support increased fairness and access for women as athletes, coaches, and administrators,
- c) Prevent sexual harassment in sport settings, and
- d) Portray women in sport in relation to their sport experience rather than as objects (p. 60).

CAAWS has taken a radical feminist approach in its attempt to transform sport. Organizations such as CAAWS are an effective vehicle for informing people of the inequalities in sport. In this instance, CAAWS was pleased with the final report of the Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy. In fact, some of its members stated that this report is the best thing that has ever happened for women in Canada (CAAWS Action, 1992).

In order for the situation for women in Canada to continue to improve, work must be carried out to ensure that the gender equity suggestions in the Task Force Report act towards advancing sport for women. On a positive note, according to Lay (1992), there are several recent advancements that have been made. Notable advancements have been in the areas of gender equity, sexual harassment issues, leadership (including coaching), and new Olympic events for women. Specific examples in coaching include; a) the Career Development for Women in Coaching Program which awards grants for professional development of women as coaches, and b) scholarships that have also been awarded to women attending the National Coaching Institute in Victoria, B.C.

The National Coaching School for Women (NCSW) was held in a different area of Canada every year. The program no longer exists. It was a week long camp for coaches in the sports of basketball, soccer, and volleyball. Coaches who taught in the NCSW were all female. It was a totally woman-centered experience for the participants (Kirby, Lay, & Steen, 1993). Partners of the NCSW were: the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union, the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), the Coaching Association of Canada, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS), and the Sport Canada Women's Program.

Beyond coaching, new Olympic events for women include women's 1000 metres speedskating at the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. Also, women's ice hockey will be included in 1998.

Long awaited changes for women in sport are now being carried out, and there are several future changes to be made before sport is truly equitable.

Subtle exclusion and systematic discrimination exist throughout the sport continuum. While progress has been made, the pace is unacceptably slow (Sport: The Way Ahead, the report of the Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy, 1992, p. 152).

Sport: The Way Ahead, the Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy (1992), offers a positive future for female sport in Canada. One of the goals of the task force is to increase the pace of

involving and advancing girls and women in sport in order to display fair and equitable treatment of females.

Other milestones of Canadian sport for women have been: the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act in 1960, the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970, the National Conference on Women in Sport held in 1974, the Female Athlete Conference held in 1981, the Constitution Act of 1982, and the report of the 1992 International Professional Development Program (IPDP) Tour: The Way Ahead for Canadian Women in Sport.

Society and sport influence and support one another. As proposals for change are made, it is essential to continue to expand our understanding of the present relationship between society and sport. Changes in sport--one of the largest, most patriarchal institutions in society--can potentially be reflected in changes in the overall structure of society.

Media and Women in Sport

Media is capable of publicizing sport and due to the large numbers of people who subscribe to television, magazines, and newspapers, it is a dominant influence in the way we view the world. The amount of female sport coverage is far less than that of male sport (Lenskyj, 1988). This implies that more males are active in sport, and that sport is more acceptable for men than for women.

This failure to cover or to trivialize coverage is based on the presumption by the media that they are to report the news. If there is no interest, there is no news. For women's sports this has created a catch-22: no interest means no coverage, no coverage means no interest.

People cannot attend an event they do not know about (Miner, 1993, p. 46).

The Importance of Sport

The benefits of sport may seem obvious to those who participate, but an explanation seems to be necessary in light of the barriers that women face in sport. Participation can not be encouraged without the basic understanding of why sport is so valuable:

Involvement in physical activity and sport is extremely important to girls and women. A decline in involvement may result in a reduced fitness level over the life cycle (absence of strength, poorer cardiovascular levels, diminishing bone density and a poor sense of body image). Lack of physical strength increases women's vulnerability in an era of violence. Loss of opportunity to enjoy the sheer pleasure of the sport experience is problem enough (Sport: The Way Ahead. The report of the Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy, May, 1992, p. 149).

The arguments for sport are endless. Sport has the potential to increase fitness, longevity, happiness, and empowerment. Yet, for women, "subtle exclusion and systemic discrimination exist throughout the curriculum" (Task Force, 1992, p. 148). From participation to all levels of administration (especially the highest levels), women are present in fewer numbers than are men.

History of Canadian Women's Hockey

There are records of Canadian female hockey dating as far back as the late 1800s and early 1900s. The early photographs show

women in full length skirts, a uniform hardly suited to the fast paced game of ice hockey.

Over the years, the female uniforms and skill levels have improved dramatically. The recent developments in female hockey would not be possible without the efforts of women who have loved the game enough to fight for their right to play. Two women who are well known for fighting for the right to play are Abby Hoffman and Justine Blainey.

"Abigail Hoffman first became aware of the obvious discrimination against her sex when she was only eight years old and an aspiring hockey player. Even at that young age Abigail Hoffman decided to fight the system" (McFarlane, 1994, p. 117). In 1955, at the age of eight, she pretended to be male in order to play in the Toronto Hockey League. She was known as "Ab" Hoffman, and was a star hockey player. She was talented enough to be chosen for the all-star team that year. During the selection process for the all-star team (late in the season), her birth certificate was checked by league officials. When they discovered she was female, her story became widely publicized. She was allowed to continue playing, but was given her own changing room (McFarlane, 1994).

The publicity surrounding Abby's experience in hockey brought to the public's attention that girls could play hockey as well as, if not better than boys. Abby was a role model for girls, who could now see that hockey was a realistic pursuit. Still, barriers remained.

As recently as 1987, 32 years after Abby's hockey debut, the struggle to play was not over. Justine Blainey, a 12 year-old girl on

a boys' team was banned from playing. She went to the Human Rights Commission and obtained the legal right to play on a male team.

Eventually, Blainey went on to play for the University of Toronto women's hockey team. Her struggle wasn't over. This time, in 1993, her university was threatening to cut the female hockey program. Even though there had been three world championships, the university did not recognize the importance of having a female hockey program (McFarlane, 1994). "The decision by university officials to deprive some of its finest woman athletes of hockey was both shortsighted and sexist" (p. 180). The Ontario Women's Hockey Association and thousands of others rallied behind the University of Toronto women's team and helped to save the hockey program.

Canadian Female Hockey

Although the sport of hockey is dominated by men in terms of administration and participation, there are opportunities for females. In Canada, there have been many positive developments for women in the sport of ice hockey. Articles in the July, 1993 issue of The CAHA newsletter for female hockey--Go Overboard reported a number of relevant issues in the area of women's ice hockey; leadership Seminars, coaching, the senior National Championship, the under 18 National Championship, female hockey within the education system, and the Lake Placid Invitational.

Coaching

There are far more male than female coaches in hockey. Female head coaches in hockey are a rarity. However, positive steps are being taken to enhance the experiences of female coaches. The Coaching Association of Canada offers financial support in the form of grants for women interested in a career in coaching. Support for female coaches is growing steadily. The number of players has also been increasing steadily in Canada. Three major competitions that took place in 1993 were the Canadian Senior National Championship, the Lake Placid Invitational, and the Under 18 National Championship.

Senior National Championship

The National Championship held in Ottawa in 1993 was reported to be a well organized event, one which will serve as an example for future hosts of the Nationals. At the event there was a panel discussion on the state of women's hockey. The panel included Murray Costello, president of the CAHA, Stacey Wilson, national team player, Karen Wallace, Female Council Director, and Abby Hoffman, female sport advocate. The panel and its attendance of 200 shows that people are aware of not only the three periods of play, but off-ice concerns as well. The Nationals were in Winnipeg in March, 1994. It is the site at which I interviewed players about their experiences.

Under 18 National Championship

The first Under 18 Championship was held in Montreal, Canada, in 1993. Similar to the Senior Championship, it was more than a series of hockey games. It was a sharing of ideas and information. Sessions were held for players, coaches, officials, and parents. Topics covered ranged from how the young players could contribute to the growth of female hockey, definitions of the no intentional body contact rule, and parent education.

The responses to the sessions were positive. The long question and answer periods showed the level of interest to be high. On one occasion the young women were asked to write down what the championship meant to them and it was found that almost all of the players "had a strong sense of her place in the history of female hockey and her responsibility to contribute to its growth" (CAHA, p. 2).

Again, women's hockey proved to be concerned with not only what goes on during the game, but off the ice as well. The discussion session, which included the topic of lack of opportunities for more talented female players brought forward a key component to the philosophy of female hockey in Canada. If the "stars" play on male teams to improve their skill level, the other female peers do not get the opportunity to play against the best and the whole program suffers as a result. Concern for such issues demonstrates that female hockey is not only about skill development, but "philosophy, environment and the social development of the player" (p. 2) as well.

Lake Placid Invitational

Canada put together a team of women under the age of 23 to face off against an under 23 American National team in March, 1993. The games took place near Lake Placid at the United States Olympic Training Centre.

It was a worthwhile event, according to Canada's coach, Julie Healy. The hockey provided valuable experience for the players. Also, hockey representatives from the U.S.A. and Canada met to discuss and plan future ideas and to talk about current developments in female hockey.

Female Hockey and the Education System

Stevens (in CAHA Newsletter for Female Hockey--Go Overboard, 1993) discussed the history of female hockey and education, the present day state, and concluded with suggestions of improvement. The first official university women's hockey game was in 1921. The next year the Canadian Intercollegiate Women's Ice Hockey League was formed. Since then, women's intercollegiate hockey has experienced ups and downs. One such down period was the very recent threat to cut the women's program at the University of Toronto. This threat prompted the evaluation of women's hockey and its future within the education system. The resolution was a positive one, and female hockey was accorded elevated status.

It has been found that the education system can be a force in promoting hockey for women. Stevens (1993) emphasizes that certain steps need to be taken to promote the sport as youngsters begin to play. Coaches and teachers must be aware of who is

interested in playing. Also, the players must be encouraged to participate. Costs must be kept to a minimum, and participation, over and above competition, must be the focus.

High schools can act as feeder systems into collegiate play and intercollegiate players can play a high calibre game that develops skills necessary for international competition. Stevens (1993) raises the important issue of whether talented Canadian players will go to the United States if the competition level is not maintained and if opportunities are not available in Canada. She de-emphasizes the traditional aspects of competition and elitism in hockey. "The unique nature of female hockey stresses camaraderie, longevity and fair play" (p. 3).

On one hand, a close investigation of all levels of sport shows that there are inequalities and unfairness for women. On the other hand, the present state of female hockey in Canada is a positive one. I seek to understand the experiences of female hockey players in Canada, to expand on the literature in the area of women in sport, and to provide an exploratory study--the experiences of 12 female ice hockey players.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

By doing research to document women's experience and concerns we can gain valuable information and analysis to guide our action strategies and programs. We can also contribute to validating women's experience, help to build a body of knowledge about women's reality and break the silence that for so long has surrounded women's lives (Barnsley, 1987 p. 10).

Research to document experiences of female athletes will contribute to a growing body of knowledge about women. From the knowledge base, action strategies and programs can be developed. Women who play hockey have valuable information to contribute to the improvement of female sport. This study will be based on data collected from elite level female ice hockey players. For the purpose of this study, the elite athlete is defined as a player who has participated at the national, post-secondary, or international level. In order to understand the experiences of the research participants and relate it to the status of women in sport, I have chosen to do a form of grounded theory--research from the margins (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Grounded theory is knowledge that follows from the data rather than preceding them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Basic Research Design

The focus of this study is to explore the experiences of female ice hockey players at the Canadian senior level. Choosing the method involved considering what format would most accurately portray

their experiences and their visions of how they want their sport to develop.

Research requires choosing the method which best suits the population or topic one wishes to more fully understand. The best source of information, clearly, is the voice of the athletes. There are others involved such as coaches and administrators of female hockey who have valuable knowledge, but theirs are not the voices that will best answer the questions and concerns of the players. It is the feelings and thoughts of the players I sought to understand. The goal of this research is not only to tell a story of the players' experiences, but also to lay some groundwork for improvements in female sport by asking what the women want for themselves.

Qualitative research is the method I employed to understand how players make sense of their experiences. The reliability of this study is based on accurately describing the data collection procedures. Often, reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, and the replication of results (Smith, 1988). In this study the concern is to enable one to replicate the method, not the results.

The goal of qualitative research is "to uncover the meaning people give to their lives and the events taking place within it" (Winther, 1992). Central to this type of research is the idea that there is no manipulation of variables as there is in traditional scientific research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "The design cannot be given a priori but must emerge as the study proceeds" (p. 11). Rather than stating a hypothesis and setting out to see if it is true or false, as in traditional scientific research, qualitative research employs

alternative methods of generating knowledge. Qualitative research can be interpretive, interactive, and can not be quantified. Lincoln and Guba call this method "naturalistic inquiry" (p. 7). In this study of female hockey players, the goal is to describe and explain the experiences of the players in ways which will help to further develop their understanding of themselves, the sport, and the needs for change. Kirby and McKenna (1989) encourage both qualitative and feminist practices.

Feminist research, as in naturalistic inquiry, challenges traditional scientific methodology (Harding, 1981). There are several traits essential to the method (Fulton, 1988; Hall, 1982; Harding, 1981). For example, feminist research unifies theory and action with an outcome related to social change. It is concerned with challenging the status quo rather than accepting things the way they are. Feminists use qualitative and/or quantitative data gathering methods most suited to the topic to be investigated. Harding (1981) sums up three features of feminist research. One feature is that the feminist researcher states biases and assumptions so as not to appear "as an invisible anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests" (p. 9). The second feature is that the research is done for the people whose lives it affects--the participants. Third, feminist research emphasizes the importance of women's experiences, and recognizes that the majority of past research has been male-oriented.

Centered on the experiences of women and women's viewpoints, feminist research takes account of the power relations

and, in particular, gender relations. Feminist research can be collaborative and creative, and may express alternative viewpoints. Research is often done to understand diverse experiences, rather than for a small specifically educated group. Diverse experiences often involve people on the margins of society, those who are different and/or oppressed. Kirby and McKenna (1989) describe research from the margins in the following way:

When we talk about doing research from the margins we are talking about being on the margins of the production of knowledge. In researching from the margins we are concerned with how research skills can enable people to create knowledge that will describe, explain and help change the world in which they live (p. 17).

Research from the margins is qualitative and feminist. In general, you would not do research from the margins within quantitative research. It has the feminist quality of respect for participants and for the researcher. It is based on giving priority to the experiences of others. The focus is on the participants' feelings, thoughts, and perceptions.

This research is about and for women who have spent a great amount of time on the margins of sport. The study brings forth the knowledge of women and the interviews are of women whose experiences give us insight into female sport. The technique of interviewing was chosen as the most suitable method for gaining a deeper understanding of female hockey.

Data Collection: The Interviews

Interviews are a special form of interaction between people, the purpose of which is to elicit information by asking questions (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 60).

An interview is a conversation with a purpose (Dexter, 1970). This study consists of semi-standardized interviews. Such interviews require that the answers of respondents are comparable and classifiable (Winther, 1992). The wording and sequence of the interview schedule was varied, although the same information was discussed with each participant.

Kirby and McKenna (1989) describe an interactive interview as a discussion or guided conversation. The components of such interviews represent the guidelines and ethics of feminist research and research from the margins, the most important aspect being the respect for one's participants. I chose to employ these guidelines throughout my interviews.

The basis of the interview are the questions asked. Also, the interview is really a sharing of ideas, enabling the interview to be guided by the needs of the participant (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The questions were determined by experience, literature review, informants, and other sources of information during the research. The setting in which the questions were asked and the relationship between the researcher and participant was, to the greatest possible extent, one of equality. Equality for this study was achieved in many ways. Considerations included sharing the focus of the study with the participants early on in the research. Recognition of the investment made by those involved was essential. Participants had

their needs met, especially in terms of respecting their time constraints. Thus, the research was conducted with respect for the participants.

An interactive interviewer invites further contact from the participant. The researcher often requests permission to contact the interviewee for further clarification of information. In research, the investment made by each participant will not necessarily be equal (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Knowing this, I encouraged participants to pursue further contact with me in order to share concerns and ideas after the interview. It is important to be open to this possibility and encourage them to become as involved as they would like. As a result, data had the potential to be richer and denser.

People who have been identified as very helpful to this research include the people who work on the National Championship committee, the members of the Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA), and the Winnipeg Women's Hockey League (WWHL). This group of people kept me informed about the current issues and concerns faced by the sport of female ice hockey. According to Kirby and McKenna (1989), some participants may become collaborators. These are people with a wealth of experience in relation to the research topic. The role of collaborators is a very specific one where they are involved in various parts of the research to give in depth analysis. I spoke with one collaborator throughout the research on a regular basis. She is an elite hockey player (not interviewed for this study) who gave me further insight to the sport of female hockey.

Participants

Twelve elite female hockey players participated in this study. The players ages ranged from 18 to 35 years. Two players were randomly selected from a list of volunteers from the visiting teams of Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick at the National Championship in Winnipeg, March 17-20, 1994. Also, four women from British Columbia participated; three in a group interview; the fourth in a one-on-one interview. During the tournament, as I began to meet players who originally weren't participants of the study, three players from British Columbia agreed to participate in a group interview. The participants generously donated their time during a busy tournament schedule. I am familiar with hockey at this level, having attended two National Championships as a player. Knowledge of the demands of the tournament guided my decisions in making sure the interview process did not disrupt the schedule of the teams. Also the tournament and myself, were based in Winnipeg, which made the research financially possible. This group was selected because a sample from across Canada enabled me to get information about the knowledge and experiences of a variety of women, who have in common the level of commitment required to compete at the national level. Many of the women attending the Championships have played on the Canadian National Women's hockey team at the World Championships in 1990, 1992, and 1994. The Canadian team proved themselves to be the best in the world in 1990, 1992, and 1994. Consequently, the level of hockey at the Canadian National tournament is among the best in the world. High calibre events for women in hockey stimulate interest and growth of the sport at all

levels. Evidence of this effect is the growth in numbers of both female hockey players and programs after the first World Championship in 1990.

Throughout Canada, female hockey is growing at a quick pace and the women interviewed have been a part of this growth. Their experiences, are the basis of this exploratory study of the game in Canada for women. If the sport continues to develop at this rate the players will continue to see changes in the years to come. An ideal outcome for this research is to encourage future changes which reflect the needs of the players.

Contact with the participants was made once teams for the championship were established. Seven provinces sent teams, and the provincial teams were selected at various times towards the end of the season. The date at which each province selected their representative team was the date at which research participants were contacted. All seven participating teams sent a list of volunteers willing to participate, however, due to time constraints of the tournament, it was only possible to interview players from five of the provinces.

Procedures Employed in Locating Participants

Location of participants involved many steps. First, the planning committee for the National Championships and the Winnipeg Women's Hockey League were contacted. This led to the meeting of people who were valuable sources of information on the planning of the tournament, and provided an opportunity for me to become involved as a volunteer. At the meetings, I introduced myself and

briefly outlined my research. I was familiar with many members of the planning committees from my years as a player. My familiarity with the members helped in my gaining entree, one of the first stages of qualitative research (Winther, 1992). The people I have met devote time and energy to a sport they view as valuable. They are the volunteers who help make the existence of female hockey possible. They are also the people I relied on for information related to this study, and were an essential part of the research.

Once the teams were selected, I sent a letter to each team, and a form for interested players to sign if they wished to take part in an interview. I included a self-addressed, stamped envelope for responses. Correspondence with Quebec was in French, and it was stated that all interviews would be conducted in English due to my lack of working knowledge of the French language. Letters to the teams can be found in Appendix B. The Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) provided their fax number for the teams to communicate through, and the MAHA contacted me as the teams responded. Twelve participants were interviewed. Four participants were from British Columbia, and two were from each of the following provinces: Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick. There were volunteers from Manitoba and Saskatchewan who were not interviewed due to the time constraints of the tournament.

Interviews

The interview guide was a semi-structured list of questions (see Appendix A). If, during the interview, the participant chose to stray from the schedule to talk about a related topic or experience, I

adapted my order of questioning. If the participant went off topic, I did my best to route the conversation back to the schedule.

Interviewing is not about meeting strangers, sharing information and then parting forever (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 69).

The sharing of information was carried out with an emphasis on respecting the participant. I began by introducing myself and my research focus. Permission to record the interview was requested. A consent form was signed by the participant and the researcher. The participant was shown how to turn off the recorder and was invited to do so at any point in the interview. Each participant chose to keep the recorder turned on for the duration of the interview. There was a promise of confidentiality as well. After each interview, notes were made about the interview process, so as to improve my sense of awareness throughout the interviews. Maximizing my own time was essential, as I was also volunteering at the tournament.

Conducting the interviews

Once the introductions took place I began to ask questions from the interview schedule. The participants were given a copy of the questions during the interview. I stated clearly that at any time during the conversation the participant was welcome to stop and ask me questions or to request clarification of the questions. At the end of the interview, I asked if there were any further questions, concerns, or comments. Finally, I thanked the participant, shut off the tape recorder, and invited the participant to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding the study once they had time to

reflect on the interview. I then asked the participant for permission to contact them a second time, if I needed clarification.

I did not plan on doing group interviews, but during the tournament, I met with many enthusiastic women who were willing to take part in the study. The group interview began in the same manner as the individual interviews, with the researcher asking the initial questions. As the interview progressed, the women began to exchange ideas with one another, and one woman suggested that they read questions to each other from the interview schedule. I spoke very little, and only when it was necessary to bring them back to the interview schedule when they were off topic. The group interview enabled me to speak to more women than I would have, had I limited the research to individual interviews.

At the time I did not consider the different ethical considerations for group interviewing. For example, I could guarantee confidentiality on my part, but not on the part of every woman in the group. In future research, I will take such ethical considerations into account.

Data Management

Making sense of the data is crucial to the researcher in describing and explaining what is being studied (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). A lot of data can be gathered in a short period of time, as was the case in this study. It was important to organize the mass of data from the interviews into manageable categories.

The transcription of the first set of interviews began after the National tournament, due to the restricted time frame (March 17-20,

1994). Three hundred pages of transcribed data were photocopied and placed in two files. One was kept as raw data, the other was used to code the interviews. While reading the interviews, I wrote down descriptive words in the margins to indicate the themes of the experiences that had been shared in the interview.

Throughout the research process I kept a journal of thoughts on the process, which may also be called conceptual baggage.

"Conceptual baggage is a record of your thoughts and ideas about the research question at the beginning and throughout the research process" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 32). Recording my own thoughts and feelings were most helpful in the beginning when defining the research focus. Another very useful time to write conceptual baggage was between interviews. Having limited time between interviews, the journal was an essential tool in remaining energized and focused. Keeping a journal of my own thoughts and experiences helped me to organize my own thoughts. Also, during the most challenging times, keeping a journal reminded me of the importance of the research, and of the research focus.

Interview Analysis

According to Kirby and McKenna (1989), analysis consists of moving data from one category to another in a constant comparative method. Categories of ideas and themes that surfaced in the transcribed data are described in chapter four. Themes and categories that reoccur can be helpful in describing and explaining the research focus.

The data was kept in two files, one for the raw data (the transcribed interviews), the other for ideas and quotes of transcribed interviews that began to establish the categories and themes generated from the data. The second file enabled me to employ a constant comparison of the data.

After transcribing and analyzing the interviews, it was determined that a saturation point was reached. Saturation was determined when new information was no longer being produced through the interviews. At this point, no new categories or key words were surfacing.

In chapter four, there was one specific topic, "Heterosexism and Homophobia," that did not reach saturation, and I included it in the description of the data under the section "Puberty" because it is an issue of great concern that needs to be addressed. Kirby and McKenna (1989) refer to unique data that doesn't fit into emergent categories as "satellites". It is important to note that this issue, which in the literature is related to the oppression of women throughout society, is only a satellite in this study of female athletes. One reason for this is that a question about homosexuality was not included in the interview schedule. The issue of heterosexism and homophobia surfaced in several interviews, and in many casual conversations with acquaintances and friends involved in the sport of hockey. Only one participant of this study spoke of this issue in her interview, and the others made jokes or changed the subject when the issue came up. Their unwillingness to talk about homosexuality reflects the discomfort and fear of the subject in most of society. Addressing the homophobia and heterosexism issue

was not a part of the interview schedule, but it is included as a theme in chapter five linked to many of the chapter four categories, and it is listed as a recommendation for future research in chapter six.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure that the research process was in the best interest of the participants. The considerations were:

- 1) Establishing an "egalitarian setting and relationship between the interviewer and the participant" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.67). One way to ensure this was to encourage each participant to offer their input as much as possible, not only as they answered my questions, but also as they asked them of me. I encouraged participants to contact me should they wish to add more information. I provided an address and phone number.
- 2) I recognized all participants as autonomous, unique, knowledgeable, and essential to the research process.
- 3) Stating the research focus to each participant at the time of our first contact.
- 4) Each participant signed a consent form stating that they agreed to participate in the study of their own free will. They were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The consent form may be found in Appendix C.
- 5) Permission to record the interview was requested before the recorder was turned on, and again when the tape was recording.

- 6) After each interview, the tape recorder was turned off, and I asked if the participant had any questions or concerns about the interview process or the research in general.
- 7) Participants were guaranteed that anything they said in the interview would be kept confidential. Pseudonyms were used when writing about the results (see *Chapter Four: The Words of the Players*).
- 8) In this study, the ethical guidelines for the group interview and the individual interviews were the same.
- 9) University of Manitoba Ethics Committee approval was attained prior to the interviews.

Validity

The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are listed with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

A valid study is one that measures what it intends to measure. The participants are the people who can verify the validity of the interpretation of their experiences. In order to do a check on the validity of the study, asking participants for feedback on the interpretation must occur (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "All types of research must address the concepts of internal and external validity" (Thomas & Nelson, 1990, p.335). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to these concepts as truth value (internal validity) and transferability (external validity).

As well as remaining accountable to the participants' experiences through "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314), help from an outside expert to review the analysis will verify the dependability of the research. In order to ensure that this is a valid study, the considerations were: 1. Checking back with the participants for feedback on the study. This ensured that the words used in the description of the interviews represented their experiences, 2. I spoke regularly with a collaborator who helped to verify that I was understanding the experiences of women in hockey, and 3. Outside experts, the advisors on my thesis examining committee, critiqued the work throughout the process.

External Validity

Qualitative research takes place in the real world therefore it is not subject to the danger of a high degree of control. Control poses a threat to external validity and generalizability of a study. The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize, but rather, to ensure that the findings are applicable (Winther, 1992). The results are applicable if the participants agree that the analysis is a reasonable reconstruction of their reality. This research is reliable within the group of players interviewed. This type of study is exploratory, and is not intended to be generalizable to a larger population.

Although the goal of this exploratory study is not to generalize to a large population, Smith (1988) states that in case study research, if a similar pattern of results is obtained consistently enough in individual cases, the outcome is somewhat generalizable.

In this study, the key words and themes found consistently throughout the data is evidence of such a pattern, therefore there is some external validity. In terms of reliability and validity, however, it is more important that the method is replicable, and that the results of the study truly represent the words of the participants.

A copy of the results (*Chapter Four: The Words of the Players*) was sent to each participant, along with a feedback form. Ten of the twelve participants responded, and all of those who responded agreed that the analysis represented their experiences.

Reducing researcher bias

Throughout the process a file was kept containing one section for field notes, and one for conceptual baggage. "Field notes document various aspects of qualitative research: Observations, conversations, maps, plans, reflections, memos, preliminary analysis, etc." (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 32). Information from field notes will be used in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Conceptual baggage is a record of the researcher's own thoughts and ideas about the research process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Incorporating sections of conceptual baggage into the research adds another perspective--that of the researcher.

Recording conceptual baggage in a personal journal made the researcher aware of personal biases and thoughts. Once an awareness was reached, a decision to observe with limited prejudice could be made, and the biases and thoughts could then become further data for analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORDS OF THE PLAYERS

During the interviews, I asked participants questions about their beginnings in sport, their continued involvement, and future hopes for themselves and for the sport of female hockey. The interviews yielded 300 pages of transcribed data. This chapter is a descriptive account of the words of the players, organized into the following categories: 1. Beginnings in Hockey, 2. Growing Up, Playing Hockey, 3. The Women's Game, 4. The Male - Female Hockey Comparison, 5. Finances, Public Awareness, and the Importance of Role Models, and 6. Visions.

The information in each category emerged from the research, and this section relies strictly on the words of the players. The names of the categories were imposed by the researcher, and were chosen in order to make sense of related data.

The first section, Beginnings in Hockey, tells the story of how the women interviewed became involved in hockey. It is a discussion of parental and family support, gender differences, and opportunities that were available for the players in the first stages of their sport experiences. The next section, titled Growing Up, Playing Hockey, is about the women's involvement as they grew older. The experiences included staying involved in sport throughout puberty, a discussion about sexuality and sport, and the joy of belonging to a team. The third section, The Women's Game, discusses the uniqueness of female hockey. In this section, the players speak of their enjoyment of and commitment to the game, and of the physical and mental

sophistication required at the elite level. The players words about the female game include the confidence gained through sport, and the uniqueness of the female game. The fourth section, Female-Male Hockey Comparison, is a discussion of how the two sports are quite different, yet the women's game is often spoken of in male terms or in comparison to the men's game. It includes three issues: the inequalities in sport, the violence in hockey, and the importance of feelings and communication in the female game. The fifth area is Finances, Public Awareness and The Importance of Role Models. It includes the struggle for finances, the need for media coverage, and the effect of role models. The final section is an account of the visions players had for the development of their sport. Visions of the players included what they wanted to see in terms of development for female hockey. The players visions included: a need for awareness of the sport of female hockey; the idea of professional hockey for women; the importance of increasing the number of female hockey associations in Canada; and the issue of representative (all-star) teams at the Canadian National Championships.

This chapter, the Words of the Players, is the story of the women who agreed to talk about their experiences in hockey. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the words of these women are not intended to represent all participants of female hockey. It is intended to tell the story of twelve women who play ice hockey in Canada.

The Participants

The following is a brief overview of each of the women interviewed for the study. The age range of the participants at the time of the study was 18 to 35 years. Five of the 12 women have played on the Canadian national women's hockey team. All of the women who participated in this study were participants at the 1994 Canadian Women's Ice hockey Championship.

"Teresa" began playing hockey on a boys' team at the age of eight. At the time of the interview she was in her thirties. Teresa has experience coaching, and works full time.

"Julia" began her hockey career at the age of twelve. Her first experiences on the ice were in figure skating. At the time of the study, Julia was a university student who also worked outside of school in order to support her studies and her hockey. She began playing the position of goaltender at the age of nineteen, and she was twenty-four at the time of the interview.

"Bonnie" is a college graduate, and is involved with coaching and instructing hockey. She began playing organized hockey at the age of eight, on a boys' team.

"Maria" began her hockey career at age thirteen, on a female team. She is a university graduate, coaches volleyball, and instructs at hockey schools during the summer. Maria was 33 years old at the time of the interview.

"Jane" began playing organized hockey at the age of thirteen. She was twenty-five years old at the time of the study. She teaches physical education, coaches volleyball, and has a background in sports administration.

At the time of the study, "Maggie" was thirty-five. She began playing hockey at age nineteen. She has worked as a teacher, and has also organized a school hockey program for boys and girls.

"Joelle" began playing organized hockey on a female team, at the age of six. At the time of the study she was twenty-three, and was working towards her second university degree.

"Nan" began playing hockey during high school, at the age of seventeen, and was twenty years old at the time of the study. She has played on a Canada Games hockey team, and also has experience in the area of coaching. She is studying in the area of recreation, and is working towards a career in sport.

"Ruth" began playing hockey at a local community club. At the time of the study she was twenty-eight years old. Ruth is a university graduate.

"Louise" began to play organized hockey at age thirteen, equipped in figure skates. At the time of the study, she was both playing and coaching hockey.

"Patty" joined a boys' team at age five and a half. She played on male teams until the age of fifteen, at which point she began to play on an all-female team. At the time of the study, Patty was a university student, and was twenty-one years old.

"Astrid" began playing hockey during her first year of university. She has also played competitive ringette and soccer. At the time of the interview she was 29 years old.

Beginnings in Hockey: Family Support, Gender Differences,
Opportunities

Most participants had some form of support for their sport participation. The research demonstrated that players were influenced by their families as they became involved in sport. One issue that arose was the difference in the encouragement of boys and girls into sport. According to the players, girls and boys were offered different opportunities. When asked about their early experiences, players shared that there was a tendency for parents to enroll girls in sports such as figure skating and ringette, boys in hockey. When the women of this study began to take part in sport, there were few organized hockey leagues for girls. The women interviewed started organized hockey later in life than most boys do. The ages they started playing on an organized female team varied from age seven to 17. One player, remembering watching her brother play said:

I always watched him...I went and we drove together to the games and I would cry all the time because I couldn't play. I didn't understand--why could he play and why can't I? (Maria).

Some players watched their brothers play, and others left the sidelines to join in the game. One player told of how she used to play with her brother:

My brother was playing hockey, so I was always following him, and then I started outside with him (Maggie).

Other girls also joined in and played with the boys. The girls were often placed in net, and words they heard as they grew up were:

"She's a girl, put her in net" (Bonnie).

"Okay, we'll take [her] so we can put her in net and shoot pucks at her" (Jane).

As children, most of the participants had experienced playing hockey with boys. Only one woman spoke of her days playing on the pond or local rink with sisters as well as brothers. When Jane went to the rink she was often the only female on the ice and she said:

You're the only girl there, right, you're with all these other guys. "Okay, so we'll put her in net because she can't skate"...you play with a bunch of boys and they're shooting pucks at your head.

Bonnie remembered the hours she spent on the ice as a child:

I used to play down at the outdoor arena, in my neighborhood, so I'd just go down, play and play until the lights went out and then go home and go to school, get up, and go back out to the rink.

She didn't mention a brother's influence, she just loved the sport so much she kept on playing, usually with her male friends. Friends and siblings appear to have influenced the players' decisions to participate in hockey. Another major source of support and encouragement were the parents.

For most participants, parents were seen as a source of support. Only one player mentioned a general lack of support at home. (She did have the support of friends.) According to the other participants, support at home was often what encouraged them as girls to participate in sport. The support and encouragement from mothers and fathers, and sometimes entire families was evident. One woman spoke of how her father and mother encouraged her:

[My father] coached a lot of my teams and he was always around. My mother was very supportive too.(Astrid).

Joelle distinctly remembered her parents asking if she wanted to play hockey. She also told of how her father further supported her by getting involved at home:

I just remember, one day my mom and dad saying to me, you know, "Do you wanna play?", And then I remember saying, "Yeah". I remember I'd drag my dad down there after dinner and make him shoot on me..."Do you wanna go play hockey down in the basement, Dad?"

For the most part, these women have benefited from parents who supported them and invested time and money into sport for their children. Maria described how her dad knew she wanted to play, and found a female team for her:

My brothers...one of them played, and I really wanted to play badly, 'cause I did everything he did, and there wasn't anything available, and one day my dad met a girl, she was wearing a hockey jacket, and he inquired about it and found out and...registered me.

For the women, there wasn't always a team to play on. Often the girls were started off in figure skating or ringette. Julia described her figure skating experience:

I was put in figure skating to start off with and my figure skating coach told my dad and my mom that they should take me out because all I wanted to do was race! Race up and down the ice, I didn't wanna do any of those little flips and stuff like that.

One player who played ringette before she started hockey expressed her regret at having started hockey later in life. She realized that although through her ringette experience she had learned to skate and pass well, it was still hard to play elite level hockey because of her late start:

I missed so many years it's very hard to keep up when you're at this level, you know, and you haven't played all your life (Astrid).

She added:

I kind of wondered, you know, after I started playing hockey, why the hell didn't my father put me in hockey at the beginning? You know I sort of felt ripped off in some ways.

As children, opportunities were very different for boys and girls according to the participants of this study. Most wore figure skates

starting out, and they noted that most boys began on hockey skates.

Opportunities for females were limited. They couldn't aspire to be in the NHL. They couldn't make a living at their favorite sport unless it was golf or tennis. Ruth reflected on the different attitude her father had towards her versus her brother in sport:

My brother played when I played--but major difference. My dad would be very interested in his games and be at his games absolutely on time if not earlier. It's my turn and like I couldn't even drive then, we were always late...very different attitude. Beause he thinks supposedly they could go somewhere--to the NHL--whereas for us it's like nothing. It's just fooling around.

One of the players fortunate to have played hockey from an early age was supported by her parents, yet she was pressured by other parents of the boys she played with. She described the experience:

Parents in general and mostly the mothers, they felt that I was taking their sons' opportunities away from making the NHL (Patty).

Despite the pressures from the boys' mothers that she was taking their opportunities to play in the NHL, Patty found it ironic that most of the boys would not get very far in hockey whether she played or not. She said:

The humorous part is...most of those kids [boys] never made it past Bantam. They never went anywhere (Patty).

Her parents were always supportive. She did not consider herself lucky or fortunate. In her family, boys and girls both had equal opportunities. She said:

I might have taken my parents for granted but why should I, I mean, for guys it just comes naturally and so I think it should be that way everywhere. I don't think a woman should say, "Oh, thank god I have parents who would let me play hockey" (Patty).

Patty played on male teams until the age of fifteen. She recalled why she decided to switch to playing on a female team:

They [the guys] were so much stronger than me...it just got to a point with strength so then I transferred over and also sometimes when you're playing with the guys you know it gets a little awkward in the dressing room and so you feel a little more comfortable playing on a girls' team...which I think is fine.

Most of the women I interviewed had played with the guys at some time. Although it was not a specific question in the interview schedule, the participants often shared their experiences of playing with boys. For example:

A lot of times the other guys thought I was a guy!
[laughs] (Bonnie).

I played on a boys' team and it was fine, but it was nice to have two other girls there. There were three girls on the team. We had to change in the ref's room though. Parents were a little picky about half way through the season (Julia).

The players had many questions about the differences they saw between male and female hockey. For example, Ruth wondered:

The boys are allowed to play hockey and they can go and play so far up to a certain level and girls can't. How come they don't get all that stuff? Why don't we get the same opportunities? (Ruth).

At one time, the answer to the problem of limited sports opportunities for girls was the creation of the sport of ringette. The two sports, hockey and ringette are quite different, and the general public seems to be confused about the two, according to the hockey players. The participants of this study stated that although ringette and hockey are quite different, people often believe that women's ice hockey is the same as ringette. Joelle stated:

When you say you play hockey, people say, "Oh, is that ringette?"

Many female players have reported that others often make the mistake of referring to female hockey as ringette. When I asked why people still say ringette for ice hockey, one woman thought it might be that ringette is getting more publicity. Another opinion was that young girls were enrolled in ringette more often than hockey. One reason for this, according to Ruth, was the perceived safety of ringette:

I think people are more likely to put their kids in ringette because they figure you know, they won't get hurt.

Joelle stressed that as youngsters, neither sex is more prone to injury than the other. She said:

Whether you're a girl or a boy, you know, to me neither one's more vulnerable to injury than the the other.

Joelle did not have a favourable opinion of ringette, and felt it was originally developed in place of female hockey. She said:

I guess I don't really have too high an opinion of ringette

--I suppose it's probably got its merits too, but I guess to me maybe it probably developed as a substitute for girls' hockey probably in a lot of places that initially didn't have it, probably in the 60s and 70s...to me, if you're gonna play ringette, you might as well play hockey.

Now that female hockey is more readily available for girls, the number of hockey players is increasing, but large numbers continue to play ringette. One player expressed surprise at the survival of the sport of ringette:

I've said this for years that ringette's going to die...but it keeps going on for some reason (Astrid).

Whether it is ringette or hockey, female sport is often viewed to be less important than male sport. The attitude of others towards female hockey players, one player perceived, is:

"You know, you're not going to the NHL. Why don't you just focus on school" (Astrid).

The women of this study reached an elite level in their sport despite opinions of others that female hockey is not important. One player who had won a world championship spoke about the perceptions people had when they learned of her success:

If they hear you've won a World Championship, they don't think it's quite at the level that the men are (Teresa).

The opportunities for these women as they began to play hockey were limited, and the sport is often perceived as less important than male hockey.

Despite such barriers to participation, the players of this study chose to remain involved due to their enjoyment of the game and its related experiences. The participants of this study shared with me the experiences in hockey as they grew older. The next section includes those later experiences.

Growing Up, Playing Hockey: Puberty, Sexuality, Team Spirit

The non-traditional nature of hockey for women brings about issues that are unique to the sport. It is a fast, strong game, and may appear to be quite rough as players bump into one another on the ice, colliding into the boards in an attempt to come up with the puck. Women are traditionally seen as participants in figure skating, ballet, tennis, and gymnastics--all sports which require great levels of fitness, but unlike hockey, they have a more aesthetic quality of grace and beauty. The grinding, sweaty nature of hockey is not consistent with the traditional graceful image of female sport. Consequently, there are unique experiences for women in hockey. This section discusses the experiences of the women interviewed as they progressed in hockey, with an emphasis on the decrease in participation rates at puberty, issues surrounding sexuality, and the benefits of belonging to a team.

One of the experiences for female players is the reaction to them when others find out they take part in hockey. Players have stated that people react in surprise, disbelief, or humour. There is often a feeling on the part of players, even at the elite level, that they are not taken seriously. One player said that her father thought she would not remain interested in hockey. She stated:

I'm sure my dad just thought that he didn't wanna buy me goalie stuff, because he thought that, "Oh, she'll play hockey 'til she's 16, get into boys, and drop that--it's a phase" (Julia).

She is now in her twenties and still plays at an elite level. However, there are many females who drop out of sport at puberty.

Puberty

There is a significant decrease in sport participation rates of females once they reach puberty. The words of the players support this fact. Astrid spoke of the dropout rate of girls from sport at puberty:

The biggest problem for female sports is at puberty age when all of a sudden girls discover boys and you lose, I mean you must wipe out about half of the female sporting population...and a lot of them were good, really good.

She continued with sport through puberty, but she saw a lot of her friends and teammates drop out. She felt the values at puberty often become focused on boys and makeup. She said:

I don't know how you stop that, but the values that girls get--obviously it's not cool...to play sports if you want to get a boyfriend. I just know there was a significant difference about what I did in my life as a kid. Some of my friends were going out with boys and wearing makeup...And I don't know if it's because I was brought up differently because my parents were always very supportive of my sports.

She had the support of her parents. Sometimes the players did not feel that support from parents and others.

I had an interesting conversation with a group of players about other people's attitudes towards them, as active, confident women:

Patty: I think that some parents don't want their daughters to be butchy

Louise: It's too aggressive I guess

Patty: But I'm telling you and I look back and I wouldn't change a thing because I think it's great. I'm one of these, I have too much confidence. I'll go out and I'll play with the guys anytime and a lot of women won't

Interviewer: Is that what they're calling butchy-- confidence?

Louise: Some men don't like to see that in women. The confidence aspect. Women that can go out and play and skate and feel good about being there and hold their head high and you know. And you'll get, you'll feel that on the ice from certain guys that have had that attitude that you do not belong here. You as a woman...

As a woman, Louise noticed a certain attitude that made her feel like she did not quite belong. Another player felt welcomed and had fond memories of playing with the boys when she was younger:

They call on you...being an old tomboy that I was when I was younger, and you just enjoy the game, you go out there and play, and it's a lot of fun (Bonnie).

A word often used to describe the players when they were young active girls, was "tomboy". We talked a bit about the use of the word:

Patty: I didn't like it, I mean I was a total tomboy growing up. I hated it.

Interviewer: You hated being called a tomboy?

Patty: Yeah. Like I said, I just wanted to be like my brother.

Although she disliked the term "tomboy", she said she wouldn't change anything about her active childhood. The players felt good about being active as children.

Generally, girls receive encouragement to play as youngsters, but once they reach puberty, the encouragement decreases or disappears. A few of the participants talked about how mothers feel about their daughters playing, and their thoughts illustrate why the amount of encouragement from mothers may drop at puberty. One player spoke of the worries mothers might have:

I think a lot of mothers worried if their daughters kept doing that. That's okay for a little while, but if they as twelve, thirteen, fourteen year olds, continue to play road hockey and to climb trees and be aggressive and punch out boys and what not, they're a little worried (Louise).

According to Louise, it seemed that it was acceptable to play non-traditional sports, to be active and assertive until puberty, but there came a time when the support for such behavior decreased. At puberty, the pressures from society and family, seemed to lead more towards a lifestyle related to traditionally feminine pursuits. She spoke about what mothers wanted for their daughters:

They want them to settle down, get married. You know, have a family. Like themselves, a lot of them. You know, they want them to be taken care of and they don't want them to be too different.

She added:

Did their mothers worry about maybe their daughters would turn into something they didn't want them to turn into due to hockey? Kind of an aggressive sport.

Louise seemed to be hinting that mothers generally wanted their daughters to be traditionally feminine; not to be "too different". Other words related to being different such as: "butch", "tomboy", "tough", "truck drivers", "dyke", and "women who wear flannel shirts", were said by the participants. When I asked them to elaborate on the words, most would laugh, repeat the same words, or change the topic. Their silence is important, as it indicates a lack of comfort or a feeling of being at risk in discussing such things (Kirby, personal communication, April 19, 1996).

Astrid went more in depth on how women were expected not to be too different. She spoke of how the players from her province were told to dress to create a positive image for the sport and the province. This has been a standard practice for men in sport over the years. Early on in their hockey careers, many young men are told to wear dress clothes when entering and exiting the rink, and when traveling as a team.

One of the reasons Astrid did not like to be told what to wear is that she felt she was being treated like a child:

The biggest piss off that I have is that I'm an adult. I'm not a ten year old kid and I really feel like I get treated like that. It really pisses me off...checking to see who's in whose room and, "Hey you got to be in bed by this time and no jeans"..."What are you, my mother?" (Astrid).

Another reason she disliked the practice was because when told by her representative, "We don't appreciate you wearing black leather", she felt that the message was anti-lesbian:

Astrid: Black leather can be frowned upon for some reason..."If there's too many lesbians in this sport for your liking or something", I don't know.

Interviewer: Was that the connotation that you got..."Don't dress like a lesbian"?

Astrid: Yeah.

Astrid spoke openly of the discrimination towards homosexuals as she perceived it to exist in sport. When a woman chooses to be different by becoming involved in a non-traditional sport, often her sexuality is questioned. In this woman's opinion, sexual orientation should not interfere with sport participation. She asked the question, "What has this got to do with hockey?" She spoke openly of her views on homosexuality. She discussed it with me when I asked, "Do you think female hockey is an open environment for gay women?" She said, "Oh no, god no".

Astrid had heard that lesbians were possibly discriminated against by the national team selection process. She had never tried out for the team, but the last word she heard on the National Training Camp that had just been held, was that "it was basically a witch hunt because they wanted to, you know, boot out as many lesbians as they could" (Astrid). She felt that there was a general fear of homosexuality in sport, and that too much contact with teammates was not encouraged:

The attitude seems to be towards women in sport, "Have fun...be nice...but go home to your boyfriend or your husband afterwards".

She perceived that people are threatened somehow by women who participate in team or group activities and she said:

It's the same sex getting together, you are quite intimate with your other team members, you know, you travel, you shower, you do whatever. Um, and that, that can be threatening. And for women, when women sort of gather together that's very threatening [for some men].

There is some evidence that when women gather together as a group or a team, other people are threatened by the power created. Often the sexuality of the group becomes questioned. The result is often that women simply do not participate so that they will not be labelled as lesbian. Consequently, many girls and women entirely miss out on what can be an enjoyable sport experience.

Team Spirit

One reason the players enjoy their sport is because of the team experience. The women spoke of the sense of belonging they felt being a member of a team. They talked about love, support and respect for their teammates. There were comments about instances of conflict, but most reflected the importance of a strong cohesive unit. Players stated that friendship and bonding were as important to success as pure technical ability. For example, Julia said about her team, "They don't have all this talent, but [have] a lot of heart". Her teammate said, "Heart and desire has been stronger than our ability" (Teresa). According to the players, it is important to have

talent to play at the national level, but physical ability isn't everything. One player said:

You've got to have a good relationship with your teammates, for sure, or else your team's not going to work (Nan).

Teresa felt that a good relationship with teammates can lead to great performances:

You know, our love for each other and the friendships that we have..."I don't wanna let you down, she doesn't wanna let me down"...you end up doing miraculous plays out there!

When the final game is over, the tournament ends, the season draws to a close, it is often not the score that is the fondest memory. Although the players spoke passionately about winning, they also spoke highly of the many great experiences they had as they became friends with players on their own teams as well as rival teams. Bonnie spoke of how she values such friendships:

The most important thing is that you meet new people and friends, and those are the friends that you have for the rest of your life. And that's through hockey, through sport in general.

Teresa stressed the importance of caring about teammates and their feelings:

Players need to understand each others' feelings and thoughts on, could be work, could be where you grocery shop, but all those things are important so you don't hurt somebody's feelings at the wrong time, that you're aware of their sensitivities and maybe their tragedies they've

had in their life. I think all those things are important for a team.

She also had a healthy respect for the team fun and antics that go on in the dressing room which she referred to as, "the things you do in the dressing room after [the game] which are very private for the team...crazy things!".

In summary, the players enjoyed meeting people, being part of a team, and maintaining contact with friends made through hockey. They also recognized that success can be greatly influenced by a strong cohesive unit.

The Women's Game: Enjoyment, Commitment

This section includes the players' words about their enjoyment of the game and its uniqueness, the amount of commitment required to play elite hockey, confidence gained through sport, and the level of sophistication of their physical and mental training skills.

Enjoyment of the Game

Oh, there's nothing like lacing up your skates! (Jane)

The women enjoy playing hockey for various reasons. A few of them are: excitement, desire to work hard, friendships, fun, love for the game, and the team experience. The following quotes describe their enjoyment of the game:

It's exciting, it's just a great feeling and it's a lot of fun!
(Nan).

When something's pretty to watch on the ice, it's like nothing else! It's just inside you, it's like a bug. It's like this thing that eats at you and any time you can play, you're gonna play (Jane).

Although they love the game, some participants recognize that there is opposition for women playing hockey. They see it in the lack of opportunities for girls and women, lack of media attention, and a general lack of knowledge that female hockey exists.

One woman stated that at first when she began to play the game, she hesitated to tell people she played. When I asked her, "Why?", she answered:

Because I was afraid of their reaction at that time, because it wasn't really well, how do you say...they didn't see it as a really nice sport for women...They always think that "Okay, you play ice hockey so you must be really tough" and that's why I never really wanted them to know that I was playing, but not any more! (Maggie)

The opinions of others who feel that hockey is not a sport for women, did not deter the participants from playing. One player spoke of the uniqueness and strength of women who play. She described the struggles of playing hockey, and the resulting strengths:

It's never been really easy to play hockey with certain parents that did not encourage girls to play, and certain boys on the teams that didn't want you there, and that you keep persevering and you keep reaching your goals that you set for yourself, and eventually you end up on a team when you're 30 years old and you're surrounded, you look around in the dressing room and you see other women that are--really got their act together, they're very strong, outspoken, you know, unique people! (Louise)

She added:

Hockey really gives women an opportunity to go against the grain of society. And allows us to feel more power in ourselves because we are doing something that, it's not encouraged you know, and so it gives us a sense of uniqueness and confidence.

The women I interviewed are proud to be hockey players. Their enjoyment of the game keeps them committed to the hard work and discipline required to participate.

Commitment: Physical and Mental Demands

The elite are committed. They experience great physical, mental, and lifestyle demands in order to play at a highly competitive level. They sacrifice things other people find hard to give up, such as spending time with family and friends. Often school will suffer or be put on hold, and work will also be given a lower priority. The demands are self-imposed; they play because they enjoy the satisfaction of hard work. One player smiled as she shared a memory of a game that ended after four periods of overtime:

Then when it was over, it hit you. You were just--we had nothing left. I mean I couldn't take my equipment off I was so dead! (Astrid)

It was hard work, and she indicated by both the smile on her face and the pride in her voice that she enjoyed pushing her body to its physical limits. These women work hard not only in sport, but in life as well. None of them are paid to play hockey. One player spoke of quitting a job once to attend a national competition in another sport

(not hockey). She realizes work is essential to her survival, but makes it clear upon starting a job that she will be leaving town at times to participate in sport, and consequently will need to take time off.

For those who are in school, being an amateur athlete and a student, often while keeping a full or part time job is not an easy life. There is little or no chance to make a living playing hockey. Most of them work or go to school and therefore have very full lives outside of their sport. Teresa spoke about the tiring life of an athlete:

I just found myself running a little bit short of hours in a day. There's nights when you're really tired and stuff, but you still have to go to practice, you still gotta work. I mean work is a number one priority.

Bonnie plans her schedule around her training. She said:

It rules my life, my schedule; it has for the past fifteen years, so hopefully it'll rule my life for the next four years.

One player is so committed to hockey that she prioritizes it ahead of her schooling:

School's supposed to come first, but I guess I sort of say, 'Priority A--hockey, then B--school. They're both important, but...for me, hockey...kind of is an identity right now (Joelle).

She knows school is important, and told me she knows there has to be life after hockey, but at the time of the interview, her first priority was hockey. Her commitment level was such that she played

mens intramural hockey during the week, her team got together on the weekends, and the team played in a midget boys league. There were not a lot of opportunities for females in her province, so she went out and found herself places to play, and men to play with.

Julia explained the commitment level expected of her team if they wish to participate at this level of hockey:

From day one you know that this is what you're shooting for, shooting toward the provincials, you're shooting to go to nationals and win nationals, so there's that commitment there and you know that it's there right at the start...so don't even bother trying out if you don't want to give it.

One aspect of commitment is the physical demand the women experience. One player felt she was overtrained during the first year she went to nationals because she worked so intensely at hockey during the season. She explained:

I wanted to do so well that...I was overtrained...so I didn't perform as I would have liked to. I didn't get any result because I was probably, you know, overtrained (Maggie).

I asked one very experienced player, "Do you still see physical improvements in yourself from year to year?":

Oh yeah. Each year, you know, you get older, more experienced, and some things that, you know, you might wanna work on, some things that you wanna change and it's really good because we have good coaching staff and I always say..."Tell me what I'm doing wrong; tell me what you see". So, you know, you can never be rated too high because there's always room for improvement (Bonnie).

The mental and physical hard work resulted in increased enjoyment for the players. One of the women described an experience:

Sometimes, you know, I just feel like I have the control...I am in control, and it's like, it's fun!...a few times when you are on the ice and you, you feel like you see everything, and it's like everything goes...your way (Maggie).

There are times for the players when everything does not go their way, and the physical demands result in injury. Two of the women I spoke to were dealing with injuries at the time of the interview. The strength to overcome injury requires mental and physical toughness, as is exemplified by the words of one player who said:

It's all...worth it too, to go for two or three hours of physio every day, and before nationals come, and you gotta find time for that, and money for that. Right now I sit on a heating pad, cause I pulled my hamstring ten days before I came, so I stretch that out...We were playing a men's team, and I did the splits, I went right across--was a cross post pass, so I just ripped out my leg and my blocker, so my blocker followed, in front of my leg...I went to physio for seven days straight before my game (Julia).

One of the injured players felt that her injury helped her to put things in perspective. She said:

Chasing a little black disk, and trying to put it in the net, I mean, that's, in the big picture of life, it's really nothing...hey look, there's more to life than hockey (Maria).

Although she has committed a large proportion of her life to hockey, she realizes that other things in life are important too. Despite the level of commitment required, she appreciates the importance of living a balanced life.

Commitment: Mental Training

A commitment to improving physical skills is only one part of what has brought the women of this study to a level of elite hockey. Mental toughness was also required for the players to be successful. In order to be mentally tough, a certain amount of mental skill development must be a part of the overall training regimen. The definition of mental training, for the purpose of this paper, is the use of psychological knowledge and skills used by the twelve participants of this study. It involves the control of the participants over what they are thinking. These thought patterns can have a positive or negative effect on performance.

Although no questions in the interview schedule were specifically about mental training, several examples came up as the participants talked about their experiences. We talked about general mental preparation, and how individual players use different skills such as imagery, relaxation, and focusing. We also talked about priorities and balancing life's activities.

General mental preparation for the players consisted of thoughts and behaviours that helped them to prepare for play. Each used different skills to prepare mentally for games. One player recognized that on her team, each player had her own way of getting mentally ready for a game:

Everyone sort of has their own, their own way of preparing...I think everybody is different...and you have to respect that...I just try to focus on what I need to do in that particular game and try to stay relaxed and not waste my energy getting all excited (Astrid).

I asked Astrid what she saw her teammates doing for mental preparation. She noticed some put their walkmans on and others go for walks. She added:

At this level a lot of it's mental. And any sport at a high level, the team that has the mental preparation usually comes out on top.

Another player noted the importance of mental preparation when she spoke about working out mentally as well as physically:

We always say, "oh well, we work out, we work out", but you have to work out up here [points to head] (Maggie).

Maggie used mental strategies in practices as well as in games. One of her strategies during games was to make herself stop thinking about mistakes made on the ice. She explained that one way to stay positive was by controlling those thoughts:

How do I stay positive? It's hard, especially because I'm really hard on myself...especially when you do a bad move on the ice...because if you still keep thinking about that, you're dead...you're out.

She mentioned that she likes to read about sport psychology and she said about visualization:

It works...and it's funny because I was doing that before I knew what it was. You know it's funny, I--remember I

was young and every time I was going to bed, I was seeing myself playing hockey.

I talked to two goalies and discovered they practice concentration and mental toughness unique to their position in net. I asked the goalies if it was hard to motivate themselves to stay focused for the games in which they received few shots. One player said:

It's hard...to keep yourself in the game, but you almost have to play with the players, follow the puck everywhere...it's not hard to get up for those games, not at all (Julie).

The other goalie answered:

You always have to try to keep concentrating. Some games where even if you're only getting ten shots, you know, five of them may still be high quality, so you have to be there...when they need you, so usually when the action's down at the other end I just sort of keep following the puck. I always just try to stay focused...all the way through. I just try to stay as relaxed as possible (Joelle).

I asked Joelle what the qualities of a good goaltender are and she answered:

Concentration...mental toughness. You have to want to be there and then just not to let things bother you...good skating skills and flexibility, and agility. There's the old saying, "The goalie should be the best skater on the team", so you still need the movement, you know, back and forth, and...good glove hands would probably come in handy, and good reflexes in general, and...a willingness to go out and challenge the shooters.

One goalie used an example of how she controlled her thoughts when a goal is scored on her:

When you get scored on?...I just look to the next goal...put that curtain over it...totally block that out because it's the next shot that's gonna count, and not the one that just went in, you know. Put that one up on the scoreboard...can't dwell on it or it'll ruin your whole game (Julia).

It happened that two of the women interviewed for this study were goaltenders. I did not develop any specific questions for goaltenders, but after talking to them, I wondered if there were qualities unique to goaltenders, not often found in the personalities of the other players.

I got a sense that the goalies in this study had perspectives that differed from their teammates. Consequently, I believe it would be interesting to research the experiences of goaltenders. One goalie stated that there is information about males, but not about females who are netminders, with the exception of Manon Rheaume.

Part of being mentally tough is staying confident. Confidence and winning seem to be closely related for the women I interviewed. The women I spoke to enjoy their sport and they enjoy being successful at it. A couple of them commented on the importance of winning:

You don't just go to play, you go to win! (Bonnie)

It's important to have fun, but it's also important to win!
(Jane)

When one player started with a new team that wasn't very strong compared to her previous team, she set a goal:

I want them to know what it is to win...and enjoy winning, because I think that you can have fun and you can win too (Maggie).

She helped them to win, and said:

They never thought they could win...now they don't wanna lose any more!

In the overtime period of a game, Maggie once said to herself, "I'm gonna friggin' score that goal!", and she did. She now has confidence in herself but expressed that she has not always been so confident:

When I was younger...I had more confidence on the ice than outside, let's say when I first started to go to university, you know, I didn't really have confidence in myself, but when I was on the ice...I had more confidence in sports in general...maybe it helped...because I was good at sports...I was much more confident in my sports than in my life (Maggie).

She added:

I have confidence in myself, and I know I can do it...I've been training hard and then, you know, it pays off.

Confidence is not only important in terms of performance, but also in staying involved with sport throughout one's life. One woman and I discussed the fact that many girls drop out of sport when they reach puberty. She remained physically active throughout puberty.

When I asked her, "Why?", she answered:

Because I was successful. I was good. It was a positive reinforcement, you know, um, this great ego boost...I think it's really hard and it's probably hard for the males too, to stick it out when you're not that good (Astrid).

Confidence, for Astrid, was directly related to her continued participation and success in sport.

The participants of this study enjoy the game, are committed to it mentally and physically, and recognize their sport and its players as unique, talented and strong. The words of the players show that the women's game has become quite sophisticated and now requires high levels of physical and mental commitment from players who wish to reach an elite level.

The Female - Male Comparison: Inequalities, Violence, Feelings and Communication

Women are no longer playing a man's game. All players agreed that female and male hockey are different. The players I interviewed expressed that neither game is better, but that each one has its own qualities. The following are some of the thoughts one player had about the qualities of the female game. She stated:

Women play a really smart game...It's just different [from the male game]. The guys have a lot more speed and strength, so because of that you don't see the plays, like you don't see the tactical game as much as you do in a female game, because we've got more time (Teresa).

Maria noticed that female hockey was often measured in male terms:

We always seem to have to be measured against the male game...and our whole game is different.

There are definite differences between male and female hockey. As one woman explained, ideally each sport should be valued for what they are, and perhaps each can learn from the other:

You have to appreciate the sport for what it is. Because undoubtedly, undoubtedly male sport is faster. The skating's faster, the body checking is evident. We don't have it in female hockey. And it's a different game. Female hockey--it's slower than male hockey, but it's fast. The shots are not as hard, but they're hard. There's no bodychecking, but there's contact...So what I'm saying is, we can't aspire to be NHL players because that's not what we are. We are elite female hockey players. Take it for what it's worth. Go and see how good our good is, and it's pretty damn good! (Jane)

Inequalities

In their experiences, it is quite common to compare male and female hockey, especially when they see the inequalities in sport.

One player asked:

What is the difference? Why do they deserve something? I mean we've trained, we've worked just as hard, and we've won! (Maria)

Maria was referring to the fact that the men's national team receives more benefits. Yet the Canadian women's team has won three World Championships and do not receive the same benefits.

Another player asked of the male game:

How come they have pro hockey and we don't? (Nan)

When Astrid became involved in hockey, she realized quickly that there were no opportunities to make a national team or to play on Hockey Night in Canada, and she said, "You realize you were a female

and it didn't really go beyond [recreational]". She spoke about the inequalities in sport and how it seems that changes of any kind take so long. She talked about developments that have been made in female hockey such as the addition of female hockey in the Olympics in 1998. Astrid recognized that changes need to be made:

If you look at the Olympics and that's probably the closest you can come to as far as having some equality within sport. And even there when you start getting down to the nitty-gritty there are major inequalities (Astrid).

Patty talked about the idea of people playing according to ability, rather than separating players on boys' or girls' teams. She considered the possibilities of women playing in the NHL not only as goaltenders, but in one of the other five positions. She said:

If there's a good enough "out" [out of net] player, if they can play in the professional ranks--go for it! Why not? (Patty)

Teresa expressed that she would prefer girls to play female hockey:

I don't want to see any kids, any little girls playing on boys' leagues unless there's not a team for them to play. Then I say, "Yeah, stay in the Minor hockey system", but if there's a girls' team, "Come learn the girls' game, 'cause there are some differences.

When I asked Teresa if she thought women could play with men she answered:

No, never. And that is not discrediting women's hockey...there's just a physical difference that we can't improve on...women are just not physically as strong as men.

Boys and girls can play together quite equally before puberty. At puberty there are significant size and strength increases for the males, not yet equalled by the females. Indeed, there are biological reasons women do not play professional hockey. Manon Rheume is a woman who has played in an NHL game. She is an exception to the reality that women do not play in the NHL.

One player I spoke to was respectful of Rheume, but would prefer to see her playing regularly in the women's game:

We'd like to see her make it big in the female world of hockey...She's a woman in men's hockey (Teresa).

In 1991, Rheume posed as a Sun Girl in a local Edmonton newspaper. One player I talked to about the photo said, "She was wearing shorts, she didn't even look like a hockey player. She was a model in that picture versus a female hockey player" (Teresa). She added, "When somebody looks at that, they're no longer thinking about hockey".

Violence/Fighting

When comparing the male and female games, a significant difference between the two is the amount of fighting that occurs. Jane stated, "You'll rarely see a physical fight in women's hockey". Maria said, "Fighting's not really a part of it as far as I'm concerned". Not one of the players I interviewed condoned fighting. Fighting is not allowed in female hockey. One participant said about fighting:

You see it all the time in men's hockey and in major hockey you always see fights (Jane).

Another participant observed:

You turn on an NHL game today and there's, like, three to seven fights (Maria).

In my experience playing and watching female hockey, I have seen fewer than seven fights in total, all of which were broken up immediately, and the punishment was never less than a full game suspension. One woman said:

I don't understand about fighting, why people get excited about it, and why they think it's part of the game, because I've never seen anybody score a goal during a fight, you know, and that's what it's all about! You don't win a game through a fight (Maria).

Another player said:

Who needs to go home with a broken nose or 15 stitches?
(Teresa)

Astrid spoke of her brothers' experiences with violence in hockey:

Once they got past midget, it was just, it gets a little bit crazy. The guys they played against were really...you know, they're out to kill people instead of play the game.

Maria sees a double standard with regard to fighting. Because there is virtually no fighting in female hockey, yet it continues in male hockey, she commented:

In a way it's a double standard. It's okay for a guy to fight, but it's not okay for a female to fight. In reality, it's not okay for anybody to fight.

One player says the most exciting hockey she has seen was between Calgary and Edmonton in the Stanley Cup playoffs. She said:

There wasn't a fight, but it was just up and down hockey and you can't tell me the crowd didn't love it! (Maria)

The players I spoke to also feel this way, and one woman said:

I can't ever see it being a problem in women's hockey. I also see it dying down in men's hockey (Teresa).

It appears that women's hockey will remain fight-free. That is one of the differences between male and female hockey, according to the women of this study. It is one of the things that keeps the action of the game flowing, therefore making the sport exciting to watch and to play.

The Importance of Feelings and Communication

There is a high element of courtesy in the female game that isn't always there when you watch Hockey Night in Canada. Skating into the opposing goalie happens in male and female hockey. In one player's experience, she stated that the women were more likely to stick around and make sure no one got hurt. Teresa said:

Whoever ran into the goalie stays there, like, "Are you Okay?"

The courtesy extended to the off ice activity as well. For example, opposing players at the 1994 Nationals in Winnipeg traveled together to the game--two teams on one bus. On the ice they fought for the puck. Off the ice they were civil, respectful, and courteous.

The importance of considering others' feelings is evident in the female game. One participant thought that feelings and

communication were handled more often with female athletes than with male athletes and she said:

Feelings need to be taken into consideration. You can't just say, "This is the way it is", and, and leave them...You can't do that...Like with guys, I see coaches just say, I mean the guy might be hurting like hell inside, but he's not gonna show it. Whereas women show, most women show you if they're upset. And guys maybe hold it in a little bit more (Teresa).

For this reason, one player saw that it would be an advantage to have women coaching women:

The communication is maybe better with women, because when women coach women, they, they know the need is there. You can't just, I mean, you still have to be stern, and you have to--discipline has to be taught, and responsibility but, you can't just walk away if you know someone's upset...You have to deal with it (Teresa).

Teresa has coached females and said:

I would say women...from being involved a little bit in coaching...are very difficult to coach.

According to Teresa, the fact that women deal with their feelings more openly, and need to communicate those feelings and discuss them makes them more challenging to coach than males.

When I asked the participants if they would prefer a male or female coach, each one that I asked said they would prefer to see females coaching females--but not at the expense of technical ability. The women want the best coach for the job, male or female. One player suggested that since men are generally more experienced at coaching hockey, that it is fine to have them coaching the elite

players, but get the women interested in coaching, and get them working with the men as assistants.

Astrid noted the importance of getting more women involved:

You have to have more females at the head. Either coaching, reffing, administrative...My impression is that you get all these sort of male values of what women are supposed to be like in sport and as far as I'm concerned...I don't think they truly understand (Astrid).

The players made frequent comparisons of the male and female games. They recognized the qualities of each, and stressed the fact that female hockey is a refined, highly competitive, talented game. Although the women's game has its own definite qualities, presently it is common for the women I interviewed to allude to the character of men's hockey while describing female hockey.

Finances, Public Awareness, and Role Models

This section includes the topics of money, awareness, and developments in female hockey. It also includes a discussion of role models and ends with a section called, "What We Have is Not Enough". Most of the literature reviewed for this study highlighted the negative aspects of the struggle for finances, media coverage, and opportunities for women in sport.

I found that the players themselves had both a positive and a negative view of being a woman in sport. They see that it is not equal for men and women in sport, but they have very positive views of how their sport will develop, and that it will continue to develop.

Finances

Hockey is an expensive sport. To outfit a beginner you might pay from \$500.00 to \$2000.00. As you become more elite, you need better quality equipment and more frequent replacement as your skates and protective equipment become worn. Other expenses are ice rental, referee payments, local travel, and travel to out of town tournaments. As players grow, the equipment gets more expensive, and as the players' talent increases, so does the amount and cost of ice time. Consequently, the entire cost of playing goes up.

Some women who play receive financial aid in the form of free ice time. For example, teams at the Universities of Alberta and Manitoba, are permitted to use university ice at no cost. The hours are often early in the morning or late at night. It was hard, one player said, to get to the rink at those times, "but it was free...so that's something that brings down your cost" (Julia).

There are distinct differences between the men's teams and the women's teams at universities in Canada. One winter, the University of Toronto women's team had to fight to keep their team in existence. One woman mentioned that the women's team gets less nights of practice and less equipment given to them. She also noted that the men's team had a dressing room for their use throughout the season:

The guys had a much better dressing room that was always their dressing room (Maria).

This was in Toronto, Ontario--the province where female hockey is one of the most developed in Canada in terms of the number of programs and participants.

At the University of Manitoba, the men also have their own room all year where they can conveniently store their equipment, rather than carrying it with them to and from the rink. It is a matter of convenience as much as it is an issue of money. It is difficult to carry equipment to and from school and to go to class before or after practice having no place to store your equipment. Overall, it means that it is tougher for a female to play at an elite level and pursue an education. One player explained:

It's not the fact that "Oh, I want these things"...It's, you know, the fact that we have to work harder and pay for our own way...It seems that they get all the money (Maria).

The University of Manitoba women's team gets two to three ice slots per week on which they must schedule their games, whereas the men's team practices at least five times per week on the same ice, in addition to having ice available for weekend games.

Even at the highest level of female hockey it is hard to get a major sponsor. Most teams do a lot of fundraising through social events and individual sponsorship. One player drew up a promotional package for herself to send to businesses, requesting funding to cover her travel costs to the national championship. Through her efforts she was able to enlist enough support to afford the trip. Another player said that she and others constantly joked about their "paychecks". In fact, all players are amateur and many teams have

difficulty raising the significant amounts of money needed to produce a nationally competitive hockey team. For example, one player said her manager found them a sponsor who provided the team with jackets:

He is out there busting his butt for us, trying to get us the money so we don't have to worry about money. We just have to worry about playing hockey (Maria).

It is not easy to get sponsorship in any sport, and Julia stated that it might be even harder in a non-traditional sport like hockey:

It's hard to get, you know, people to sponsor you to recognize you, and you gotta fight against that all the time.

As much as the older, elite players need money, so too, does the development of young girls' hockey. Ontario hockey is well established, but some provinces haven't the finances to develop girls' hockey. One player suggested that if she had unlimited resources she would "get in every community, get a representative, get them out to the families with girls and promote female hockey" (Maria). She said the CHA once successfully promoted female hockey through the use of commercials that encouraged people to enroll their daughters in hockey. The commercial promoted female hockey and included a telephone number for registration information.

Unfortunately money is not always available for expenses such as television advertisements. The struggle for funding is ever-present in female hockey. One player believes that there will be more support and sponsorship after the women's hockey debut at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. She said:

I think people are starting to realize too, with female hockey, that the time commitment that is made...they're, they're kind of sitting back and saying, "Geez, these guys aren't even getting paid for this", you know, and they have no major sponsor...Women's hockey is such a wonderful game to watch...there's gonna be people who want to support it. They're going to want to have their name on jerseys...and on boards, and it's going to be on t.v. (Teresa).

Women want to play. It's one thing to state that female and male sport deserve equal status and funding--it's quite another to back up those beliefs and statements with ice time, sponsorship, media coverage, and all the tangible ways to promote and develop female sport. It is a systemic problem that needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis.

Public Awareness

In 1990, during the World Championships in Ottawa, there were lineups for tickets. Some fans left the lineups fearing they would miss the gold medal game which featured the United States and Canada. They headed home or to a bar to watch it on television. People want to watch women's hockey. It is therefore surprising to find that there is still quite a lack of awareness that women play hockey and play it well. "There's a whole portion of the population that have no idea females are playing hockey", said Maria. Other players mentioned that some people are shocked and surprised that females play. "Maybe it's improving...once '98 comes then it will probably clue in to everybody" (Joelle).

Perhaps the awareness of female hockey will improve, but it remains a "catch 22". If the sport gets exposure people will be more likely to sponsor it, and the media will wish to cover it. However, if female hockey never gets media coverage nothing else will follow.

Joelle suggested:

To get the awareness you need the exposure; maybe once it's promoted and gets more high profile, then the t.v. networks might say, "Well we can benefit from this too."

One player said that a lot of people argue that they would be more interested in watching male sport, and she thought, "the only reason for that is whoever's been controlling the media and everything else" (Maria). Teresa stated, "when you're playing at a national level or international level the exposure is there". We need that exposure at all levels in order to recruit more players and keep the sport growing and strong. One participant worried about the future of female hockey and said:

We're gonna hit a point where all the players that are elite are gonna grow old and we better hope that a younger group is coming up 'cause if we don't we're gonna kill ourselves (Maria).

The women know that hockey has a big chance now, being an Olympic sport, to get the media coverage and promotion it needs to become more publicized. The opportunities that now exist give girls a chance to dream bigger than ever with their hockey aspirations. One participant stated her goals:

My goals are to go to the World Championships in two years and to go to the Olympics in four years (Jane).

She watched the Worlds in 1990 at the Ottawa Civic Centre which she described as being filled to capacity:

You couldn't fit another person in there and the people there enjoyed the sport for what it was--and it's much better now than it was in 1990!

I spoke to a player who participated in the World Championships in 1990. She also described the arena:

It was like a thunder going on in the arena. The arena was packed...for sixty minutes you're their national heroes...10,000 Canadians. They cheered their lungs out for us! (Teresa)

There was an unofficial World Championship won by Canada in 1987; in 1992 they were in Finland and Canada once again captured the gold. In 1994 it was gold again for Canada who won in Lake Placid. In 1998 female hockey will be in the Winter Olympics for the first time in Nagano, Japan.

The Importance of Role Models

One method of increasing awareness of female hockey is to increase the number of role models for young girls to see and to emulate. Jane spoke of how her goals have changed now that opportunities for female hockey players have increased:

My goal is to play in the Olympics, and when I was younger, we didn't have goals like that.

The role models of the participants of this study reflect the fact that at one time there were no female examples to look up to in

hockey, and few females in elite sport in general. "Growing up, there wasn't a whole lot of female athletes" (Bonnie). The women named men as their early hockey influences: Bobby Orr, Richard Martin, Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier and Kirk Muller. Later on in the participants' lives they respected female sports models such as: Billie Jean King and older girls who played ringette. Presently they see women who have played on the national women's hockey team as their role models; Shirley Cameron, Stacy Wilson, and France St. Louis were a few of the women mentioned. According to one participant, there are now quite a few women to look up to in sport. She mentioned the sports of tennis, ice hockey, golf, speed skating, rowing, and biathlon.

The role models mentioned epitomized the qualities of great players as defined by the women I interviewed. According to their responses, great players are positive, lead by example and give to others by teaching and sharing their knowledge. One player had a lot to say about a teammate she saw as a person to emulate:

Good female hockey players are people who have leadership ability, they have a positive attitude, a positive aura...a role model, and I'll tell you [she] is a great female hockey player. I've experienced people that are very talented, but very "Me" oriented. You have to be able to skate, you have to be able to shoot, you have to be able to do all those things. You have to be physically strong, but you also have to allow yourself to expose yourself to other people and allow them to experience part of you. Because then you have, like me, as an aspiring hockey player, [saying] "You know, look at her. She gives, and I can maybe be as good as her some day. And that's what a good female hockey player is (Jane).

Athletes were not the only important role models for the participants of this study. Coaches were also mentioned. When asked the question, "When choosing a coach for a female team, the qualifications of two coaches being equal, and one was male, the other female, which one would you pick?", the players I asked said to pick the female. One said, "Take the female coach, it's a role model" (Jane). Another said, "We need more females behind the bench" (Maria). They made it very clear that the talent of the coach should not be sacrificed for the sake of putting a woman in a coaching position. The important ideas they expressed were that there is a need for women to get involved in coaching at any level, and work their way up to top level coaching positions.

There was a time when the only hockey heroes were men. Now there are increasing numbers of female role models in many areas of sport. This is good, says one participant, because "little girls should have sports heroes too, and not always Mario Lemieux. They should have women to look up to". We need female role models because kids will see women playing and will think, "Wow, I could do that, I guess!" (Teresa). If girls never see women playing and enjoying hockey they may never get the idea in their minds that they can do it too. If they never see women coaching or administrating sport, they may never aspire to do it themselves.

Many of the women of this study were involved in coaching, teaching, and instructing sport. One wants to be a recreation director, and says she "wouldn't mind being part of the female council for women's hockey in Canada" (Nan). One is a recreation coordinator, has refereed hockey, and instructs at a hockey school.

These women recognize the importance of women as role models administrating and participating in sport. Maria stated that many females may not see their potential in sport:

There's probably a lot of people walking around-- probably a lot of females could be great hockey players-- who will never know that that's in them" (Maria).

I interviewed the players at a national tournament where they were in a positive hockey environment, yet in many of the interviews we discussed the negative aspects of being a woman in the sport of hockey. "What we have is not enough", were the words of one participant. It sums up where we are in terms of the development of female hockey. There are a lot of things happening that are positive, but there is still an air of pessimism. For example, when people began to plan for a World Championship in female hockey, Maria was skeptical. "When I see it I'll believe it", she remembered herself saying.

The first World Championships were officially held in Ottawa in 1990. Once that happened, and Canada won the gold, a greater emphasis was put on developing girls' hockey. One player then expressed a concern for senior level hockey:

I have a funny feeling they're gonna try and cancel it for the seniors (Bonnie).

She feared that championships like the senior nationals for club teams would be cancelled if all of the energy was going to be put into developing the national team and young girls' hockey.

Amidst the developments (female hockey in the Olympics for the first time in 1998 and for the second time at the Canada Games in 1995, for example) there are aspects of female hockey that are frustrating and negative. One woman, lamented the fact that she chose to play hockey. She gave up the opportunity to get a scholarship to play field hockey in order to play the sport that she loves--ice hockey. There were no opportunities to play on a national team when she began to play, and there are no opportunities to play professionally (Manon Rheaume is an exception). She asked herself:

Why did I pick this sport? Like, this is a nowhere sport (Astrid).

Female sport doesn't have the status and opportunities of male sport and one of the reasons proposed is that there are few women in administrative positions. Jane said:

You gotta have females in administrative positions in order to fight for females in lower positions.

Indeed, there is a lot to fight for in female hockey. For example, university women's teams face feeling less important than their male counterparts when they walk into the arena and the male team has a paid coach, a trainer, and a manager, free skate sharpening, and more ice time. Players from Ontario told of how the University of Toronto Lady Blues Hockey Club was almost cut from the university program in 1993. Many elite women's teams play at odd hours of the night, some as late as two o'clock in the morning. At the national championships in Winnipeg in 1994, when the ice was not cleaned before a game, Maria asked:

Why isn't the ice being flooded before a game? At nationals? If this were men's hockey it'd be flooded.

These women love their sport, and want to see it develop in the best way possible. However, Astrid expressed that it is hard to constantly keep fighting for recognition:

Look at the number of female sporting events as opposed to male sporting events and maybe if that could loosen up then obviously you'd have more female athletes but you know, it's just so hard to even get like something like female hockey accepted.

It is necessary to keep working for opportunities for women in sport. Maria stressed the importance of such work when she said:

It's too bad...but I think we've sat back and when I say "We females", we've sat back and accepted way too much in the respect that, "Well, what we have is enough". Fine, things are starting to get rolling...maybe we should, you know, be a little more equal, and as much as people say that the equality is there, it's still not there.

The players believe female hockey is great, but that it needs to continue to develop. They began with the support of family and friends, persisted through puberty, and now play female hockey at a national level.

For continued development in hockey, we must ensure that young girls are encouraged to begin playing. They must also be supported as they continue playing, and public awareness needs to be increased in order to encourage people to start and to remain involved in the sport of female ice hockey.

Visions

I asked each participant the question, "If you had unlimited resources, what would you like to see in terms of development for your sport?" As they answered the question, the players shared their ideas and visions of how they would like to see their sport develop. The majority of answers I received indicated that the players want to see more awareness of female hockey in general, and especially an increased awareness throughout Canada. Some players mentioned professional hockey for women. Two other important issues are: 1) the need to create more female hockey associations throughout Canada, and 2) sending representative (all-star) teams to the National Championships.

Promotion

The players want their sport to continue to grow and develop. Their suggestions for growth included an increase in the awareness of the general public. They want to let people know that female hockey exists--especially for young girls interested in trying out a sport. According to the participants, the way to increase awareness is to publicize, advertise, and market the sport. Another area of concern with regard to development was that hockey should be promoted in the smaller provinces and the Atlantic provinces--the areas where participation numbers are significantly lower than in the rest of Canada.

Maria stated that with increased funding, more promotion of female hockey could take place. She went on to say that in order to get more funding, private sponsorship from large corporations would

be necessary, but first the corporations would have to be convinced that female hockey is important. She said:

Money to promote would be really helpful, and it's just not there. I'm hoping things will get better, but we need some more private businesses, some of the rich folk to get involved. How do you convince them that female hockey is important?

I asked her to answer her own question, "How do you convince people that female hockey is important?" And she answered, "Maybe that's something that has to be done--to get together a panel and brainstorm".

One area in which people do not seem to treat female hockey as important is the university setting, where the inequalities of male and female sport are quite apparent. Female teams that play at Canadian universities are recognized as "club" sports and do not receive the same benefits and recognition as varsity teams. Julia talked about the financial advantages of being recognized as a varsity sport:

It would be nice to have it recognized as a university sport so that you could get some of those groups that the university athletes do--to go into [the physiotherapy clinic] and get paid care.

Julia's vision for female hockey development included making female hockey a varsity sport at Canadian universities.

Awareness Throughout Canada

Players noted the importance of increasing the number of female players throughout Canada. Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta have

large numbers of female programs and participants. The smaller provinces and the territories have yet to reach their potential in terms of participation and programs. There is an imbalance of talent throughout the country; the smaller provinces do not have the numbers competing that the larger provinces do.

Maria and Joelle had some ideas for increasing awareness through the promotion of female hockey:

Put an ad. out. Local newspapers. The first thing is making people aware that it's there in the smaller provinces. And then going from there (Maria).

Joelle talked about hiring more women to market the sport in order to increase the number of women in administration, as well as promote hockey in all areas of Canada. She said:

I'd use the money for marketing and promotions--get the programs developed in the areas of the country where they're not. Get in there and hire someone for women's hockey marketing. I know Glynis [Peters, Manager of Female programs with the CHA] does a good job, but she can't be everywhere.

She added that promotion is especially important in the smaller regions:

Promote it a little more. We need to right now, certainly in the Atlantic region. I don't know what the depth is like in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Maybe those areas would be the lowest numbers [of participants] and really need it the most. The main thing is to promote it and see awareness of it everywhere so you don't have people saying, "Oh, is that field hockey?"...so everyone knows women's hockey is here!

The players have expressed that increased awareness and promotion are two steps towards developing female hockey.

Professional Hockey For Women

A few of the women proposed paying the players if there was unlimited funding. Nan said, "I'd have an NHL for women!" Astrid suggested getting a semi-professional league together. She added, "That's really dreaming." Bonnie joked about paying the players and the fans:

I'd definitely pay the players [Laughs]. And we need some more fans in the stands. I don't know if you can buy those!

They tended to laugh or sigh when they talked about professional hockey for women--suggesting that they thought it was a lofty or impossible goal. It seemed more realistic for the players to talk about female hockey associations than it was to talk about professional hockey for women. They laughed as they spoke of professional hockey, but they went more in depth with the other two issues (Development throughout Canada and Female Hockey Associations), suggesting that they thought they were more achievable options for female hockey.

Women's Associations

According to the participants, one form of development would be to set up an association for female hockey in every province and in the Territories of Canada. Presently the only province to have such an association is Ontario. Joelle knew about the Ontario

Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) and noted the importance of the OWHA in establishing female hockey:

I know the OWHA has a development coordinator who goes around and helps people who are setting up a new league, and they have resources to help people start up leagues.

Ontario women's hockey is the most developed female hockey program in terms of numbers. They are the only province in Canada to have their own female hockey association. One player from Ontario thought every province had a female association equivalent to the OWHA and she was surprised when I told her Manitoba does not. "You guys should have your own", she said. "Every province should" (Bonnie). I asked Bonnie, "What are the benefits of having a female association?" She answered:

Instead of fighting for all of amateur hockey, you're organizing women's programs only...When you do something, you're doing it strictly for the women, so that's why I think women would benefit more if there were women's associations throughout all the branches.

She stressed the need for encouraging young girls to play, and said that the OWHA does much of the encouraging of girls in Ontario. According to Bonnie, her province has a good broad base of talent, and that she hopes the other provinces will do the same thing--set up their own female associations in order to work towards a better balance of hockey talent in Canada. According to Jane, the reason the OWHA is so successful is because of the following:

A lot of hard work at the beginning with a lot of volunteers, and it just grew and it got bigger and money got put into it and now they have Glynis [Peters, Manager

of Female Programs] at the CHA and that has a lot to do with the OWHA. And they just became a force to be reckoned with. But it was just a lot of people doing a lot of volunteer work.

She suggested that to set up an association would require a lot of volunteers, an executive, and the help of other associations. It will require a lot of volunteer work if we are to have female hockey associations throughout Canada.

Jane lamented the fact that in her province everything was "male-run". She said she had a diploma in Sports Administration that she would like to use in order to change things in female sport. For example, she would like to see more women in high level administrative positions. She felt more women in such positions would result in more work towards advancing sport for females.

Jane works as a teacher and a coach. Presently, she has only the time for work and her own hockey. Something she said she would eventually like to see is what she called, an "Old Girls" network. She said:

There's your "Old Boys" network. You have to start building an "Old Girls" network. It's probably not in the near future, but that's something that I would like to work on.

Her idea of a network would include women fighting for a better future for female sport. She stated that in order to develop such a network, women have to be able to see other women working as coaches and administrators. With role models in those positions, women would be more likely to get involved. According to Jane, it is

important for females to get involved, especially when they stop playing:

There are people now that are going to stop playing soon. I wouldn't want them to get out of the sport because they bring so much to the sport, they know so much about the sport. They could be coaches; they could be administrators. But they don't see it if it's not there.

Indeed, if the role models are not present, many players will not see coaching and administration of female sport as an option for themselves. If these players get involved as volunteers, one project they could undertake would be to set up female hockey associations.

Representative/All-Star Teams

An issue in recent years has been the sending of representative or all-star teams to the National Championships. For the first time in 1994, provinces were allowed to send an all-star team to the championships. Rather than sending a club team which won the provincial championships (as had been the former procedure for deciding who went to nationals), these representative teams would be made up of the best individual players in the province. Presently, there are some mixed feelings about the concept of all-star teams. I spoke to a small number of players about this issue, and they had various opinions regarding the concept.

Bonnie did not like the idea of sending all-star teams to nationals because it meant that if her club team won the provincial championships, only the all-stars would go to nationals. She said:

In our province it's kind of ridiculous if we send an all-star team because there's nothing to shoot for, for the whole year, as far as I'm concerned, as a club team.

She wanted her team to go as a club--the club that earned the right to be there by virtue of winning the provincial championships.

Teresa also did not agree with the idea of representative teams. She said that as many as 85 to 90% of her teammates may not have had the chance to play at the nationals if there had been an all-star team selected from her province. She has been a national team player and would have a great chance to make the all-star team, but her club team was clearly more important to her, and this was evident in what she said:

I don't know if winning a gold medal is that important to me...or to any of the kids on the team. If I can't go with the people that helped get me there, then I don't really want to go.

She added a warning about the implications of encouraging all-star teams:

I think they have to be really aware of...the damage that it might cause women's hockey.

She is an elite player of national team calibre and she was quite concerned with keeping as many women involved in the sport as possible. She worried that many of her teammates would not have played if they did not have a chance at the end of the season to go to the nationals:

I'd say, of the 16 players we carried all year, I'd say 40 or 50% of our team this year would not have played if

they knew that at the end of the year they couldn't go anywhere. If they didn't have something to work for, towards as a team, I don't see them continuing in the sport.

She added some feelings about the attention given to elite athletes:

I don't think we need to focus in so much on elite athletes. I think there's World Championships, and now Olympics for those elite athletes to be a part of. I don't think we need to take nationals away from my friends. I don't need hockey that much. I'm the same way as the guys think about the Olympic team. They don't need to send NHL guys.

Maria also went into some detail about the potential harm of sending representative teams to nationals. She stated:

I think in our province it will kill Senior A hockey, because...people look forward to playing at the provincials. If they send an all-star team, the provincials will become meaningless.

Bonnie felt that the league's reason for introducing the opportunity for representative teams was to keep the club teams from stacking their rosters with the best players. If there was a reduction in stacking, the result would be a more well balanced league. This player did not think all-star teams would spread the teams out more and she argued:

Their [the league's] rationale is that the teams in the league won't go to one team or something like that [if they can later try out for an all-star team]...and [won't] try to build a team so that they'll win...and always go to nationals.

Astrid expressed that her season would lose meaning if there was no chance to go to nationals. She felt the final goal of her club team's season was to go to nationals. For her, to lose that goal would reduce the importance of playing hockey throughout the season. She stated:

If you don't make the provincial [all-star] team...your season really...doesn't mean a lot.

The question of whether or not representative teams should continue at the national tournament is a very important one. For the most part, the women I spoke to did not like the idea of sending all-star teams. They like the idea of playing with a team all year, winning provincials with that club team, and traveling to nationals with the women who won provincials as a team. I did not include a question about representative teams in the interview schedule, but it naturally came up as a topic of conversation. It is important to note that the representative team issue was not discussed with the players I interviewed from Quebec. They have sent a representative team for the past three years, and the team has won the National Championship all of those years.

In conclusion, the participants experienced support from family and friends for their participation in sport. As they grew up they remained involved in sport despite the lack of encouragement at times from society. They persevered to become elite athletes. They recognize the game and its players as unique and talented. The participants and their teammates have reached a sophisticated level of physical and mental training which is what makes female hockey

the game it is today--refined and skilled. Yet, as sophisticated as it is, the female game remains often compared to the male game.

A large part of the male-female comparison involves the obvious differences in funding and awareness of female hockey. The players have made suggestions to affect change in these areas of their sport. According to their words, the sport has recently made great strides. However, they also note that there is still much systemic discrimination in the world of sport. Consequently, there is a need for work towards further development in order for female hockey to reach its potential.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of data consisted of moving information from category to category, in what Kirby and McKenna (1989, p. 146) refer to as the "constant comparative method". Many of the descriptive categories from chapter four, *The Words of the Players*, were linked and are presented in this chapter as conceptual themes. The themes to be examined include: 1. The view of female hockey as a non-traditional sport, 2. Systemic Discrimination, 3. Heterosexism, 4. Survivors: Pursuing elite hockey, and 5. Present developments. It was a challenge to link the categories, as there was much overlap, and some categories fit into more than one theme.

This chapter also relates the words of the players to the themes present in the literature. A chart of conceptual themes with the related topics from chapter four is located in Appendix D. It is evident in the appendix that some categories are present in more than one theme.

Non-Traditional Sport

Various influences in society shape traditional views of what is acceptable for males and for females. Parents and other early influences, for example, shape the sport experience. The idea of sports as traditional or non-traditional is related to the following categories from chapter four: Parental support, opportunities, gender differences, sexuality, and sophistication. Some participants of this study stated that their parents enrolled them in hockey at an early age.

Some of the women interviewed spoke of the fact that many people do not know female hockey exists; for example, hockey is often confused with field hockey or ringette. A recent example of the lack of awareness was found in the words of an acquaintance who asked about this study. When he learned that the title was "Experiences of Elite Female Ice Hockey Players", he said, "I didn't know there *were* elite female ice hockey players".

Along with the lack of knowledge that female hockey exists, there are many misconceptions. For example, Astrid stated that ringette is perceived as a safer sport for females. Therefore more parents enroll daughters in ringette than in hockey. This is an example of the traditional view that females need to be protected, that they are weak and fragile. Maggie said that she did not emphasize the fact that she played hockey at the start of her playing career. She feared that people would perceive her as "tough" and would think that it was "not a nice sport for women".

Nice sports for women are sports that enhance a woman's femininity. Sports are classed as "masculine" or "feminine" depending upon their function in enhancing heterosexual attractiveness (Rich, 1980). Traditionally, women are more attractive if they participate in activities that emphasize grace and beauty. Women are encouraged to participate in socially acceptable sports such as tennis, swimming, or gymnastics (Snyder & Spritzer, 1983) in which the aesthetic qualities are emphasized at least as much as strength and power. Aerobic dance programs, symbolized by lean, smooth-muscled women in revealing clothing are another example of the view of the traditional female athlete. Body building

is traditionally a male domain, but the number of female participants is increasing. Even though it is "masculine", women are judged on their heterosexual attractiveness, and are rewarded for shapely rather than bulky muscles (Gaines & Butler, 1983).

The strength and power required to play hockey at the elite level reflects the non-traditional nature of the sport. The sex-role research of the 1970s generally perpetuated the idea that all females in sport would experience role conflict due to the assumption that being a traditionally feminine woman was incompatible with being a successful athlete (Lenskyj, 1988).

The sophisticated nature of elite hockey is evident in the commitment, both physical and mental, required to succeed. Strength, power, and size are assets to a woman who wishes to succeed in the sport of ice hockey. Also, the protective equipment covers most of the body, as it is intended to be protective, and therefore does not promote heterosexual attractiveness (traditional femininity). Non-traditional sports for women are activities which in the past have had predominantly male participants. Hockey is one of those sports. The commonly held view of hockey as a "masculine" sport is evident in the lack of programs for females in some areas of Canada, and the smaller numbers of females who participate in the sport. The lack of opportunities is one of the reasons females do not participate at the same rate as males. Another reason for the lower numbers is that female hockey is still in the early stages of development, although considerable work is being done by the Female Council of the Canadian Hockey Association to promote the sport. The smaller numbers of females participating in hockey is related to

its classification in the past as "masculine". Such classifications are an example of a type of discrimination referred to as "systemic".

Systemic Discrimination

Systemic discrimination is the exclusion of members of certain groups through the application of policies or practices based on criteria that are not job or performance-related, or required for the safety of other individuals in the sport (IPDP, 1992, p. 37)

Systemic discrimination is embedded in the structures of society and is not always intentional (Introduction to the Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985). It is reflected in the inequalities between females and males, and has been experienced by the participants of this study.

The participants saw the subtle discrimination in the number of opportunities for boys to play hockey at an early age--the opportunity was not presented to the girls as readily as it was to their male counterparts. Although some became involved playing with brothers or on boys' teams, most girls would not view playing hockey as an option.

The participants experienced subtle discrimination as they chose their role models in sport. Their earliest role models were male. There were few female athlete role models throughout sport, and fewer still in hockey. Presently there are national team members as role models--Angela James and France St. Louis, for example--but there remain to be a significant number of role models in coaching and administration.

The participants stated that their earliest role models were male. Another aspect of systemic discrimination is in the area of funding. They experienced, and still experience, lower funding than males. In summary, these women see the discrimination in the lack of media coverage, awareness, and funding of their sport.

In a recent popular press article, Jollimore (1996) summed up the positives and negatives of female hockey. Her findings support the words of participants in this study who have said they still have promotional, financial, and developmental work to do in hockey. A comparison made by Jollimore was that the national men's team gets paid to play. The women, on the other hand, hold full time jobs, careers, or are students. Players had to pay a \$100.00 fee to try out for the national team. Glynis Peters, manager for female hockey is quoted in Jollimore's article as saying:

Sometimes I have to tell the players, "I'm sorry all you have to do is look over your shoulder and see how things are for the guys".

Peters recognizes the struggle to develop female hockey, yet she is positive and realistic about the time it will take to develop a full-time female program.

The lack of opportunities is one idea related to the discrimination of females in hockey. The system is set up and administered in such a way that females are often excluded from participation. Other forms of systemic discrimination emerged also. Entrenched in systemic discrimination are the concepts of heterosexism and homophobia.

Heterosexism and Homophobia

Heterosexism stems from the view that all people should be heterosexual; those with other sexual orientations do not receive the same benefits or opportunities as heterosexuals. Compulsory heterosexism in sport, as Rich (1980) termed it, is evident in that females are encouraged to participate in activities that express their femininity or heterosexual attractiveness. These ideas are entrenched in the systems of society much like the systemic discrimination faced by all females in a patriarchal system. Pursuing non-traditional activities often results in being viewed as unfeminine:

Regardless of sexual preference, women who reject the traditional female role in their careers as athletes, coaches or sport administrators, or in any other nontraditional pursuit, pose a threat to existing power relations between the sexes. For this reason, those women are the frequent targets of labels intended to devalue or dismiss their successes by calling their sexuality into question...For many, the visible signs of an androgynous personality--self-confidence, assertiveness, determination--are inevitably associated with a threatening image of femaleness, characterized by labels like 'pushy,' "man-hating" or "lesbian" (Lenskyj, 1988, p. 57).

The result of the frequent use of the label of lesbian attached to non-traditional females results in the decrease in participation rates, especially during puberty, a time when sexual identity is being explored.

The socialization literature suggests that the pressures in adolescence make it difficult to be accepted by peers and still remain in sport. Peer group approval often becomes more valued than

success in sport. Belonging to a non-traditional team such as hockey may be viewed by the public as unfeminine, therefore unattractive. This may be one of the reasons that many females drop out of sport at puberty. To continue might pose the risk of not being accepted by peers or to be labeled as a lesbian.

Lenskyj (1988) stated that research on women in sport in the past has been based on the assumption that all participants of studies are heterosexual:

For example, male subjects are asked to rank the "femininity" or "attractiveness" of female athletes and their desirability as girlfriends; and women are asked whether their boyfriends or husbands encourage their sporting participation, questions which ignore the possibility of primary same-sex relationships in the lives of female athletes (p. 13).

Astrid recognized the homophobia that exists in sport. She wrote on her feedback form:

The image of female hockey players that seems to be actively pursued by hockey 'administrators'/organizers is one of 'feminine' looking women which ties in with the issue of homophobia. We should be receiving female values from the top, not male values.

Maggie felt that female hockey is perceived to be "not a nice sport for women", and Ruth stated that to continue playing hockey might make their mothers worry that they will become "truck drivers" and wear "flannel shirts". "Truck driver" and "flannel shirts" are often euphemisms for the lesbian label, therefore when the participants used the words, I steered the conversation in an attempt to discuss homosexuality. The result was that all but one participant (Astrid)

laughed and/or changed the topic. The reluctance on the part of the participants to speak about homosexuality is evidence that the issue appeared to make them uncomfortable. The lack of willingness to discuss homosexuality may be a result of the overall homophobia that exists in society.

Astrid spoke in depth of the homophobia in sport. The other participants seemed uncomfortable talking about the issue, possibly because it is such a sensitive one. In addition, the research interview guide did not specifically focus on lesbians in sport. For an extensive study on the experiences of lesbians in team sport, see the work *Lesbians in Locker Rooms* (Fusco, 1995).

Astrid spoke of how it might be a disadvantage for someone, if they were a lesbian, to make the national women's hockey team. As she stated in chapter four, in her opinion it was basically a "witch hunt" to weed out as many lesbians as they could" in the selection process. There exist conflicting views. A woman who once tried out for the team told me she felt lesbians were discriminated against. Therefore she made an effort to spend time with women she perceived to be heterosexual during the selection process so as not to diminish her chances. I have also been told that the national team is an open environment for homosexual women. Latrice (not her real name), who defines herself as lesbian, attended a selection camp for the national hockey team. She spoke of how she did not feel discriminated against at camp. When I asked her if the national team is an open environment for gay women, she said of the 1994 team, that they were chosen for their talent and team cohesiveness; selection was not based on their sexual preference.

Latrice understood that coaches have the power to dictate how players should act, and she stated that if a coach wants a player to express her sexuality in a certain way, the player must do so, even if it is against her nature. In response to my concern that I have heard the national team selection camp is a "witch hunt", she said that maybe it was in the past but, "things change" and now there is a more open environment for gay women. "I feel comfortable being gay [in the National team environment]. It's almost like for once in my life it's good to be gay" (Latrice).

In sum, it appears that times are changing, however slowly. Female ice hockey, according to Latrice (the collaborator for this study) is accepting of homosexuals within its team structure. Although the team is made up of women of differing sexual orientations, according to Latrice, there is a feeling of respect for one another both on and off the ice.

The Survivors: Pursuing Elite Hockey

Despite the systemic discrimination, the players of this study pursued elite sport. "What motivated these women to stay involved in sport?" According to the previous chapter, the factors are: positive encouragement (including societal and family support); uniqueness and confidence; success; and commitment (mental and physical).

The results of this study support the findings of a study by Butcher (1985). She found that the influences for continued participation throughout puberty were: satisfaction with one's sport ability, a preference for active versus sedentary pursuits, a

perception of the self as assertive, encouragement from significant others, especially parents, and availability of sports equipment. The influences described by Butcher are similar to the motivating factors for the women of this study.

The present opportunities available to women in hockey provide further motivation for pursuing elite sport. For example, women's hockey will be in the Olympics for the first time in 1998. The sophistication level of the sport has risen, and continues to rise, as a result of the increase in opportunities and awareness of female hockey.

Developments

Categories related to development that emerged from speaking to participants were: Olympic hockey, public awareness, sophistication of female hockey, and the increased number of female role models. These present developments in the sport of female hockey provide a motivation for girls and women to continue in the sport. The players who survived the system to remain in sport as elite level athletes told of their love for the game, their commitment (mental and physical), and their socialization in sport, and how all of those factors influenced their continuation in sport. The present developments in female hockey will provide further motivation for females to play hockey.

Some of those developments are: the inclusion of female hockey at the 1998 Winter Olympics for the first time; the World Championships in 1990, 1992, and 1994; opportunities for financial support from the government for national team members; and an all-

female hockey development program run by Shannon Miller, one of the Canadian National team coaches in Calgary, Canada. All of the developments are evidence that hockey provides high quality opportunities for females who wish to play at an elite level. One player spoke of how she can now set goals such as playing at the Olympics, and World Championships, opportunities that were not available to her when she began to participate in sport.

The literature in this area is limited, therefore this would be an important area for future research--a profile of the recent developments in female hockey. Although beyond the scope of this study, a future research approach would be to examine a larger number of participants, at all levels of hockey in order to provide a larger sample of ideas for development. Another direction for future research is to study the influence of present players and opportunities as motivation for players to begin and to continue in sport.

The participants stressed the importance of role models for females in sport. Future research, therefore should encourage the use of female role models as great motivators for females to participate in sport. The health benefits of physical activity, the mental benefits, the confidence and self-esteem achieved through healthy sport participation, are all arguments for keeping women in sport.

The women of this study participate in a non-traditional sport, have faced systemic discrimination and heterosexism, and have survived the system to become elite athletes. With the present developments in female hockey, and with women such as the

participants of this study as positive role models, girls and women can be encouraged to participate and remain in sport throughout their lives.

A role model is someone who leads by example. The idea of role models arose in many interviews as an important way to keep girls and women involved in sport as athletes, coaches, and administrators. The players of this study listed their earliest role models as being male hockey players. As they grew up, the participants began to recognize female sports stars such as Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova. At the time of this study, the participants' role models included women who have played on the National Women's ice hockey team. Exposure to positive role models increases the chances of young girls becoming involved in sport.

A request for feedback was sent to each participant, and in the responses received, participants stressed the importance of role models for females in sport. Nan wrote about the importance of role models:

If role models like Stacey Wilson are exposed more to the public the interest of female hockey will increase.

Future research, therefore should encourage the use of female role models as motivators for females to participate in sport. According to Maggie's feedback for this study:

It is essential that women play a part in terms of administration, coaching, refereeing, and instructing.

The feedback received from Jane supported Maggie's view. Jane wrote that equity and the need for female coaches and

administrators are issues that need to be addressed. "We need this in order to develop our sport", she stated. A lack of enough role models is one of the systemic barriers keeping women from reaching their potential in sport. If they do not see females participating in all levels of sport, from the playing fields to the administration, they may not see sport as a viable opportunity for themselves.

Female hockey is a non-traditional sport for women and there is much systemic discrimination to keep women from participating. The women of this study have survived the system to become elite athletes. Despite the barriers, the "survivors" reached an elite level. They challenge the idea of being female and successful in sport as incompatible, and they are positive role models for women who wish to pursue excellence in sport.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the research focus and results. As well, the positive and negative aspects of female hockey are highlighted. The chapter continues with the development of female hockey, from the perspective of the players and the researcher. The final section includes a list of recommendations for the future of female hockey, and on a more general note, for research on women in sport.

Summary

The focus of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of women's ice hockey at the Canadian senior level, and to understand the experiences of the players. It was my intention to provide an accurate account of their experiences, to demonstrate how and if the findings support the literature on female sport, and to present a vision of how the players wish their sport to develop. Many theories of female sport were found in the literature, but the information on female hockey was sparse, thus the theories of what was important to the participants in terms of the development of their sport emerged from the words of the players themselves. In the researcher's field notes, it was stated that:

Although I did not set out to get information specifically about the all-star format for senior nationals, most players had strong opinions on the subject, and

mentioned it in both their interviews and on their feedback forms.

The above field note supports the belief that in qualitative research, "the design cannot be given a priori but must emerge as the study proceeds" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.11).

The literature available for female hockey was limited, and I drew on female sport literature during the development of the study. This study will add to the growing field of feminist sport literature, and it will become a part of the presently limited base of research on female hockey.

Positives and Negatives

Throughout this study there was a thread of positives in terms of development and another of negatives in terms of barriers for females in sport. Through the process of interviewing 12 of the elite hockey players in Canada, I learned that there have been many developments in female hockey, and that its level of sophistication has risen in recent years. Girls are now beginning to play at an early age, and for senior level players, it is now an official Olympic sport in the Nagano Olympics in 1998. There have been three official World Championships, and the women on the Canadian National women's team presently serve as role models.

Despite the developments, it was evident that for the players I spoke to, there is much more to gain in the sport of female hockey. Female hockey continues to be viewed as a non-traditional sport. Barriers to female participation exist in the subtle form of

systemic discrimination, much like the barriers that exist for women throughout society.

Players' Perspectives

The participants expressed concern for the future of senior level hockey (one level below the national team). One aspect they perceived as affecting senior hockey was the all-star format of the national championships. Nan's view was that if each province sent an all-star team, the club team members who felt they would have no chance to make a provincial representative team would have no goal to work towards:

I agree with the fact that if you do have an "all-star" team, then the provincial teams wouldn't have anything to work for. I think the nationals should be given to the best provincial team. Therefore people will have the opportunity to experience the National level competition, which is a great experience.

Louise wrote in her feedback:

The top players of our country play at the Pacific Rim, the Worlds, and the Olympics. There is plenty of top hockey for them. Let's meet the needs of the notch below players who, through hard work and skill, lead their team to the best in their province.

The players have a fear that the all-star format and the development of the National team will negatively affect senior level hockey.

Teresa expressed her concerns, and wrote on her feedback form:

The only issue that I absolutely disagree with is the "all-star" system. Again I feel that the world's and now the Olympics are where our elite players should and will get

their recognition. To take away the National level for the balance of the players I believe in the long run is only going to hurt the sport. i.e. the numbers are eventually going to go down. Also, I feel quite strongly that all levels need our attention--perhaps we need to concentrate on different specifics at each level--but not at the expense of one level or another--do not eliminate senior nationals to create or develop junior nationals. I think both could be done.

Future studies might communicate to the players a way in which senior hockey will be developed, in order to alleviate those fears.

As well as expressing their concerns about all-star teams, the women I interviewed asked the question, "What will be done with the results of this study?" A partial answer to that question can be found in the feedback from the players. A section of this study was sent to each participant, and 9 of the 12 feedback forms were returned. The feedback forms stated that all but one of the players recognized their own words in the piece of research I sent to them. Additional comments were generally positive and encouraging. Ruth, for example, stated that her boyfriend read it and could pick out her words. Teresa wrote:

Thanks for sending this out--I found it very interesting and felt you did an excellent job with expressing many of our thoughts--good luck and all the best.

She added that she was pleased to know that she was not the only female who had to "fight her way through the male system." Joelle recognized herself with the first reference to her in chapter four. She stated that all of her comments were recorded in context, and

that it was "interesting reading!" She also wrote, "Hope all goes well with the defense--good luck!"

One question asked by four of the participants was in regard to what would be done with this study now that the results are analyzed. "What is the significance of the study?" The participants had some of their own answers to that question. Louise stated in her feedback what she felt was the importance of this study:

I think you show many issues that surround our sport and their complexities. You have helped to open up the dialogue that is needed between players, supporters, and onlookers to help advance hockey for females.

Teresa had a suggestion of what could be accomplished with the information generated by this study. She suggested that the results be sent to the CHA, and added:

I think any insight to the female program would be of benefit and I feel this paper would be an angle for the "administration" to consider.

The women interviewed had insightful ideas for the development of hockey. The next section includes the perspective of the researcher with regard to the results of this study, and recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

This study points to several areas for development in female hockey. One area in need of development is the promotion and sponsorship of female hockey. The Female Council of the CHA is very concerned and active in the development of female hockey. This

thesis will be sent to the CHA, so that the Female Council may review the results, and have an idea of what these players feel is important. The results of this study may potentially inform the CHA in future decisions. As was stated in the outset of this study, an ideal outcome for this research is to encourage future changes to reflect the needs of the players.

Feminist Research

Feminist theory takes into account the issues of the patriarchal structure of society, and has a limited base of research much in need of further study. Homophobia and heterosexism, characteristics of a patriarchal society, act in discouraging females from sport, consequently reducing the participation rate of all women in sport. Homophobia and heterosexism have the same effect in keeping women from pursuing non-traditional occupations, assertiveness, health, and ultimately wellness.

There is a need for sport research and feminist research to come together in order to get girls and women to start participating and to continue in sport. The health benefits of physical activity, the mental benefits, the confidence and self-esteem achieved through healthy sport participation are all arguments for keeping women in sport. It is essential for feminist studies of sport and socialization to continue. It is an effective avenue for challenging and improving upon the present structure of sport.

Feminist research encourages action (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). One recommendation for action to develop female sport is the education of adults: parents, guardians, teachers, and coaches.

Adults have the potential to encourage girls to be assertive, active people who will develop into competent, confident women.

The inequalities and discrimination spoken of by the participants supports the literature on the gender differences that still exist in the structures of society--structures that perpetuate stereotypes and hegemonic systems of male power. Areas of society that often maintain the power structure are the family, the media, and the schools. The discrimination is entrenched into our social structure, making it hard to affect change. Sport is one area through which we can begin to break down the barriers that exist for females.

A. Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in the area of female hockey should include:

- 1) Continued feminist research in all of sport with an emphasis on homophobia and heterosexism and how it affects female sport participation in general.
- 2) A study of female goaltenders focusing on the mental toughness and uniqueness that goes with being a goaltender.
- 3) An investigation of the implications of the all-star team format for senior nationals.

B. Recommendations to Improve Awareness of Female Sport

- 1) Education of parents, coaches, guardians, and teachers to promote non-traditional sport for females.
- 2) Promotion of role models for females as athletes, coaches, and administrators.

3) Promotion of female hockey, and female sport in general. Alert the media of tournaments taking place, opportunities to play, and other events that might encourage females, young and old, to participate. Recognize the contribution that females make to the sport of ice hockey.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background

- How old were you when you began to play hockey?
- Were you encouraged to play sports?
- Who were your early influences in sport?
- Who were your early influences in hockey?
- How did you first begin to play hockey?
- Can you tell me about your first hockey experience?

Being a Hockey Player

- Hockey is often seen as an unusual sport for women. How did your family and friends react to your decision to play?
- What first attracted you to the sport?
- What do you enjoy most about hockey?
- Can you describe what it is like to be a hockey player?
- Describe how you feel when you are on the ice
- Off the ice, do you have any of the same experiences and feelings?
- What does being a hockey player mean to you?

Hockey - General

- What are the qualities of a good hockey player?
- Are the qualities different for male and female players?

- I have a quote I would like you to read:

Female Hockey is:

All those things your mother told you...

Eat your vegetables, go to bed early,

Brush your teeth, do your homework,.

Dry your blades, be nice to the referee,

Listen to your coach, respect your opponent,

Play fair, play for fun and play forever.

- What do you think of the quote?
- Do you agree with the quote?

- Is female hockey different from male hockey?
How are they different?
How are they similar?
- Do you have a favorite player or role model in hockey?
- What does this player represent to you? What type of a person is this player on the ice and/or off?

Experiences

- Can you think of any bad experiences you have had in hockey?
- What do you feel is the greatest experience for you in hockey?

Future

- Can you tell me something about what you think the next ten years hold for you...just an idea of what you may be doing in relation to hockey?
- How long do you anticipate being able to play hockey?

- Do you anticipate a career for yourself in sport? If so, does it involve hockey?
- Do you coach any sports?
 - Hockey? Male or female?
- Female hockey is developing rapidly. What would you like to see in terms of development for your sport?
- If you had unlimited resources, what would you change?

APPENDIX B
LETTER TO PROVINCIAL TEAMS

(University of Manitoba letterhead)

Dear (provincial team),

I am presently writing a thesis in the area of women in sport, towards a Master of Science degree in Sport Psychology. The purpose of my thesis is to present an accurate view of the experiences of female hockey players in a sport that is constantly developing. I am interested in gaining a deeper understanding of women's hockey at the elite level. The reason I am writing to your team is that I would like to interview players at the National Championship in Winnipeg in March, 1994.

I would like to request a list of volunteers from your team, if you and the athletes feel that they can take the time out of what I know can be a rather hectic schedule. The interviews will take from 60-90 minutes. I will respect the the time constraints of the players, and any discussion during interviews will be confidential on the part of the interviewer. The interviews will be tape-recorded, and after the analysis, the tapes will be erased.

Enclosed you will find a consent form for the head coach to sign, and this form also includes a volunteer list. I will randomly select players from the list. I am requesting a response by March 4, 1994. This will ensure a sufficient amount of time to contact the players who agree to participate, and to set up interviews that will not interfere with your schedule throughout the tournament.

Female hockey is a rapidly developing sport. Having played the game, and still very much interested in its progress, I feel that the experiences of female hockey players is a worthwhile study and will deepen our understanding of the direction of development the athletes would like to see. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at:

()

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Thank you for taking the time to read over my proposal. I am looking forward to seeing you all at the National Women's Hockey Championships!

Best of Luck!

Judy Leyden

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Thesis research by Judy Leyden

Thesis Advisor - Neil Winther

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women who play hockey at an elite level in Canada.

Participant's Consent

I hereby acknowledge that I have been informed as to the purpose of this research and I agree to participate in the study conducted by Judy Leyden (University of Manitoba, Winnipeg) for her MSc thesis.

I understand that my account will be tape-recorded in an interview, with the researcher, lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The option to refuse to be tape-recorded is also available. I understand that the text of the tape-recording will be transcribed to print for analysis and the tape-recording will be erased when the research is completed.

I understand that, as a participant in the study, I am a volunteer and that I may refuse to answer any or all questions without penalty, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. If I choose to withdraw from the study I also have the option to withdraw the information I have provided.

I understand that a second interview and further contact may be requested by both myself and the researcher. Also, I shall be given an opportunity to ask questions at any time during the study and after my participation is complete. I may contact the researcher by leaving a message at the researcher's home number () .

I understand that any information I provide in the course of the interview will be confidential, and that my identity will not be revealed during any stage of the data analysis or in the publication of the research findings.

Having read and understood the nature of this research and my participation in it, my signature below signifies my willingness to participate.

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX D
CONCEPTUAL THEMES

CONCEPTUAL THEMES

Chapter Four Categories

Parental support
Opportunities
Gender differences
Sexuality
Sophistication

Role models
Opportunities
Awareness
Funding

Puberty
Sexuality

Positive socialization
Uniqueness
Enjoyment
Commitment
Support
Confidence

Olympics
Public awareness
Sophistication
Role models

Chapter Five Themes

1. Non-traditional Sport

2. Systemic Discrimination

3. Heterosexism and
Homophobia

4. Survivors

5. Developments