

**“SHE SHOOTS, SHE SCARES”!
ONLINE READER RESPONSES AND THE BACKLASH AGAINST THE 2010
CANADIAN OLYMPIC WOMEN’S HOCKEY TEAM ON ICE CELEBRATION.**

by

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Abstract

Gender double standards continue to affect women's participation in sports. This major research paper investigates the online newspaper coverage of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration that took place after the players won a gold medal during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics Winter Games. I consider two significant online articles published in the *Ottawa Citizen* and the online reader responses that appeared as a reply to those articles. Readers expressed concern over these hockey players drinking alcohol, smoking cigars and celebrating on a public ice surface. The readers' unease appears to be indicative of an underlying historically and culturally entrenched opposition to the disruption of white, middle-class norms of femininity. The sentiments expressed by the online reader responses concerning failed role models, public disgrace and classlessness are linked to historical assumptions of female frailty, reproduction, and lesbianism in the context of women's sporting activities today. Three categories of women athletes emerge: the Heterosexy Athlete, the Good Mother and the Failed Woman.

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To all of the hockey players on the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team: continue inspiring women both young and old to play sports, especially the "non-traditional" ones. You motivate us to play them without reservation and to celebrate with excitement.

Table of Contents

1) Introduction	
<u>Backlash: Hockey as a Gendered Practice</u>	1
2) Smoking Hot and Under Fire: The 2010 Canadian Olympic Women's Hockey Team	4
<u>Coverage of the 2010 Gold Medal Wins for Canadian Hockey</u>	4
<u>Methodological Toolbox</u>	12
3) Offside! Readers' Reactions	16
4) Canadian Women and Hockey: Skirts and Beyond	19
<u>Gender Inequities: Historical Legacies of Women and Sport</u>	20
<u>From Past to Present: The Heterosexy Athlete; The Good Mother; The Failed Woman</u>	34
5) Parting Shots	43
<u>Taking the Hit: Implications of Gendered Categories of Women in Sport</u>	43
6) References	50

1) INTRODUCTION

Backlash: Hockey As A Gendered Practice

Children are socialized differently on the basis of gender. Messages of strength, ability, beauty, and fragility are central to these gendered interactions and continue to be organizing conceptual themes in childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Fine et al 2007; Jordan et al 2007). Infant girls are held gently and are referred to as “pretty”, “delicate”, “fragile”, “lovely” or “princess” (Wohlwend 2009; Myers and Raymond 2010). An infant boy will commonly be described as looking and acting “healthy”, “strong”, “resilient”, “tough”, or otherwise described as a “trooper” (Jordan et al 2007; Skelton 1997; Kimmel et al 2007). Additionally, I have observed the following sporting references used to describe baby boys: “he’s built like a linebacker”; “he’ll be a great skater with those legs”; “what a champ” and “he’ll be feisty” or a “scrapper”. These are sporting analogies used to describe traits of infant boys and their potential or rightful place in the sporting world. Young boys are predominantly given sporting equipment as toys or gifts in order to foster this potential while young girls receive dolls or jewelry. Gendered cultural assumptions about who ought to participate in sports are ingrained in infancy.

Such gendered assumptions about strength and athleticism are echoed in the normalization of violence in a variety of sports directed primarily to young and adult men (Fine et al 2007; Kimmel et al 2007; Nelson Burton 1995). There is a recent cultural shift that suggests an increase of violence in male dominated sports as a form of entertainment. The glorification of violence in sport is problematic considering the seriousness of the injuries that the players suffer for entertainment purposes. Head injuries, more particularly concussions, have recently attracted

media attention. For instance, Sydney Crosby, Canadian hockey icon and National Hockey League (NHL) player for the Pittsburgh Penguins, suffered a concussion after being hit to the head twice in January 2011 and is still unable to return to his professional role in hockey after four months of medical leave (Gulli, 2011). Football and mixed martial arts, also known as MMA, are two additional male dominated sports where the consequences of head injuries are serious and common (Pickard and Sekeres, 2010). The risk of death, suicide, domestic violence, aggression and murder are increasing for athletes who have a history of brain injuries stemming from their sporting participation (Schwartz 2007; Boston University 2011). Many fear that hockey is following the example of other professional sports where such head injuries are prevalent (Gulli 2011; Pickard and Sekeres 2010).

Indeed, at the level of professional hockey, the increasing emphasis on body checking and physical contact is dangerous. In the NHL, there are players whose main role is to play with physical aggression and “fight” players and rivals of the opposing team. For instance, at an Ottawa Senators hockey game on Saturday October 9, 2010, I was disturbed to see violent and illegal hits projected on the jumbo screen for the explicit purpose of riling the audience. The Ottawa Senators, who were playing their rivals the Toronto Maple Leafs, saw upwards of ten fights throughout the game. The increased use of brute force and aggression in professional hockey has superseded in importance other elements of the game such as the strategies and skills required to score goals and win. The growing emphasis on fighting and violence as entertainment in organized hockey diverges from my interest in hockey, which I believe should be valued for its strategy, teamwork and pace.

Women’s hockey emphasizes skating, stick and puck handling, speed and agility as the central skills of the game. The use of violence as a tool for entertainment is not available or

acceptable in women's hockey leagues as there are strict rules against body checking and violent plays (Hockey Canada, 2011). Thus, the strategic use of violence as entertainment in hockey is an example of one of the many ways in which organized hockey represents a gendered practice that excludes women who attempt professional careers as hockey players. The rate of female registration in various Canadian hockey leagues indicates that there are more girls and women playing hockey in Canada than ever before. It should be noted, however, that the allocation of funds, ice time, and overall support still favours men's hockey leagues. A common sentiment is that people do not enjoy watching women's hockey as much as men's hockey because it is not as exciting. In other words, women's hockey is less violent and physically aggressive. Calling women's hockey unexciting suggests a double standard that operates as a justification for not further supporting the development of young girls and women in this male-dominated sport.

The gender scripts that are imposed on females since birth shape cultural expectations of women's roles, including those of women athletes. These gender norms are challenged by women hockey players; consequently, they have implications for women hockey players both on and off the ice. I investigate the online newspaper coverage of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration that took place after the players won a gold medal during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. I consider two significant online articles published in the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 26th, 2010, and the online reader responses that appeared as a reply to those articles. The results of my study indicate not only a discomfort with women hockey players who celebrate the way that this team did, but a fundamental resistance to women's hockey; in particular, the presence of women hockey players at the Olympic level. This pattern of unease is interpreted as indicative of an underlying historically and culturally

entrenched opposition to the disruption of white, middle-class norms of femininity. It is this threat to the gendered status quo that fostered backlash against the women's on ice celebration.

2) SMOKING HOT AND UNDER FIRE: THE 2010 CANADIAN OLYMPIC WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

The coverage of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration is the subject of this study. This section outlines the events surrounding the 2010 Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team gold medal win and provides a descriptive account of the team's subsequent on ice celebration. Media coverage of the event in the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper provides rich data for analysis. In particular, two online articles "Women's on ice hockey celebration creates stir"! (Ewen, 2010) and "Canadian women apologize for antics after winning gold" (Canwest Olympic Team, 2010) and their accompanying photographs and online reader responses comprise the content of the analysis. The newspaper articles, photographs and the online reader responses were purposely chosen and are critical to understanding the backlash against the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team.

Coverage of the 2010 Gold Medal Wins For Canadian Hockey

The Event

In the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 26, 2010, the headlines screamed "Women's on ice hockey celebration creates stir"! (Ewen, 2010) and "Canadian women apologize for antics after winning gold" (Canwest Olympic Team, 2010). The previous day the Olympic gold medal women's hockey game took place in Vancouver between the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team and the American Olympic Women's hockey team during the

2010 Olympic Winter Games. Canadian forward player Marie Philip Poulin scored two goals during the match and goaltender Shannon Szabados stopped every shot by the American players, resulting in a score of 2-0 for Canada. Goaltenders for the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team were: Charline Labonte; Kim St-Pierre and Szabados. Players for the Canadian Olympic women's hockey team were: Meghan Agosta; Gillian Apps; Jennifer Botterill; Tessa Bonhomme; Jayna Hefford; Haley Irwin; Rebecca Johnston; Becky Kellar; Gina Kingsbury Carla Macleod; Meaghan Mikkelson; Caroline Ouellette; Cherie Piper; Poulin Colleen Sostorics; Sarah Vaillancouort; Catherine Ward and Hayley Wickenheiser. This game earned the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team a gold medal, which contributed to Canada's overall Olympic gold medal count. Canada won the highest number of gold medals in this 2010 Olympics.

Approximately one half hour after the end of the game, players from the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team returned to the ice at the Canada Place arena. Players Agosta, Apps, Bonhomme, Hefford, Irwin, Kellar, Labonte, Macleod, Szabados, Ouellette, Poulin, Sostorics and St-Pierre smoked cigars and drank Molson Canadian beer and champagne. Except for their helmets and gloves, the players remained in their hockey gear, which was emblazoned with the Canadian maple leaf. Some of the players sat on the ice, while others lay on their backs talking to one another. Many of the players posed for photographs with cigars in their mouths and some of the players held cans of beer in their hands. One image accompanying the Canwest Olympic Team's article depicted Irwin pouring champagne into Bonhomme's mouth. The spectators had long since left, but several media personnel covering the Olympic Games, including Alex Livesly from Getti Images, Jean Leduc from the *Canwest Olympic Team* Olympic Group, Scott Audette from Reuters and Andrew Mills from Star-Ledger, remained in the arena to take pictures of the women's celebration.

Three days later, on February 28th, 2010, the Canadian Olympic Men's hockey team defeated the American Olympic Men's hockey team in the final gold medal game. Goaltenders for the Canadian Olympic men's hockey team included: Martin Brodeur, Marc-Andre Fleury and Roberto Luongo. Players for the Canadian men's hockey team were: Patrice Bergeron; Dan Boyle; Sydney Crosby; Drew Doughty; Ryan Getzlaf; Dany Heatley; Jarome Iginla Duncan Keith; Patrick Marleau; Brenden Morrow; Rick Nash; Scott Niedermayer; Corey Perry; Chris Pronger; Michael Richards; Brent Seabrook; Eric Staal; Joe Thornton; Jonathan Toews and Shea Weber. The Canadian Olympic Men's hockey team played the gold medal game against the American Olympic Men's team, winning with a score of 3-2 on the final day of the Olympics and earned Canada's final 2010 gold medal.

Tasked with maintaining information about gold medal rankings and other Olympic statistics was the section of the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* entitled "2010 Winter Games" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 2010). This section of the *Ottawa Citizen* was entirely devoted to the 2010 Winter Olympic coverage. The page includes a link to a list of 15 winter sports that readers could select to receive additional information. The "Ice Hockey" link directed readers to an information page about Canadian Olympic hockey. The content of the Canadian Olympic hockey page is dedicated almost entirely to images, articles, and videos of Canadian Olympic Men's hockey; information about the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team is paltry.

The first headline under the "Ice Hockey" section is: "Canada wins hockey gold; sets new Olympic record". While the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team also won a gold medal at the 2010 Olympics, this article and subsequent image refer only to the men's team. Below this article is a list of 15 additional articles related to hockey. Each of these articles is about Canadian men's hockey, with headlines such as: "Fans across Canada turn out to party"; "Send your

congratulations to Team Canada”; “With golden moment, Luongo erases all doubts”; “\$6,000 hockey tickets 'definitely worth it' say fans”; “2010 Gold-medal hockey Canada vs. U.S” and “Gold medal game is ‘hottest ticket in history of Canadian sport’”. In total, there were 17 articles in the “Ice Hockey” section devoted solely to the Canadian Olympic Men’s team. Of these 17, nine of the articles had headlines that were positive about the Canadian Olympic Men’s gold medal win. The eight remaining articles were neutral, descriptive articles of the Canadian Olympic Men’s hockey games and relevant statistics.

In the “Ice Hockey” section of the 2010 Winter Games coverage in the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen*, there was a significant discrepancy between the articles featuring the Canadian Olympic Men’s hockey team and the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team. In total, there were only five articles devoted to the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team on the main page of the “Ice Hockey” section. The five articles devoted to the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team were at the very bottom of the online webpage in a smaller font than the majority of the Canadian Olympics Men’s hockey team articles, making the articles about Canadian women’s hockey difficult to locate. There was only one headline discussing the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team gold medal win. It simply stated: “Canada wins gold in women’s hockey”. Directly above and beside this article were the headlines speaking to the controversial celebration of the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team.

Online Newspaper Articles

The first article by Steve Ewen entitled “Canadian women apologize for antics after winning gold” implies that the “antics” that took place required an “apology”. Ewen used the term “whooping it up” to describe the women’s on ice celebration, which included smoking and

drinking. In reference to the character of the celebration, Gilbert Felli, the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) executive director argued: "I don't think it's a good promotion of sport values". He furthermore promised an investigation of the on ice celebration (Felli quoted in Ewen, 2010). These statements intimate that the women's celebration constituted a serious transgression requiring a formal investigation by the IOC. Indeed, it appears that the transgression overshadowed the women's gold medal victory.

The article proceeded with an interview that asked two of the players to account for their behaviour. Player Hefford responded: "we realize we should have kept our celebrations in the change-room" (Ewen, 2010). Goal-scorer Poulin stated "I guess we just wanted to enjoy the game and go back on the ice and I think we are really sorry for what happened...It won't happen again" (Ewen, 2010). Poulin was asked if she was aware that she was drinking alcohol under the legal age of 19. She said that at the time of the celebration she did not realize that 19 was the legal drinking age in the province of British Columbia (Ewen, 2010). The article included statements only by these two players, both of whom were apologetic. It did not include the opinion of any of the other players on the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team.

At the end of the article, Hefford stated that her team "accomplished something huge" by winning the gold medal at the 2010 Olympics (Hefford quoted in Ewen, 2010). She added: "Today would have been a great day to open the papers and see our team celebration on the front page and hear how proud Canadians are of us" (Ewen, 2010). With only one article in the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* dedicated to the team's gold medal win, Hefford's comments speak to the focus of the news media on the controversy over their celebration, rather than on their accomplishment. The potential investigation of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team by the IOC increased the severity of the incident. Words such as "apology", "issue",

“whooping it up”, “downplay” and “antics” problematize the celebration while minimizing the significance of the team’s Olympic gold medal win.

The second article by the Canwest Olympic Team entitled “Women’s on ice celebration creates stir” examines the readers’ reactions to the celebration. The article declares that “Canada was buzzing” about the on ice celebration as the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team “cracked open cans of beer and brandished bottles of champagne, smoked cigars, clowned around for photos and lounged on the ice surface, soaking in their victory” (Canwest Olympic Team, 2010). This article also focused mainly on the celebration and not on the gold medal victory. Like Ewen’s article, derogatory language such as “cracked”, “brandished” and “clowned around” was used to describe the events of the celebration. Furthermore, IOC spokesman Mark Adams was quoted as sternly stating: “Yes, we will look into this matter...”, the “matter” being the women’s celebration. Toward the end of the article, it is suggested that “Canadians themselves seemed divided on whether their golden girls had anything to apologize for”. This comment allows that the public has divisive opinions regarding the on ice celebration. For instance, the article reported “a minority of reader comments on stories about the post-game celebration criticized the players’ actions, some of them on sexist or nationalistic grounds”. Interestingly, 87 of the online readers responses responding or commenting on this article did not support the Canadian Olympic Women’s hockey team on ice celebration, while 83 of the online readers responses did support it. The articles incited heated debate, as did the accompanying photographs.

Online Photographs

The photographs of the female hockey players during their post-win celebration were an integral visual accompaniment to the headlines and news stories. The article by Ewen featured photographs taken by Jean Levac and Bruce Bennett. The Canwest Olympic Team's article featured photographs by Scott Audette. Both the online and print version of the *Ottawa Citizen* were accompanied by these photographs. However, the online version of the articles often includes several more accompanying photographs. The reader can select the images section of the page and can see as many images as the *Ottawa Citizen* has published for each article; readers can also look at all of the photographs without reading the article. In Ewen's article there are two photographs: the first portrays Poulin and Bonhomme posing with cigars in their mouths while holding up their gold medals. The second photograph depicts Irwin pouring champagne into Bonhomme's mouth. Comparably, the Canwest Olympic Team article includes two photographs. The first is of Kellar, Mikkelson and Johnston smiling for the camera and holding cans of Coors light beer. The second photograph is of the entire Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team after receiving their gold medals on the ice immediately after the match ended.

Online Reader Responses

In the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen*, readers are invited to post their comments in a section entitled "What do you think?" In order to create an online reader response, one must register for a free online account. Once registered, the readers can post comments related to online articles and photographs. Some articles allow approximately 48 hours for online reader responses, capping them after that time, while other articles do not have a time limit for reader responses. Readers can create online reader responses, report abusive comments and engage in

dialogue with other readers. Additionally, readers have the option to change their name from “*Anonymous*” to an online name of their choice.

The negative sentiments toward the on ice celebration are evident in the online reader responses to the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen*. The online reader responses comment on the articles, images and other online reader responses. The online reader responses are important clues as to how readers of the *Ottawa Citizen* accept and define purportedly acceptable behavior for women athletes. In total, there are 507 reader responses that accompanied the two articles; 213 for the Canwest Olympic Team’s article and 297 for Ewen’s article. I examine these two articles, accompanying photographs and online reader responses together as there are substantive parallels in their content.

Of the 507 online reader responses, 203 responded favorably to the celebration. I closely examined all 507 online reader responses and used key words and tone to interpret whether or not they were supportive of the celebration. To decipher which online readers responses were supportive of the celebration I coded key words such as “celebrate”, “congratulations”, “proud”, “victory” and “winning”. Of the 507 online reader responses, 168 responded negatively to the celebration. To determine which online reader responses did not support the celebration I coded key words such as “shame”, “embarrassment”, “classless”, “failed” and “disgrace”. Seventy-four of the readers’ responses implied that they were neither for nor against the celebration. The remaining 62 of the online reader responses fell into a contrarian category. These responses used the word “but” to condemn and to condone certain aspects of the celebration. These readers indicated that the players were right in celebrating “but” it should have been in private, or should not have involved smoking, or drinking, or the public rink. The use of the word “but” was

foundational as it portrayed doubt and discomfort related to the celebration even among those who claimed to be supportive of the team and of the celebration overall.

Methodological Toolbox

This section outlines the rationale behind my data collection process. The reasons for selecting online newspaper articles from the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* and the significance of the two particular articles are detailed here. I examined these two online *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper articles, as well as accompanying photographs, captions and the online reader responses, for my discourse analysis. The interpretation and meaning of these texts are critical for gaining insight into the consensus regarding acceptable social behaviour for female athletes as language and images illuminate the resistance to women in sports in general and to women in hockey in particular.

The *Ottawa Citizen* was selected as my primary source as it is the most widely distributed newspaper with the highest readership in Ottawa. The paper has approximately 493,000 readers each week (Advertising Rates, *Ottawa Citizen*, 2008/2009). Of these readers, 124,000 subscribe to the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* (Advertising Rates, *Ottawa Citizen*, 2008/2009). The online version is available to anyone with access to the Internet, which surmises that the actual number of people who read the online version is higher than the projected 124,000. A high readership is important to ascertain a diversity of perspectives while demonstrating trends in the online reader responses. The *Ottawa Citizen* was also chosen as it is the main newspaper of Canada's capital. The capital is home to the Federal Government, Parliament and the Prime

Minister of Canada, and as such the *Ottawa Citizen* focuses on political, social and economic issues as they directly affect the city and the country. This focus was particularly relevant during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games as Canada was the host country.

In 2008, the *Ottawa Citizen* was incorporated by Canadian media giant Canwest Publishing. At this time, Canwest won a bid for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games as the official regional newspaper publisher (Poulton, 2008). The partnership allowed the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) access to advertising opportunities within the regional newspapers of Canwest. In exchange, Canwest garners exclusive rights in the regional newspaper publisher product and service category for their regional newspapers *The Gazette, Ottawa Citizen, Windsor Star, Regina Leader-Post, Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, Vancouver Sun, The Province* and *Victoria Times Colonist*. Editorial content and coverage remains unaffected by this partnership, but regional newspapers operating under Canwest have internal teams that reported on the 2010 Olympics. In other words, the *Ottawa Citizen* had a team of writers who reported on the Olympics under the name Canwest Olympic Team. This detail is relevant to readership as it was the *Ottawa Citizen* that was directly affiliated with VANOC and the Olympics. This partnership provided a closer connection between the *Ottawa Citizen* and the Olympics than other regional newspapers.

The online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* is easily accessible and is updated more frequently by journalists and editors than the print version. One of the significant benefits of the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* is that news stories and additional information is updated often and instantaneously. This immediacy permits real-time dialogue to occur between readers. The instantaneous nature of the online reader response technology in the online version of the *Ottawa Citizen* creates a broadly accessible conversation. For example, the two articles by Ewen

and the Canwest Olympic Team were published online on February 26, 2010. Within minutes online reader responses began to appear and were available to anyone with Internet access. On March 1, 2010, the *Ottawa Citizen* closed the online reader responses section.

The reaction time of the online reader responses is significant in interpreting the thoughts and sentiments of readers following the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team celebrations. The online reader responses create instant and relevant dialogue between other readers about the particular articles and images. van de donk, Loader, Nixon and Rucht (2004) argue that online interaction between people creates important messages. It is a valuable method of interpreting sentiments regarding current social issues. The authors claim "a good deal of civic discussion takes place on the internet, not only in explicit public forums and within varieties of online journalism, but also within the vast networking of activist organizations and social movements" (p.xiii). Shirky (2009, 2010) adds that the Internet allows readers to consume and produce ideas. Citizen sharing of information finds value in constructing "codes of meaning" that assert dominant beliefs and expectations (Henry et al. quoted in Sethna, 2007). Although there are evident differences between print newspapers and online newspapers, the interactivity between readers, editors and journalists remain in online newspaper formats.

Frances Henry and Carol Tator (2002) assert "the media are one of the most powerful institutions in a democratic society because they help transmit its central cultural images, ideas and symbols, as well as a nation's narratives and myths" (p.4). Furthermore, media are several "vehicles of cultural production [that] help shape our sense of self, our understanding of what it means to be male or female [works to] help us understand who is us, who is them" (p.296). Despite the media's fragmented nature, each medium works to reify the dominant ideology (Hall 2002).

Understanding how readers perceived the images of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration is important. Hall's (1997) discourse of representation is useful to understand how even photographs and captions are interpreted. Hall contends "it is the caption which selects one out of many possible meanings from the image, and anchors it with words...the meaning of the photograph then, does not lie exclusively in the image but in the conjunction of image and text" (p. 228). In other words, the Internet, newspaper articles, photographic images and captions can work together to create and maintain social meanings and messages. Indeed, there are profound connections between the online *Ottawa Citizen* articles, the photographs, captions and the online reader responses that perpetuate a gendered status quo in sports.

Unnamed editors at the *Ottawa Citizen* monitor the online reader responses. The *Ottawa Citizen* policy for online posting declares that posts containing "vulgarity, hate speech, personal attacks, copyright violation or other inappropriate content" will be removed as the editors see fit (*Ottawa Citizen*). Although it may be considered a limitation not to have access to the censored responses, it does not pose a problem for this study. I am interested primarily in the general responses found in the majority of the reader's posts and less so in the minority of censored responses. If any of the online reader responses are anonymous, they are differentiated using the recorded times of their posting. User names are included when available. To maintain authenticity and accuracy, I have not altered the content of the online reader responses in any way, including spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

Although there are slightly more online reader responses that were supportive of the on ice celebration, there were still many readers who were not supportive and who indicated that it was a transgression. The negative comments are relevant as they reflect a social dialogue

regarding Canadian women's hockey. I chose to focus mainly on the negative online reader responses because the impact that these negative comments have on a gendered status quo in sports are real. Canadian women's hockey remains under-funded, under-supported and as reflected in the imbalanced coverage, it is still not a sport that is valued by Canadians in the same way that Canadian men's hockey is valued. The negative comments imply deeper issues with women participating in sports in general, and Canadian women hockey players, in particular.

3) OFFSIDE! READERS' REACTIONS

This section offers an overview of the content of the *Ottawa Citizen's* online reader responses to the articles and photographs previously described. There are a number of common sentiments that emerge from the total 507 online reader responses to the articles by Ewen and the Canwest Olympic team. The readers' online dialogue indicates that the members of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team who participated in this celebration were regarded as failed role models, as a public disgrace, and as a classless group of women.

Failed Role Models

A number of the online reader responses infer that the players on the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team are considered bad role models for youths. By smoking cigars and drinking beer on the ice, the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team members were understood by readers as having failed in their roles as inspirational figures for the country. Cigar smoking was a significant concern for many readers. *Anonymous* 7:04 p.m. described the women's smoking as offensive, stating:

whats with the stupid cigar smoking. That's a sign of really stupid athletes doing something that really helps the health and body of an athlete for all the young people to see. I have never seen anything so gross and undermining of a Championship team. Go blow smoke up your own (Ewen, 2010).

Other readers proclaimed that smoking on the ice in the Canada Place arena was illegal since Vancouver city bylaws forbid smoking within six meters of building entrances (City of Vancouver, 2008). *Anonymous* 4:57 p.m. wrote: "as for the smoking, smoking in a public building is illegal. If anyone else there had been smoking they would have been fined and ejected from the building". Likewise, *Anonymous* 5:24 p.m. claimed, "you can drink but you can't smoke in a public building in Vancouver..they should be fined \$500.00". The Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team members' status as role models was questioned as a result of the perception that this risk taking behaviour was an illegal activity. Many others, however, found open alcohol to be the most problematic offense to the women's status as role models.

Additionally, when the players on the Canadian Olympic women's hockey team drank alcohol on the open ice, readers reacted with disappointment. *Anonymous* 3:51p.m. stated:

Shame on you Olympians! You are supposed to be role models for young girls!! Along with the honor of representing your country you are also imbued with a sense of responsibility!!! Celebrations with alcohol should be held in private. You may have won medals but you lost some dignity and respect!!! (Canwest Olympic Group, 2010).

Comparably, *Anonymous* 4:40p.m said: "Disgraceful. What an example for our children". These readers felt that the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team players breached their status as role models. The combination of smoking and drinking that occurred during the celebration exacerbated the feelings among readers that the women had failed Canadians.

Public Disgrace

The public nature of the celebration was problematic for other readers as indicated in their online reader responses. Some readers expressed shame and embarrassment as a result of this celebration because it was related to the venue of the celebration and to the underage drinking of alcohol. The women's celebration in the Canada Place arena on the ice surface contributed to the sense that this act constituted a public disgrace. *Anonymous* 5:02p.m. wrote: "the issue for me is where they chose to enjoy it. They shouldn't have taken their celebration back onto the ice". Similarly *Anonymous* 10:26p.m. exclaimed: "I think where they did it sucked!!!! Comes off as disrespect and an up yours to the venue. I could care less if they swung by curtain rods, got loaded and sang bad karaoke as long as it was out of the rink". The idea that the team's actions represented an affront to public decency appeared to be exacerbated by the fact that they wore their hockey jerseys on the ice surface at the public arena.

Moreover, Poulin, the goal scorer, was under the legal provincial drinking age at the time of the celebration. To drink alcohol legally in British Columbia, one must be at least 19 years of age; Poulin was 18 years old at the time. Public disgrace was a sentiment expressed by some online reader responses as a result of the underage drinking. *Anonymous* 12:40p.m. asserts: "Innocent? Last time I checked drinking underage is illegal. That girl should be charged and whomever gave her the beer, should also be charged....". Another online reader response pronounced: "What an embarrASSment for the whole country of Canada esp. when some of the players are under age" (*Anonymous* 8:13a.m.). The online reader responses echoed a sense of national embarrassment and disgrace at Poulin's alcohol consumption during the celebration. By emphasizing the "ASS" in the word embarrassment, *Anonymous* 8:13a.m. added to the insult against the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team by using this derogatory term.

Classlessness

On several occasions, the online reader responses charged the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team with tawdry behaviour associated with lower class status. A number of online reader responses declared "Money can't buy class, apparently, neither can gold" (*Anonymous* 7:10p.m.). One reader wrote, "what a bunch of trailer trash" (*Anonymous* 4:51p.m.). Thus, following the on ice celebration the players were constructed as lacking in "class" primarily for consuming alcohol, drinking certain types of alcohol, and for smoking.

Many readers felt that beer was a lower class beverage choice for women athletes celebrating a gold medal victory. *Anonymous* 7:46p.m. wrote:

I fail to understand what BEER and cigars have to do with Victory, are our heroes so low class that we have to meet on the ice and degrade the area. Athletes who do these things are NOT true athletes!!...GROW up girls. Getting gold in an honor, not a secretive cheap seat on the ice. You are supposed to be models for young women..not booze drinking cigar smoking low life (Ewen 2010).

Anonymous 7:46p.m., like other readers, holds that beer drinking reflects a player's lack of class. Moreover, *Anonymous* 7:46p.m.'s post indicates a link between the sentiments that the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team had become failed role models, a public disgrace and a classless bunch as a result their on ice celebration.

Several actions performed by the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team during the on ice celebration caused concern among readers. Drinking alcohol, smoking cigars and drinking beer while underage particularly distressed the readers of the online *Ottawa Citizen* articles. These concerns are related to the notions that these women were failed role models, a public disgrace and classless in behaviour.

4) CANADIAN WOMEN AND HOCKEY: SKIRTS AND BEYOND

These notions can be understood as emerging from historical roles of women in sporting practice. Women's participation in the Olympics, women's participation in hockey, and gendered assumptions about athletic women's sexuality provide the context for the readers' sentiments regarding the 2010 Canadian Women's on ice celebration. From these historical roles emerge three identifiable types of women in sporting culture: the heterosexy athlete, the good mother and the failed woman.

Gender Inequities: Historical Legacies of Women and Sport

Women have struggled to be included in both leisure and organized sports. Hockey is but one example of a sport in which women have had to fight against sexist rules and traditions to play the game. Although women's hockey is the sport of interest in this study, women riding the bicycle is a starting point in understanding the gendered panic around women's participation in sport (Lenskyj 1986, 2003). In the late 1800s the bicycle became a topic of debate; specifically, who could ride it, afford it, enjoy it, and who could not. Bicycle riding as a leisure activity is understood as class-linked, not only due to the affordability of the bicycle, but also because of the differential distribution of leisure time. The second critical aspect of bicycle riding is that women wanted to wear bloomers as opposed to their long, conservative skirts, in order ride a bicycle safely and comfortably (Hall, 2002). At the time, bloomers were considered menswear and the prospect of a woman donning bloomers caused consternation. A woman wearing bloomers indicated a transgression from the traditionally acceptable female attire of dresses and skirts. While women's bicycle riding initially received popular support, it was not long before the activity was constructed as a danger to women.

As in many sporting activities, the rhetoric of danger associated with women's bicycle riding was tied to women's supposedly frail physiques. The argument that bicycle riding would damage women's reproductive organs was supported by medical doctors and clergymen of the time. Their claims pertained to the apparent cessation of menstruation and the displacement of the uterus. Implicitly, as the argument goes, bicycle riding was an offense to women's sexuality since it "would threaten their ability to attract the most worthy fathers for their children"(p.36). Essentially, reproduction was symbolic of femininity, and consequently, of motherhood. Of equal concern was the possibility that bicycle riding could sexually awaken women via bodily contact with the bicycle's seat.

These arguments implied that female anatomy, physiology and "women's special moral obligations, disqualified them from vigorous physical activity" (p.17). Women had a "moral duty to preserve their vital energy for childbearing and to cultivate personality traits suited to the wife and mother role" (p.17). It is in this sense that the riding of bicycles by women, as well as their participation in other sports, came to represent the overall racial degradation of the population (Lenskyj, 1986). Sporting and Olympic participation especially for white middle-class women contradicted ideas about femininity as such activities might negatively impact women's ability to attract the opposite sex and fulfill their stereotypical roles of wife and mother. Indeed, sport "threatened to blur the natural boundaries between the sexes" by creating a generalized anxiety regarding the threat of women's sporting activities to white, middle-class feminine norms (p.35).

Women are expected to reproduce the nation. In times of crisis, such as during the First and Second World Wars, population growth is a concern. Ensuring adequate growth is a gendered and racialized responsibility. Women are expected to produce more offspring, more national bodies, for war and for the economy (Yuval-Davis, 1996). The emphasis on healthy

reproduction is the emphasis on heterosexual reproduction of national bodies. Behaving as a female means to be a mother, to be a mother means to have heterosexual relationships for the purposes of reproduction. Historically, the medical profession focused largely on white middle-class women's bodies as appropriate vehicles of mothering and childbirth. Lenskyj states: "[o]ver the past century the medical profession has played a dominant role in dictating safe and appropriate sporting activities for women. The dominance may be understood as yet another instance of medical control over women's lives in general, and over reproduction in particular" (p.17). Further evidence indicates that childless women, especially married childless women, continue to be regarded as selfish and abnormal (Gillespie, 2003). Thus whiteness, heterosexuality, femininity and motherhood continue to be inextricably linked.

The body valued for reproduction is a white body (Lenskyj 1986; Schaffer and Smith 2000; Yuval and Davis 1996). There is a particular demographic segment that is considered desirable on the basis of race and class; white middle-class bodies are, therefore, generally required to reproduce. Doctors who "viewed the reproductive capacity of Anglo-Saxon, middle-class women as a more valuable commodity than that of their working-class immigrant counterparts" perpetuated this reproductive ideology (Lenskyj 1986, p.17). There remains little interest in reproducing poor and racialized bodies, as is dramatically evidenced today in access to fertility treatments (Yuval-Davis 1996; Burfoot 2007). Ensuring proper care to maternal bodies is directed at white, able-bodied, middle-class women who are categorized as heterosexual; consequently, white women who deviate from the expected feminine roles of wife and mother have historically been and continue to be viewed with skepticism. These anxieties infiltrated women's involvement in many sports, including hockey.

Other gendered leisure activities from which women have traditionally been excluded include smoking and drinking. There is a general discomfort with women smoking cigars, an activity typically associated with celebratory moments for men. Women athletes who smoke, especially those who smoke cigars, push the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women both on and off the ice. Sharon Cook (2008) argues that because smoking is regarded as a man's activity, the female smoker or drinker is constructed "as so deviant as to be beyond mention" (p.775). Historically, women smokers were assumed to be unmarried and rumored to be sexually deviant or promiscuous (Cook, 2008). Since women smokers existed on the fringes of society, it was also generally assumed that many of these women were lesbians; a signifier that is often also associated with immorality and marginality. Additionally, in a court of law, smoking has been associated with adultery and other crimes that tarnish a woman's reputation. Essentially, "a woman smoking in public could suggest that she broadly failed to discipline her sensuality and ultimately her sexuality" (Rudy, 2005, p.18).

Similarly, Rudy (2005) argues that cigar smoking is a gendered, classed and race-based activity. From the late 19th until the mid-20th century, a man "with class" would refrain from smoking in public and in front of women; such restraint indicated masculine self-control. Consequently, men's smoking became a private activity and white men's smoking areas became privileged, male-dominated spaces organized around men's business and leisure activities. The exclusion of women, combined with the white privilege of these spaces, meant that cigars were associated with whiteness, masculinity, wealth and upper-class status (Rudy, 2005).

Women athletes who participate in male rituals, such as smoking and drinking, disrupt gendered understandings of feminine behaviour. The work of sociologist Mariana Valverde (1998) addresses the relationship between alcohol, gender, class, health and commercialism, with

a particular emphasis on the historical relationships between women's alcohol consumption and women's rationality. Historically, a woman who drank, like a woman who smoked, was thought to have few inhibitions and little self-control. Alcohol consumption reflected her deviance, promiscuity and the distance from white, middle-class, feminine norms. The belief that women who drink alcohol have little sexual self-control and few sexual inhibitions remains. Unlike other alcoholic beverages, beer is a classed beverage that is traditionally considered to be the drink of "working-class" men (Le Masters, 1975). Because beer is commonly paired with ideas about blue-collar work and the "average Joe", beer companies still rely on the imagery of the hard-working, plaid wearing, outdoorsy, working-class man as a marketing strategy, even though their target marketing demographic is often young, middle-class white men. Thus, these types of leisure activities such as, drinking, smoking, and sporting participation continue to be classed, racialized and gendered. The exclusion and inclusion of women in sport and leisure activities is a theme that persists in women's struggle to participate in leisurely and organized hockey.

Women and Hockey

Although precise historical dates vary, the first official women's hockey game seems to have taken place in 1889 between a Government house team and the Rideau ladies (McKinley, 2009). The first recorded women's hockey game was at the Rideau Rink in Ottawa. The game was hosted by the Canadian Governor General Lord Stanley, whose daughter, Isobel Stanley, played on the Government house team on February 10, 1891 (McKinley, 2009).

In the late 1800s, it was acceptable for privileged white women to play hockey as long as they wore long floor length skirts weighted down with stones (Hall, 2002). These outdoor leisurely hockey games were popular and attracted quite a crowd. Canadian women in Ottawa in

the early 20th century created their own league and charged monies to spectators to watch their games; in turn, viewership and support of these games increased (p.4). While discouraged by some husbands, women's hockey was overall a positive and acceptable activity for these players (Hall 2002; Lenskyj 1986). However, during the 1930s, around the time of the bicycle debate, women's hockey became suspect and women were discouraged from playing by universities and colleges, as well as by medical doctors, husbands and members of the clergy (Hall 2002; Lenskyj 2002; Theberge 1992). Women's hockey playing, similar to women's bicycle riding, became something to fear.

During the 1960s, women's hockey re-emerged, yet a strong social resistance to women playing a man's sport continued (Avery and Stevens 1997; Hall 2002). Concerns over women playing hockey on men's leagues and the subsequent consequences of transgressing acceptable gender norms made the hockey environment generally unwelcoming to women (Hall 2002; Theberg 1992). Between the 1960s and late 1980s, women fought for their right to play hockey. The struggles of three Canadian women, Abigail Hoffman, Gail Cummings and Justine Blainey are particularly well documented.

Hoffman, was a young player who called herself Ab, a genderless nickname, and who never disclosed her sex since it was never requested. It was assumed by several officials that Ab was simply a young boy playing hockey. En route to a tournament in 1956, officials noticed that her birth certificate indicated that Hoffman was a girl. Subsequently, she was banned from playing on the team. The ban, which was lifted the following year, technically allowed Hoffman to try out for the boys' team. However, the pressure Hoffman faced from parents and players to cease playing hockey altogether became overwhelming and she eventually quit hockey to pursue other sports.

Cummings was a goalie for a Huntsville, Ontario team in 1976. Despite her incredible success as a goalie, the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) refused to acknowledge her officially as a player. In 1976, Al Moore from the OMHA indicated that Cummings could no longer play any games with her male team because: "There are problems when you start mixing sexes. Change-rooms might have to be changed to accommodate girls and many of the facilities that we play in just don't have the space. We make the regulations for all members, not for isolated individuals. I'm not so sure hockey is such a great thing for girls to be playing anyway" (Moore quoted in Avery and Stevens, 1997 p.121). The underlying reasons why the OMHA and many similar organizations did not want girls to play hockey, especially on a boys' team, became glaringly obvious: hockey was a man's game that would be diluted by making inconvenient accommodations for female players. Clearly, female players were seen to be encroaching upon male territory.

Blainey is a critical figure in the development of women's hockey in Canada. Blainey was not permitted to play for her team in the Metropolitan Toronto Hockey League (MTHL). Although there was a girls' hockey league in Toronto, Blainey wanted to play in the boys' league because the boys were given more practice time, ice time, funding and were permitted to use slap shots during game play. In 1985, Blainey lobbied the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) for her right to play on the Toronto Olympics, a Minor Pee wee 'A' team in the boys' league (Avery and Stevens, 1997 p.125). Despite the OHRC's disappointing 1985 decision to refuse Blainey the right to suit up under the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA), she persisted with her case. In May of 1987, at the Supreme Court of Canada, the Court ruled that qualified girls have the right to play on boys' teams and that any decision otherwise constitutes gender discrimination and a violation of human rights (Vella 1989-1990; William 1995). In 1988

Blainey played hockey on the boys' Minor Bantam League and continued for several years playing on boys' teams until she attended university during which time she played on a varsity women's hockey team.

Women and the Olympics

Attempts to include women athletes in the Olympics have been subject to similar struggles. To appreciate the significance of women's exclusion and inclusion in the Olympics, it is necessary to consider the larger political implications of the Olympics itself. Lenskyj (2000) argues that the use of terms such as "Olympic games" or "Olympic family" does not truthfully acknowledge or name the power relations within the "Olympic Industry", which include the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Federations (IF) and National Olympic Committee (NOC) (Lenskyj 2000). The Olympic Industry names the Olympics as an organization that profits economically from various contracts, advertisements, ticket sales, merchandising, etc. (Lenskyj, 2000). It is also an industry that has political and social power. The Olympics are not simply about good sportsmanship and entertaining competition; in fact, from the inception of the modern Olympics, the results of the games have been largely political (Lenskyj 2000, 2008; Schaffer and Smith 2000; Tomlinson and Whannel 1984).

The political ramifications of the Olympics are rooted in the history of Olympic events. For example, the 1936 Berlin Games, also called the Nazi games, were used to showcase Adolf Hitler's growing power in Nazi Germany (Tomlinson and Whannel, 1984). At the Mexico City Games in 1968, certain black athletes promoted Black Power to challenge the traditional

exclusion of black athletes from the Olympics. The 1976 Montreal Games were associated with a political and financial scandal that left Montreal residents with a one billion dollar deficit. The United States boycotted the Moscow games in 1980 because of the increased tension caused by Cold War politics. As a result, the Soviet Union refused to partake in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, California. The Los Angeles Games were also known as the “McDonald Olympics” due to the emphasis on merchandising, advertising and capitalist ventures (Tomlinson and Whannel, 1984).

The modern Olympics are about much more than sports. The historical exclusion of women from the Olympics and the official sanctioning of acceptable sporting activities for women are yet again examples of a political statement. The political, social and economic interests of the Olympics are interlocked with racist, classist and sexist practices.

It was Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French aristocrat, who decided to revive the Olympics in 1894 after an approximate 1,500 year break. He single handedly created the IOC, which organized summer games every four years, the first of which began in Greece in 1896. The athletes were unpaid amateurs. Punishment was severe for athletes who were discovered to have received any money for playing sports; consequences included disqualification from future events and the revocation of their medals (DeMeyer, 2000). The Olympics were an elitist system, privileging gender, class and race and subordinating and excluding racialized groups and women. de Coubertin’s vision of the Olympics was “the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism, with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, arts for its setting and female applause as a reward” (Schaffer and Smith, 2000 p.1). In other words, women played a peripheral role. Their contribution was to praise the athletic success of men and do nothing more. Furthermore, de Coubertin argued “the distortions caused by exertions [during game play] made

women hideous” “competition was masculinizing, and ...public exhibition by females... vulgar” (Schaffer and Smith, 2000 p.8).

It was not long, however, before women insisted on being included in Olympic sports. At the first Olympics held in Greece in 1896, Melpomene, a Greek female runner attempted to compete in a marathon but was disqualified on the basis of her sex. Melpomene ran unofficially in the marathon, her score or ranking unknown (Tomlinson and Whannel, 1984). Women persisted with their demands for inclusion in the Olympics. By 1900 women were unofficially permitted to play lawn bowling, tennis and golf and in 1904, the sport of archery was included. At the London games in 1908, women competed officially in these sports and both figure skating and yachting were added to the menu of acceptable female sports for members of the white upper class (Hall, 2002). Assumedly, one would have to be wealthy to train for these sports, have the necessary equipment and the leisure time for practice.

Official inclusion did not translate into official recognition. Unlike their male counterparts, female athletes were awarded diplomas rather than medals to mark their athletic achievements (Tomlinson and Whannel, 1984). The resistance by the IOC and the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) to include additional women's sport in the Olympics, such as track and field, was the breaking point when several women took matters into their own hands. In 1922, Alice Milliat formed the Federation Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI) that hosted a large track and field event in Paris named the Olympique Féminine; a separate event for women unaffiliated with the Olympics (Hall, 2002). The success was immediate and over a short period of time there were 19 official sporting events for women and a growing number of spectators at such events (Hall, 2002).

Despite de Coubertin's fierce resistance to women's inclusion in the Olympics the IOC, in conjunction with the IAAF, moved to include women's track and field events in the 1928 games. de Coubertin became motivated to include women for financial reasons. He wanted the funds that the FSFI was gaining to go to the IOC. This prompted debate among the members of FSFI because if it joined the IOC it would lose control over women's sporting participation. Nevertheless, being recognized by the Olympic Games outweighed all other concerns. The merger between the FSFI and the IOC occurred in 1928. The 1928 games included women in discus, high jump, the 100-metre, 800 meter and 4x100-metre relays. Still, the unfortunate reality of this merger was that women were only allowed to participate in five new Olympic sporting events whereas in the FSFI there were 19.

The other unfortunate reality of this merger was the investment of the Olympics in managing women's bodies. The Olympics continues to be involved in defining and exposing women who do not meet certain physical criteria associated with acceptable femininity. This exposure is exemplified with the mandatory sex testing in 1966 that required women athletes to prove that they were female (Carlson 2000; Cole 2000). At the same time, the Soviet Union and several Eastern European countries were suspected of sending male athletes to compete as females (Bale and Christensen 2004; O'Reilly and Cahn 2007). According to the IOC, sex verification testing was, therefore, needed to prevent men from posing as women to win medals (Cole, 2000). Sex verification testing has never been required of male athletes; the IOC's reasoning for this decision seems to have little basis in light of the fact that there has been only one recorded incident of a man posing as a female athlete.

In 1966, all Olympic women athletes were required to walk nude in front of a panel of judges, mainly doctors employed by the IOC, to evaluate their physiques and genitalia for any

sex abnormalities. If any woman athlete failed the initial walk test, more invasive tests were required. The nude examinations were cancelled in 1968 due to the negative controversy surrounding them. The Barr test, a buccal smear test taken from the inside of women athletes cheeks, replaced the nude walk test and was used from the 1968 Mexico City Games until 1992 (Cole, 2000). Controversially, the presence of Barr bodies signifies a chromosomal female; the absence of Barr bodies signifies a chromosomal male. If the IOC doctors deemed the Olympic athletes not “female enough” they were required to withdraw, or were disqualified (Bale and Christensen 2004; Fausto-Sterling 2000). Eduardo Hay, a gynecologist, obstetrician and spokesperson for the IOC Medical Commission, stated: “the purpose of the femininity tests...[is] to make sure all female athletes compete under identical anatomical conditions” and therefore “what/who needs policing is that which ‘threatens’ fairness-defined in terms of identical anatomical conditions” (Hay quoted in Cole, 2000 p.136). The woman athlete whose sex was called into question was often given the option to fake an injury in order to avoid public humiliation. The IOC would “advise an athlete who received an unsatisfactory result to feign a warm-up injury that requires withdrawal from the competition” (p.136). In this manner, the athletes could “avoid embarrassment and irreparable psychic damage” (p.138).

The Barr test detects chromosomal constitution, which is “presumed to be the fundamental expression of sexual difference” (p.135). It checks for anomalies and deviations from the typical XX in females. Yet as many doctors have stated in relation to this test, deviations from the female XX and male XY binary are not adequate measurements of sex. Finnish geneticist Albert de la Chapelle stands firmly against the IOC’s use of the buccal smear test, noting that “if the intent of the test is to exclude men and women whose body structure or muscle strength confers a ‘male-like’ advantage, then the buccal smear test is the wrong test” (de

la Chapelle quoted in Carlson 2007 p.106). Echoing the same resistance to the Barr Test, Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) contends: "The problem, though, is that this test...cannot do the work the IOC wants it to do", adding, "A body's sex is simply too complex. There is no either/or. Rather, there are shades of difference" (p.3). Chromosomal tests, such as the Barr test, risk punishing women athletes who do not appear feminine enough or whose athletic abilities are so impressive that they cast doubt on her femininity. The controversial nature of the Barr gender verification test and the reasons given by the IOC for the tests, create skepticism as to why sex testing for women athletes exists at all.

The history of women in the Olympics extends beyond which sports they participated in and into the much more invasive and official assessments as to which women's bodies could participate. Women have struggled to be included in sports at the Olympic level. Whether it was exclusion from certain sports or resistance to the inclusion of certain female bodies, gendered assumptions as well as sexist, racist and classist beginnings prevented many women from participating in the Olympics. Even once women began to gain entry into the Olympics they were faced with entrenched beliefs about physical frailty, reproductive dangers and lastly, the suggestion that their participation in sporting activities indicated a deviant sexuality.

The Other Woman

Prior to 1930, women were often encouraged to have close friendships with other women. Rarely was it suspect for women to spend a lot of quality time together. However, in the post-World War I context, social understandings of women's friendships changed for two reasons: the introduction of Freudian theory and the need to replenish the post-war population (Lenskyj, 1986). During this period the so-called "tomboy" became suspect, as did friendships

between women in general. Family structure shifted and families commonly resembled a nuclear form that included only members of the immediate family. The shift to nuclear families from a more community based family model made outside relationships between women suspect. Women who spent too much time away from their mothering or wifely duties in order to spend time with other women were viewed with wariness (Jamieson 2009; O'Reilly and Cahn, 2007).

Freudian theory increased in popularity during the post-World War II era, when indicators of boyishness in females were equated with lesbianism. Such indicators threatened the post-war efforts to increase population size as the reproduction of the nation "required settled gender roles" (Lenskyj, 1986 p.59). The need for heterosexual reproduction, especially the reproduction of valued white bodies, became a pressing national priority that required the compliance of all citizens. Women's roles in populating the nation involved staying in the home, particularly in context of the nuclear family. Therefore, the stereotypical roles of the white, middle-class, feminine, wife and mother were crucial in facilitating population growth for the state.

With increased state involvement in reproductive efforts, lesbianism became a symbol of deviance. Any woman who did not follow the norm of heterosexual wife and mother threatened the state's reproductive agenda. In order to ensure majority compliance by families to reproduce, there had to be a deviant "other" to fear and loathe, a symbolic foil for the normal woman. The tomboy lesbian became the deviant other used to define failed femininity. The social ostracization of the tomboy lesbian was essential to keeping women on the proper path to heterosexual reproduction. As Cahn states,

As a stigmatized figure the mannish lesbian functioned as a powerful but unarticulated "bogeywoman" of sport, silently foiling the ongoing efforts of sport advocates to rehabilitate the reputation of women athletes and resolve the cultural contradictions between athletic prowess and femininity (Cahn quoted in Theberg, 1999, p.90).

The logic was as follows: organized sports created the potential for women to gather together in groups. While the gathering of women in groups in the pre-World War I context was viewed as innocent and normal, female groups, sporting or otherwise, became suspect in the post-World War II context due to the threat of lesbianism. Were tomboyish women interested in sport, or was sport creating tomboyish women? The inconclusive nature of this question caused great social concern. Many husbands insisted that their wives quit sports, including the popular game of hockey (Theberg, 1999). These dichotomous female stereotypes are used against one another and folded into attempts to maintain the male-dominated character of organized sports.

From Past to Present: The Heterosexy Athlete; The Good Mother; The Failed Woman

Deviant female sexuality and sporting participation continues to affect contemporary women athletes. Consequently, women athletes are constructed as belonging to one of three contemporary categorizations: the heterosexy athlete, the good mother or the failed woman. This section considers the present-day construction of the transgressive potential of women in sport. The sentiments expressed by the *Ottawa Citizen* online reader responses concerning failed role models, public disgrace and classlessness, combine with historical assumptions about female frailty, reproduction, and lesbianism in the context of women's leisure and organized sporting activities today. They work in tandem to create the three categories in which women athletes are ultimately grouped. These categories render women athletes more acceptable to the world of sport. The *Ottawa Citizen's* online reader responses to media coverage of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebrations exemplify this observation.

The Heterosexy Athlete

The primary gendered category that athletic women are placed into, if their physical appearances are conducive to it, is the “heterosexy” athlete. I use the term “heterosexy”, coined by Pat Griffin (1998), to refer to certain physical traits related to heterosexual ideals of feminine beauty. These include, but are not limited to, applying makeup, having long hair often worn in a ponytail, wearing tight or revealing clothing and/or posing in passive or vulnerable positions in photographs. Heterosexy codifies the way that behavior and images are understood to be sexually attractive and desirable to the opposite sex. It also functions on the assumption that the heterosexy athletes have heterosexual desires. The annual *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition* is a prime example of the use of heterosexy. This magazine often includes images of women athletes modeling in bathing suits and in sexually suggestive poses intended as heterosexy for the male gaze. Heterosexy images are used to soften the tomboy image of women athletes or to make them more sexually desirable to heterosexual males (1998). If a woman athlete is more heterosexually desirable and read as more feminine, it reduces the threat that the athlete poses when she appears to act in opposition to her gendered, sexualized and reproductive role.

Increasingly, there are a number of cheeky nude calendars that feature women athletes posing nude. When a woman athlete is categorized as heterosexy, it acts as a strategy to reconcile competing assumptions about athleticism and femininity. Hockey, like many other sports, requires strength, power, endurance and tenacity, traits typically and historically associated with masculinity. By asking that women athletes render their physical appearance heterosexy, the athlete can be showcased as a feminine woman. There are countless examples of coaches forcing their women players to wear full makeup during game play and to dress in very feminine attire before and after games (Morris, 2009). Conversely, some readers still resist heterosexy images;

as one reader response put it: "I think there should be an investigation into why the USA girls were playing with full makeup on ridiculous!!!" (*Anonymous* 12:37a.m.).

A recent example of the merger of heterosexuality and sport is the women's Lingerie Football League (LFL). Founded by Mitchell S. Mortaza, the LFL began its first season in the United States in September 2009 and is currently entering its third season. The women footballers play on a 50-yard field during two 17-minute halves wearing only lingerie (LFL, 2011). The mission statement of the LFL is to "become the Ultimate Fan-Driven Live Sports Phenomenon - Blending Action, Impact and Beauty" (LFL, 2011). Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the fans are heterosexual males. On the official LFL website in a section entitled "Want to be a gridiron goddess?" one can click on the link to receive information about upcoming tryouts to become a LFL player. For the tryouts, the LFL website advises: "Dress attire is cute gym wear (sports bra and shorts) with sneakers or cleats if surface is grass. Please bring a photo to leave behind" (LFL, 2011). A few examples of the heterosexuality team names in the LFL league are: Philadelphia Passion; Los Angeles Temptations; San Diego Seduction; Orlando Fantasy and Dallas Desire. Toronto will be adding a team to the LFL in the fall of 2011; in September 2012, a Canadian lingerie league will be formed and will include five Canadian teams (Cross, 2011).

Mortaza believes that heterosexuality and sports are a perfect combination, stating: "These are women who are athletic but also very beautiful and very marketable...we've taken that concept and made an entire league of it" (Cross, 2011). Mortaza continues, "It's become the most successful women's professional league in the U.S. in (two years)... It's really an opportunity for them to be elevated to (the level) of major sports for guys, and be on the cover of everything ranging from *Playboy* to ESPN to Fox News channel" (Cross, 2011). Despite Mortaza's claim

that he is creating an opportunity to elevate women's sport to the level of men's sport, the women athletes are unpaid. The profits made from the LFL games are impressive, yet only the women athletes' travel costs are covered. By contrast, in men's professional football, the players' salaries are in the millions of dollars.

The LFL further exemplifies the trend of mainstreaming pornographic images and scenarios into typically uncharted territories. Attwood (2009) declares, "much more recently an interest in mainstreaming sex- or what some writers have called a 'pornified' or 'striptease' culture- has begun to emerge" (xiii). Dines (2010) contends that mainstreaming pornography creates a social dynamic where women's bodies and sexualities are used and positioned for the purpose of male pleasure. The interest in mainstreaming pornography and striptease culture is expanding into the sporting world. Although these women athletes are demonstrating athleticism through running, throwing and catching the ball, they are also enacting a hypersexualized heterosexy fantasy as they are dressed in lingerie and bend over seductively for certain football plays. In addition, these women athletes are performing for a predominantly male audience.

A woman athlete's failure to appear heterosexy leaves open the possibility that she may be a lesbian. This possibility evidently caused discomfort among some of the readers of the *Ottawa Citizen*. They felt that the women hockey players, by virtue of their engagement with such a man's sport and their subsequent masculinized on ice celebration must be lesbians. This anxiety regarding the women's sexuality is evident in a number of online reader responses. For instance, *Anonymous* 4:53p.m. wrote: "Any straight women on that team?" while another reader deliberately referred to the women hockey players as "boys" quipping: "Let the boys have their fun. Women's hockey is a JOKE!" (*Anonymous* 7:06a.m.). These online reader responses are not only homophobic; they reflect a genuine assumption, or fear, that the players are lesbians or

even males. Today, a woman athlete who threatens acceptable gender norms causes similar panic to that of the tomboy lesbian in the past.

A woman's sexuality, as well as her class, determines her potential to be categorized as heterosexuality. A number of online reader responses spoke to the women athletes' lack of class. For example, *Anonymous* 10:49p.m. argued of the celebration, "it was classless> What next strippers?" while another sarcastically remarked: "some real wife material there" (*Anonymous* 4:51p.m.). *Anonymous* 9:26p.m. writes, "NO CLASS, but then again, they're female hockey players". In a similar vein, *Anonymous* 11:11a.m. commented: "A bunch of drunken sailors. Shame on you". *Anonymous* 4:51p.m. announced, "what a bunch of trailer trash".

The sentiments of classlessness expressed reflect a larger social discomfort about women's roles. The categorical conundrum is as follows: women who play sports, especially traditionally male dominated sports, conflict with traditional and expected feminine behaviours. Women who play hockey, drink beer and smoke cigars lack class because they do not conform to stereotypical white middle-class feminine behaviours. The rhetoric of class or lack thereof contrasts the class earned by white middle-class women who conform to normative gender roles. Breaking normative and acceptable feminine norms with behaviour such as the on ice celebration contradicts the sexiness of the heterosexuality athlete.

The Good Mother

If attempts at heterosexuality are not successful, there is a secondary avenue to rectify the social transgressions of a strong woman athlete: motherhood. A woman athlete who cannot conform to social standards of heterosexuality is often placed in the second category: the good mother. The most apparent example of using motherhood as a category to construct a woman

athlete as non-threatening to traditional gender roles is the Captain of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team, Wickenheiser. In 2008, Wickenheiser was named by *Sports Illustrated* as one of the 25 toughest women athletes for her athletic contribution. Wickenheiser began to play hockey at eight years of age and played with boys' leagues until 13 years of age. At age 15 she was recruited by Canada's National Women's Team (CNWH), becoming one of the youngest to ever play for CNWH. She has remained in the organization ever since. She has won three Olympic gold medals and one silver medal. She is arguably the best woman hockey player in the world and is the first woman player to play full-time professional hockey in an European male league in a position other than goalie. Despite these successes, her short hairstyle, powerful physical presence and lack of makeup have made her a source of social discomfort. Attempts to render her heterosexy have not been successful. Nevertheless, Wickenheiser has been maternalized. Wickenheiser adopted her partner's son (White, 2010) and displays maternal tenderness toward the boy after hockey games. After the players remove their helmets, her adopted son has been brought to her on the ice on several occasions. He is often the only child on the ice and is clearly uncomfortable with everything that is going on around him. Supposedly, by uniting Wickenheiser with her son on the ice, her maternal side makes her less threatening to gendered assumptions about women's roles.

This maternalizing effect can be integrated into sponsorships and advertisements. In magazines, photographs, interviews and events, the focus is often on the women's roles as mothers and homemakers rather than as athletes. The maternalizing of women athletes is motivated by a social desire to reinforce the notion that their primary roles are as wives or mothers. A typifying example is Wickenheiser's 30-second Hamburger Helper commercial. This television advertisement for a food product depicts her with her son and partner at a family

dinner gathering. It ends with Wickenheiser announcing happily: "It's smiles all around when it's Hamburger Helper night!" (Buchanan Group).

Wickenheiser may have willingly agreed to this commercial due to the limited financial resources available to Olympic women athletes. Although certain women athletes are offered various sponsorships and advertisement opportunities, the main sponsors require them to enact stereotypical portrayals of womanhood. It is not coincidental that Wickenheiser's commercial for Hamburger Helper was aired before and during the Sydney Olympics, the second time women's hockey was ever included in the Olympics. Commercials and advertisements that focus on the maternalized aspect of women athletes reaffirm feminine gender roles.

A woman athlete who is interpreted as a good mother is also interpreted as a respectable, classy woman and acceptable role model. Readers chastised the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team members as bad role models as a result of their on ice celebration. *Anonymous* 12:38p.m. declares: "What a great bunch of role models eh? I wonder if any of these women have children of their own? It's no wonder that men are looking for wives from other countries...". This telling comment addresses two key issues: the shameful unfeminine behaviour of the women and the racist assumptions about the docile femininity of non-Canadian women, mostly from developing nations. There are Canadian men who seek or "order" wives, often from developing nations (Belleau, 2003), therefore, making the comment by *Anonymous* 12:38p.m. even more egregious.

Anti-feminine behaviours such as playing hockey, consuming alcohol and smoking cigars pose a challenge to the gendered status quo in sports. The Canadian Women's Olympic hockey team prompted an online backlash from readers of the *Ottawa Citizen*. Because the women hockey players disrupted the ideals of gender, class and race with their celebration, their

femininity was called into question. If members of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team behaved in ways that make them appear as bad role models, then it disrupts the readers' ability to categorize them as admirable mothers.

The Failed Woman

When a woman athlete is categorized as neither heterosexuality nor as the good mother, there is one final category available to her: the failed woman. The failed woman is the residual category in which women athletes who do not conform to the heterosexuality or the good mother categories are placed. The function of the failed woman is to exemplify the repercussions of deviating from feminine gender norms and roles. The readers' sentiments of public disgrace are linked to the category of the failed woman. Historical notions of femininity coupled with contemporary anxiety about gender caused discomfort among readers. The overall sentiment of public disgrace is mirrored by the category of failed woman. Undeserving of placement in the heterosexuality and the good mother categories, the failed woman cannot be saved. To ensure social compliance to femininity, the failed woman acts as a social marker of exclusion.

A current example of a woman athlete categorized as a failed woman is Caster Semanya. Semanya, an eighteen-year old sprinter from South Africa, won the 800-meter at the World Championship in August 2009. Mere hours after her victory, her sex was immediately questioned due to her muscular physique and fast speed (Nyong'o 2010). Newspaper coverage was filled with debates over her sex. The International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) intervened and required sex testing from Semanya (Nyong'o, 2010). In the meantime, a strategy for making her heterosexuality was implemented. During all of the media frenzy awaiting the results of Semanya's chromosome test, the South African magazine *You* surfaced with a

cover shot of Caster Semanya with very glamorous hair and clothing. The caption was: "We turn SA's power girl into a glamour girl-And she loves it, Wow, look at Caster now!" (Nyong'o, 2010). Both the photo and caption appeared to provide proof that she was not just female but heterosexy as well.

This attempt at making Semanya heterosexy enough for proper sex categorization did not work, blocked by Semanya's muscular physique and facial features. Neither was the category of the good mother available to her due to her inability to reproduce. Semanya is intersex and, as such, cannot reproduce in a traditional sense. Because she cannot be constructed as heterosexually attractive or as maternal, she became a failed woman. She is not heterosexy enough so needs to be maternalized. Yet since she cannot reproduce she cannot be maternalized effectively.

Although the members of the Canadian Olympic Women's team were not asked to partake in sex testing the way that Semanya was, the sentiment of failed womanhood was noticeable among online reader responses. The on ice celebration caused readers' to describe the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team members as classless, poor role models and a public disgrace. As a result, their heterosexy image was compromised, their ability to be good mothers was questioned and to some, the celebration and its components turned them into failed women. *Anonymous* 12:40p.m. succinctly states: "The girls should be ashamed of themselves for embarrassing all of Canada to the world..Shame on all of them....IOC should kick them out of the games....". When women do not conform to the gendered norms they are socially prescribed, and when they do so violating the existing categories of allotted femininity, it creates social anxiety. The public disgrace is rooted in the fear of the failed women, the fear of a woman

athlete transgressing too far from normative gender roles that maintain the gendered status quo in sports.

5) PARTING SHOTS

The online reader responses to the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration are not isolated sentiments confined to these two particular articles. These sentiments and the categories of the heterosexy athlete, the good mother and the failed women that sequester women athletes have historical roots and contemporary consequences. The categories have real implications for women in sports. Secondly, the categories have consequences for women in hockey at the Olympic level and clearly had a direct impact on the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team, the team that won the gold medal.

Taking The Hit: Implications of Gendered Categories For Women In Sport

Wickenheiser, perceptively comments during the backlash: "if it were a men's team, there wouldn't be a hint of controversy", adding, "it's celebrating, it's hockey, it's a tradition we do. When we see a Stanley Cup winner, we see them spraying champagne all over the change-room, you see 18-year-old kids there and nobody says a thing" (Wickenheiser quoted in Whamsby, 2010). Male hockey players in competitive levels from junior B, junior A, Ontario Hockey League (OHL) and the NHL are inculcated into a very masculinist sport discourse with an emphasis on initiations involving alcohol and even sexual acts with women. All these levels of hockey have players that are under the legal drinking age of 18 in Quebec, Manitoba and

Alberta, and 19 in the remaining Canadian provinces. In the NHL there are younger drafts, but even more common are drafts to hockey teams in the United States, where the legal drinking age is 21. Many male hockey players celebrate victories and Stanley Cup championships while under the legal drinking age (Whamsby, 2010). It is clear that for male athletes, even if underage, celebrating this way is expected, even encouraged. A woman athlete celebrating in similar fashion, regardless of her age is seen as punishable because it transgresses feminine norms.

Such transgression has serious implications. Some College recruiting programs insist that they do not accept lesbian athletes. Coaches suspected to be lesbians have been fired (Morris, 2009). Women athletes have married men in order to preserve sponsorships that require a wholesome straight girl image (O'Reilly and Cahn, 2007). Robinson (2002) contends "today what limited sponsorship funds are available for women go almost exclusively to particularly attractive athletes" (p.26). She argues "perhaps the biggest problem is that even conventionally attractive women athletes must display their bodies in extremely passive and vulnerable ways...of course robbing them of power-including the power they had gained from being elite athletes in the first place" (p.28).

Consequently, feminizing women athletes by making them heterosexy, maternal or failed women ultimately undermines their power and confines them to very limited gendered activities. If these athletes do succumb to the pressure of conformity, a difficult pressure to resist, they are placed in these categories that rely on stereotypical and sexist assumptions of women that simultaneously attempt to render them powerless. Ironically, the powerlessness that results is the opposite of what women athletes embody.

Physical strength, agility, tenacity and good health are great attributes of participating in sports. When these attributes are coupled with the overt need to remain feminine in order to be

socially accepted, athletes are forced to choose between their athletic abilities or their feminine qualities. This choice is then enforced through the power of sponsorships and advertisement opportunities. Since women's sports are generally under funded, women athletes need to do what they can to earn money to continue practicing their sport. But advertisers will often only hire and seek heterosexy or maternalized athletes and at times will promote them regardless of their athletic accomplishments. For example, despite her mediocre athletic record, tennis player Anna Kournikova profits financially from and receives tremendous attention for her heterosexy looks (Harris and Clayton, 2002).

The categories also function to make women athletes validate their identities as non-threatening feminine women as primary, and their identities as talented women athletes as secondary in importance. If women's sports come secondary to their feminine identities, it reinforces the notion that women's sports are not as important as men's sports. Indeed, the primary identity of athlete is socially acceptable for men, but not for women. Once women's sporting activities are deemed less important than those of men's the lack of funding and support for the development of women's sports can be rationalized.

Threats to Women's Hockey

Women's hockey is now facing a lack of support at the Olympic level. On the morning of February 25th 2010, Jacques Rogge, President of the IOC, announced mere hours before the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team's gold medal game that without "improvement" women's hockey would be cut from the Winter Olympic program. The "improvement" to which he referred was an increase in international competition that would ensure the diversity of different nations on the winner's podium and more even scoring games between various nations.

The online reader responses echoed similar feelings about the low level of competition present in Olympic women's hockey. *Anonymous* 5:07p.m. said, "Let's face it. This IS beer league hockey with only two teams in the running. Nobody should take this seriously and nobody should take women's ice hockey seriously. It is not really an Olympic sport and this just underscores that fact". Another reader complained, "I just don't get the girls over the top celebration. This was not even a competition, it was just a 2 team tournament" (*Anonymous* 7:50p.m.). Similarly, *Anonymous* 4:54p.m. argued that "Woman's hockey should be banned from the Olympics. Not cause of this incident, just in general". *Anonymous* 9:58a.m. wrote "Lets hope they move on yep move on right out of the Olympics and out of our sight. What good in a medal when all you have to do is beat one team. This is a sham and they can drink, smoke, and leap around but it is what it is Total Nonesense. IOC please make it go away". These online reader responses indicate that women's hockey at the Olympic level is not valued. Readers expressed discontent with their perception that there is not enough competition in women's hockey at the Olympic level, thereby creating a lack of excitement.

During the 2010 Vancouver Winter games, the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team won against the Slovakian Olympic Women's team with a score of 18-0. Since the inclusion of women's hockey in the 1998 Nagano Games, the podium standings, meaning the nations that win the gold, silver or bronze medals, have been similar to men's hockey podium standings. In the final 2010 gold medal game, both the women's and men's hockey match was between a Canadian and American team. The 2010 women's gold medal win is all the more impressive given that the Canadian men's team has had 22 Olympics in which to grow over the course of 90 years. Women's hockey in the Olympics has only had four Olympics over 12 years to progress.

Instead of encouraging its development through increased funding and support, the IOC is suggesting instead that it be cut.

In 1998 women's hockey was introduced for the first time in the Nagano Olympic Winter Games. This same year another change was made, this time to men's Olympic hockey. Olympic men's hockey now included players from the NHL. This was the first time in the history of the Olympics that professional and paid athletes were permitted to compete in the same game, which was previously exclusively reserved for amateur players. Permitting the participation of professional players gives the men's Olympic hockey teams a significant advantage. First, the skill level of the NHL players is more advanced due to the incredible resources available to the players. The amount of funding that NHL players receive far exceeds that of amateur players, allowing for better equipment, better coaching, trainers, specialty camps and other financial benefits. Second, men's hockey incorporates the physical aggression and violence as entertainment that is deemed by members of the public as more exciting. Lastly, incorporating professional male hockey players increases the number of skilled athletes playing for each men's team, which creates more equal competition among countries.

Ryan Kennedy (2010) makes a relevant point of the unfairness of cutting women's hockey on the basis of unbalanced podium standings. Kennedy discusses men's and women's luge in the Olympics. The international luge podium standings are more unbalanced than nearly any other sport in the winter Olympics with Germany winning 65 medals, Austria 16, Italy 14. Only recently did Russia, the United States and Latvia earn medals in luge at the Olympics (Kennedy, 2010). The inclusion of luge and its value in the Olympics has never been questioned the way that the inclusion of women's hockey in the Olympics is now being questioned. The IOC has not demanded international growth and diversity in luge in the way

that it is recently demanding of women's hockey. Luge has also had an additional 34 years to develop since its inclusion in 1964. Women's hockey has had only 12 years to develop. When comparing the podium history of these two sports, it is apparent that the reasons that the IOC is providing for cutting women's hockey are not as they seem. The lugers wear skintight Lycra clothing, making it easier for the women athletes to be categorized as heterosexy. In addition, lugers do not require an overly physical presence and are often competing individually. For these reasons the sport is viewed as non-threatening and, therefore, does not need to defend its position within the Olympics the way that women's hockey does.

Women athletes in general and women hockey players in particular, thus find themselves involved in a vicious cycle. If women's hockey fails to improve by becoming more entertaining, meaning by being as aggressive and as violent as men's hockey, then women's hockey faces extinction from the Olympics. However, if women players conform to trends they come under scrutiny for breaching feminine norms. If they become too good at a man's sport, they will no longer fit into the heterosexy or the good mother categories and will only be seen as failed women, a social affront. Until we work to break down stereotypes of what constitutes acceptable feminine behaviour, women in sports will continue to face this cycle with no resolution.

Concluding Remarks

In response to the article "Canadian women apologize for antics after winning gold", reader *Anonymous* 6:35a.m proclaimed in defense of the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration: "Come on folks, I'm a senior and thought the days of gender double standards was over!". Unfortunately the "days of gender double standards" are not over. The negative online reader responses outlined in this paper indicate that double standards do exist in

women's hockey as exemplified by the backlash to the Canadian Women's 2010 on ice celebration.

The online reader responses in the *Ottawa Citizen* regarding the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team on ice celebration reflects discomfort with the transgression of feminine norms. Certain online reader responses referred to the women's inability to be wives and mothers. Such comments rely on outdated, albeit deeply ingrained claims that sport endangers the white, middle-class female body. Strong women athletes, such as players on the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team, are called into question for being too strong, too contradictory and too threatening to the gendered status quo. Online reader responses related to notions of failed role models, classlessness and public disgrace gave way to three categories of women athletes. The heterosexy athlete, the good mother and failed woman categories attempt to restore feminine gender roles and render women athletes less threatening to a man's game.

Women have had to fight to be included in both leisure and professional sports and in the Olympics. From Melpomene, who ran unofficially in the 1896 Olympics, to Blainey's attempts to play on a Toronto boys' hockey team, to the backlash against the Canadian Olympic Women's hockey team celebration, women continue to face gendered obstacles to their participation in sport. Although there is progress, a strong female presence in sport makes many people uncomfortable because it implies gender transgression. The common denominator is that powerful women shake things up. Despite every attempt to cut women's hockey from the Olympics, regardless of what people say young women should or should not do, the goal of every hockey game is to keep one's head up, skate hard and fast, foresee the opponent and score. If women's hockey continues to push the boundaries of acceptable female behavior, we will all win.

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