

PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN
YOUTH WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY

by

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ABSTRACT

Women's ice hockey is one of the fastest growing sports in Canada, sustaining a 200% increase in participation numbers between 1991 and 1996 (Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, 1995/96). This popularity will likely increase due to its recent inclusion as an official event in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games. While women's ice hockey has been rapidly increasing in registrants in Canada, other sports have experienced high levels of attrition (Gould, 1987). The purpose of this study was to examine how young female ice hockey players, their coaches, and their parents perceived the learning opportunities provided in women's ice hockey. Learning opportunities constitute one part of the overall participation and withdrawal motives cited by young athletes, and include factors related to optimal practice and playing time, as well as instruction and feedback from the coach. Focus group interviews were conducted with three groups of female competitive ice hockey players aged 12 to 15 years ($n = 33$), two groups of coaches ($n = 7$), and three groups of parents ($n = 30$). The focus group forum allowed participants to discuss what they felt the players liked and disliked about women's ice hockey using their own descriptions and perceptions. Comparisons were made to determine how accurately the perceptions of the parents and coaches coincided with what players reported they liked and disliked about ice hockey. Results indicated that the coaches' and parents' perceptions were very similar to the players' perceptions. The players, coaches, and parents of the present study all reported that factors related to learning opportunities were important to players. Participants cited that players enjoy improving and learning new skills, well organized practice, and instructive, corrective, and positive feedback from coaches. The findings in this study provide support for existing literature regarding the importance of numerous participation motives of female athletes. The current study contextualized many motives into factors players like and dislike specifically about practice and competition. The present study also revealed additional participation motives specific to women's ice hockey, such as young female ice hockey players enjoying playing against boys' teams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii

CHAPTER

I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Purpose of the Study.....	3
	Significance of the Study.....	3
	Definition of terms.....	4
	Delimitations.....	5
	Limitations.....	5
II	REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	6
	Participation and Withdrawal Motives.....	6
	Descriptive Studies.....	6
	Theoretical Frameworks.....	8
	Motivational Models.....	11
	Coaching Influences.....	16
	Parental Influences.....	20
	Women's Participation in Sport.....	22
	Women's Ice Hockey in Canada.....	23
	Conclusion.....	26

III METHOD..... 28

 Participants..... 28

 Data Collection Procedures..... 29

 Instruments..... 30

 Focus Groups..... 31

 Pilot Studies..... 34

 Data Analysis..... 34

IV RESULTS..... 37

 Initial Involvement in Women’s Ice Hockey..... 37

 Continued Participation in Women’s Ice Hockey..... 40

 Perceptions of what Players Like and Dislike
 about Ice Hockey..... 46

V DISCUSSION..... 72

 Participation and Withdrawal Motives..... 72

 Initial Involvement..... 72

 Continued Participation..... 74

 Likes and Dislikes..... 76

 Learning Opportunities..... 80

 Coaching Influences..... 82

 Parental Influences..... 84

 Women’s Participation in Ice Hockey..... 85

VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 89

VII	REFERENCES.....	91
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VIII APPENDICES

A	Information and Consent Forms.....	98
B	Discussion and Moderator Guidelines.....	102
C	Background Questionnaires for Coaches.....	110

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Characteristics of Groups Participating in Focus Group Study.....	28
2.	Perceptions of Players, Coaches, and Parents on Factors Influencing Initial Involvement in Women's Ice Hockey.....	38
3.	Perceptions of Players, Coaches, and Parents on Factors Influencing Continued Participation in Women's Ice Hockey.....	41
4.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Competition: Psycho-social Aspects.....	48
5.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Competition: Physical Aspects.....	54
6.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Practice: Psycho-social Aspects.....	57
7.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Practice: Physical Aspects.....	59
8.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes of Coaches' Actions.....	62
9.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes of Parents' Actions.....	66
10.	Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes of Teammates' Actions.....	69

LIST OF FIGURES

1.	A Motivational Model of Youth Sport Withdrawal.....	12
2.	A Motivational Model of Youth Sport Participation.....	15
3.	Perceptions of What Players Like and Dislike About Ice Hockey.....	47

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of children involved in youth sport is continuously growing in Canada. Valeriote and Hansen (1986) reported that the number of Canadian youth aged 6 to 18 who participated in team and individual sports in 1984 was approximately 2.5 million, with 27% of these youth being young women. From data collected in 1992, Statistics Canada stated that levels of organized sport participation for 6 to 18 year olds in Canada was approximately 4 million, and 34% of these youth were young women (Sport Canada, 1994). Adult volunteers have played a vital role in the organization and expansion of youth sport. The total number of adult volunteer coaches in Canada was estimated at 840,000 (Sport Canada, 1994). Over the past two decades, this magnitude of child and adult involvement in youth sport has interested researchers, particularly toward gaining a deeper understanding of children's motivation for participating in and withdrawing from sport (e.g., Brustad, 1993a).

In spite of the increasing number of total youth sport participation, many sports are facing high levels of dropout of youth between the ages of 11 to 18 (Gould, 1987). In Canada, Gould (1987) found an attrition rate of 22% in youth soccer, and 35% in age-group swimmers. Counter to this drop-out trend, the number of participants in women's ice hockey is increasing rapidly. From 1983 to 1996 the number of registered female ice hockey players in Canada increased from 5,379 to 23,922, with a 200% increase between 1991 and 1996 (Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, 1995/96). In comparison, a 23% increase in registration in men's ice hockey occurred over these six years. The total number of registrants in ice hockey in 1996 was 507,000, and 5% of them were registered in women's ice hockey.

Accompanying this increase in registration in women's ice hockey are a number of questions. What are the causes for this rapid increase in numbers of female ice hockey players? What do female ice hockey players like about hockey, and what motivates them to

become involved in and continue participating in this traditionally male-dominated sport? Most specifically, what do young female players like and dislike about the learning opportunities provided by coaches in women's hockey?

In the sport participation literature, the most highly rated reasons young male and female athletes give for participating in sport are skill development, fun, fitness, team atmosphere and excitement or challenge (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Gould & Horn, 1984; Passer, 1982). Reasons youth have given for withdrawing from sport include fear of failure or disapproval (Orlick & Botterill, 1975), overemphasis on competition by coaches and parents, burnout from over training, inadequate instruction (Gould, 1987), and conflict of interest, when children found other sports or activities to participate in (Burton, 1988).

Skill development is a particularly important factor in youth sport because it is one of the most frequently cited reasons young athletes give for participating in sport (Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988). However, Trudel and Côté (1994) concluded in their analysis of the studies on the learning opportunities offered to players by their coaches, that coaches only partially succeed in providing a context where the percentage of motor engagement and the percentage of instruction was optimal.

In women's ice hockey, where body checking is not allowed, technical skills such as skating, maneuvering and stick handling are particularly important (Beaulieu, 1994/95). Therefore, skill development, and the context to in which to develop, should be of interest to players, parents and coaches when discussing ways to organize or even improve the practice of women's ice hockey.

In light of the impact that skill development has had on how children enjoy participation in sport, it seems appropriate to explore how young women perceive the learning opportunities provided in women's hockey, a sport where technical skills are vital. However, an understanding of the athletes' perceptions of the learning opportunities provided in hockey will only give a partial view of the picture. It will also be necessary to

gain an understanding of how the coaches and parents perceive the importance of learning opportunities to the athletes, and how accurately these perceptions coincide. Evidence from the literature (e.g., Brustad, 1992; Smoll, 1986) revealed that coaches and parents have strong influences on the enjoyment of youth in sport. Smoll stated that the quality of an athlete's sport experience was enhanced by a positive relationship between the athlete, the coach, and the parent. The coach is also the primary facilitator in providing learning opportunities which enhance skill development to athletes in sport. It is only through an increased understanding of how all parties involved in youth sport perceive the issues that constructive improvements can be recommended.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how female youth ice hockey players, their coaches, and their parents perceive the learning opportunities provided in women's ice hockey. The main research questions were, firstly, how do female youth ice hockey players perceive the learning opportunities offered during games and practices? Secondly, do coaches and parents accurately perceive how players feel about the learning opportunities provided? Learning opportunities are one part of the overall participation motives which have been identified in the literature. In order to situate the perceptions of learning opportunities in relation to other motives for participating in sport, female hockey players, coaches, and parents were asked general questions about (a) how young women become involved in hockey, (b) what motivates them to continue, and (c) what they like and dislike about hockey. The comments generated from these broad questions allowed the researcher to gain insight into the two main research questions.

Significance of the Study

There has been very little empirical research done on women's ice hockey. There is a need for research in the area of women's ice hockey for several reasons. First, women's ice hockey is a sport which is growing rapidly in registration numbers, compared to the high attrition rates in other youth sports. Women's ice hockey is also gaining recognition

by its inclusion as an official event in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games. The void of empirical research published on this sport needs to be filled, as more and more people become familiar with women's ice hockey. Second, female participants are underrepresented in youth sport, and information about what draws young women into sport and keeps them participating would be valuable.

This study can be considered pro-active in that it examines a sport which is increasing in registration numbers, instead of decreasing in numbers. By gaining a better understanding of what learning opportunities players enjoy, the results provide information on how to maintain this participation level. The results of this study can also assist people involved in developing training programs for coaches, by providing information about how athletes perceive learning opportunities in women's ice hockey.

Numerous studies have been conducted in the area of participation and withdrawal motivation, but few studies have looked specifically at motives directly related to learning and skill development. The majority of the studies done on participation motivation and on learning conditions in sport have used questionnaires or direct observation.

The main contribution the present study makes to the literature is in examining the perceptions that athletes, parents and coaches have concerning the learning opportunities provided in women's ice hockey with the use of focus group interviews. Focus group interviews provide a forum in which the present issue can be discussed in depth by a group of participants using their own words. This study also contributes to the growing number of studies being conducted using the focus group methodology in the field of social sciences.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions will be used:

Focus groups: "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment" (Krueger, 1994, p. 6). The focus group is typically conducted with 4 to 12 participants led by a skilled

moderator. Multiple group discussions can be conducted with similar types of participants to identify trends and patterns in perceptions. Participants interact with each other by responding to ideas and comments from others in the discussion.

Learning opportunities: Situations or conditions which enhance skill development, such as practices or games in which the athlete can benefit from optimal practice/ playing time, as well as instruction and feedback from the coach.

Delimitations

This study involved players, parents and coaches of competitive peewee and bantam teams in the Ottawa District Women's Hockey Association. Focus group interviews were conducted with three groups of female ice hockey players (n=33), three groups of parents (n=30), and two groups of coaches (n=7).

Limitations

A limitation to this study is that generalization of the results is restricted. The current study, with relatively few subjects selected non-randomly, does not give a representative sample of the population of female ice hockey players, parents and coaches, making generalizations inappropriate.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study is being conducted within the field of sport pedagogy and therefore the focus is on the learning opportunities that facilitate skill development. However, it is recognized that skill development is one element among several that makes sport an enjoyable experience for youth. In an attempt to contextualize the learning opportunities, the review of literature has been divided into four sections. First, a summary of the literature on participation motivation and withdrawal is presented, which leads into a description of Gould and Petlichkoff's (1988) motivational models of youth sport. This provides the background as to what youth in general enjoy about sport, and what motivates them to either continue participating or withdraw from sport.

In sections two and three, literature pertaining to coaching influences and parental influences in youth sport respectively is presented. In these two sections, the important roles coaches and parents play in the initial involvement of children in sport, in the skill development of athletes, and in the athletes' perceptions of themselves and their sport experiences are described. Finally, literature related to the participation of young women in sport, as well as literature on women's ice hockey in Canada, are presented. The specific characteristics of female athletes and women's ice hockey are described. In addition, how the unique characteristics of female athletes and women's ice hockey relate to skill development and participation motivation in youth sport is presented.

Participation and Withdrawal Motives

Descriptive studies

Most of the studies conducted on participation and withdrawal motives have been descriptive in nature. They have helped develop a database which researchers have used to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying process or to develop theoretical frameworks (e.g., Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Petlichkoff, 1993; Weiss, 1993; Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). The major participation motives cited by young male and female athletes included

(a) fun (excitement, challenge, action), (b) competence (improve and learn new skills), (c) affiliation (be with or make new friends), (d) fitness, (e) competition (win, be successful), and (f) energy release (Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Gould & Horn, 1984; Passer, 1982; Weiss, 1993).

Gender differences have been found in participation motives, with young women rating the importance of fun and friendship higher than young men (Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Gould & Horn, 1984). Age-related differences in participation motives is another area to consider in describing participation motives. Studies done by Wankel and Kreisel (1985), as well as Gould, Feltz and Weiss (1985), found that younger athletes, 7 to 10 years and 8 to 11 years respectively, were more motivated by external factors such as encouragement by parents, liking for the coach, pleasing others and getting rewards. Older athletes, 12 to 14 years (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985) and 15 to 19 years (Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985), were more motivated by internal factors such as developing skills and physical fitness, and excitement of the game.

Researchers in the area of sport withdrawal have found that young athletes discontinue participation for various reasons such as conflict of interest, lack of playing time, little skill improvement, competitive stress, lack of peer-parental support, lack of fun, dislike for the coach, and injury (Burton & Martens, 1986; Gould, 1987; Gould & Horn, 1984; Robinson & Carron, 1982). The most commonly stated reason for withdrawing from sport has been conflict of interest, where interest in other activities becomes higher than an individual's interest in that particular sport.

Burton and Martens (1986) have conducted a study in wrestling to examine whether normal trial-and-error sampling process of youth in various activities adequately explains sport withdrawal. They suggest that more complex reasons exist, such as youth sports' inability to meet the needs young athletes have to achieve success. Their findings confirmed that dropouts find other activities preferable to wrestling as outlets for their achievement

needs, and that dropouts turn to other activities only when wrestling no longer allows them to infer high ability.

Theoretical frameworks

To date, three theoretical frameworks have been identified which enhance understanding of the reasons youth have given for sport participation and withdrawal (Gould, 1987; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). These theoretical frameworks include competence motivation (Harter, 1978), cognitive interpretation of achievement motivation (Maehr & Nicholls, 1980; Nicholls, 1984), and cognitive-affective model of stress (Smith, 1986; Thibault & Kelley, 1959).

Harter (1978) suggested in the competence motivation theory that children are motivated towards experiencing mastery or competence feelings when dealing with tasks. When a child is successful at a certain task and mastery is attained, their perception of competence is enhanced. The successful performance of a task increases competence motivation, resulting in the child persisting longer at that skill and maintaining an interest in mastering the skill. Individuals who receive modeling of approval and positive reinforcement for independent mastery attempts will gradually internalize a self-reward system and develop a mastery goal orientation. When tasks of optimal challenge are successfully completed, internal perceptions of control and perceived competence are increased, and intrinsic pleasure is enhanced (Black & Weiss, 1992). According to the competence motivation theory, individuals high in feelings of competence and internal control will exert more effort, persist longer at achievement tasks, and experience more positive affect than individuals lower on these characteristics (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). Perceived competence is not regarded as being a global trait, rather, as having specific domains; physical, social, and cognitive. It is possible that an individual could show variations in motivation across these competence areas depending on their past experiences (Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988).

Klint and Weiss (1987) investigated the relationship between perceptions of competence and motives young boys and girls give for participating in competitive gymnastics. Results showed that children with high perceived physical competence were more motivated by skill development reasons, and children with high perceived social competence were more motivated by affiliation aspects of sport. Klint and Weiss (1987) concluded that children high in perceived physical competence may be more inclined to drop out if their skills have not improved or they have not learned new skills. Also, it was found that those athletes high in perceived social competence might consider dropping out when affiliation-related motives are not met.

Harter (1978) has also emphasized the role that significant others such as coaches and parents have on children's perceived competence and motivation in sport participation. Studies using Harter's (1978) theoretical framework have been conducted which focused on parental influence (Brustad, 1993b) and coaching influence (Black & Weiss, 1992; Horn, 1985) on the perceived competence of young athletes. These studies will be discussed in greater detail in the sections on coaching and parental influence.

In the second theory, cognitive interpretation of achievement motivation, Maehr and Nicholls (1980) suggested that children's perception of success and failure, and their achievement orientation must be identified in order to understand achievement behavior. The three general achievement orientations identified are ability, task, and social approval orientations. Ability-orientated individuals seek to demonstrate skills in relation to others, usually by winning, and social comparison is an important source of information. Task-orientated children try to perform the task as well as possible, regardless of the competitive outcome, and evaluate their ability in relation to their own past performance. Social approval is when a child exhibits maximum effort in order to seek approval and positive feedback from significant others, regardless of the performance outcome. Maehr and Nicholls (1980) stated that individual differences in achievement orientations exist, and that continuing in sport depends on the fulfillment of these objectives.

Burton and Martens (1986) have conducted a study with young wrestlers and former wrestlers which supports the predictions of Nicholls' (1984) achievement motivation model. They discovered that former wrestlers found other activities preferable to wrestling as outlets for their achievement strivings. The current wrestling participants were found to have many of the characteristics of high perceived-ability athletes, whereas the former wrestlers showed traits similar to low perceived-ability performers. Results indicated that individuals who had negative future expectancies devalued wrestling because they could no longer infer high ability from participation, which prompted them to turn to other activities to fulfill their achievement needs.

The third theory is Smith's (1986) cognitive-affective model of stress. This theory originated from the social exchange theory where Thibault and Kelley (1959) stated that social behavior is motivated by the desire to maximize positive experiences and minimize negative experiences. Individuals continue participating in relationships and activities as long as the outcomes are seen as sufficiently favorable. This favorability reflects the balance between potential consequences; the benefits and costs. Benefits can be physical, such as money or trophies, or psychological, such as achievement of desired goals, feelings of competency and mastery, and the admiration of others. Costs include the amount of time and effort expended, feelings of failure or disappointment of others, and negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, helplessness and lack of control. The decision to remain involved in a current situation is not merely a function of benefits and costs, but includes two levels of satisfaction (a) satisfaction with the current activity, and (b) satisfaction with alternative activities (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). The individual weighs the costs, benefits, and satisfaction of a current situation with the alternatives when making a decision to continue or withdraw from sport.

Gould and Petlichkoff (1988) included a cost-benefit analysis component in their motivational models of youth sport participation and withdrawal. While this theory may assist in understanding how athletes decide to continue or withdraw from sport, there may

be some limitations to its application to youth. Children and adolescents may not have the cognitive sophistication for engaging in a complex evaluation process of weighing costs and benefits, and determining satisfaction levels of current or alternative activities (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992).

From the theoretical studies and the descriptive studies done in participation motivation and withdrawal, it appears that improving skills is an important factor given by the youth for continued sport participation, and that lack of skills and playing time are important factors in withdrawal.

Motivational models of youth sport withdrawal and participation

Gould and Petlichkoff (1988) have developed models for youth sport withdrawal and youth sport participation motivation, which integrate the information obtained from descriptive studies and the three theoretical frameworks. These models provide a comprehensive overview of the research completed on participation and withdrawal motives, and help to situate motives related to skill development within the existing literature. The sport withdrawal model was initially proposed by Gould (1987), and later adapted by Gould and Petlichkoff (1988) to explain sport participation motives. A summary of Gould and Petlichkoff's (1987) models will be presented, and those components of the models which are closely related to skill development will be highlighted.

The motivational model for youth sport withdrawal is composed of three interrelated components which represent different aspects of the attrition process (see Figure 1). Component 1 (sport withdrawal) represents the varying types of withdrawal. Research shows that children who withdraw from one sport, may become involved in the same sport at a different level (e.g., competitive to recreational). Children may also withdraw from one sport and continue in a different sport (sport-specific withdrawal) or withdraw from sport altogether (domain-general withdrawal). Gould, Feltz, Horn and Weiss (1982) interviewed youth who had dropped out of competitive youth swimming and

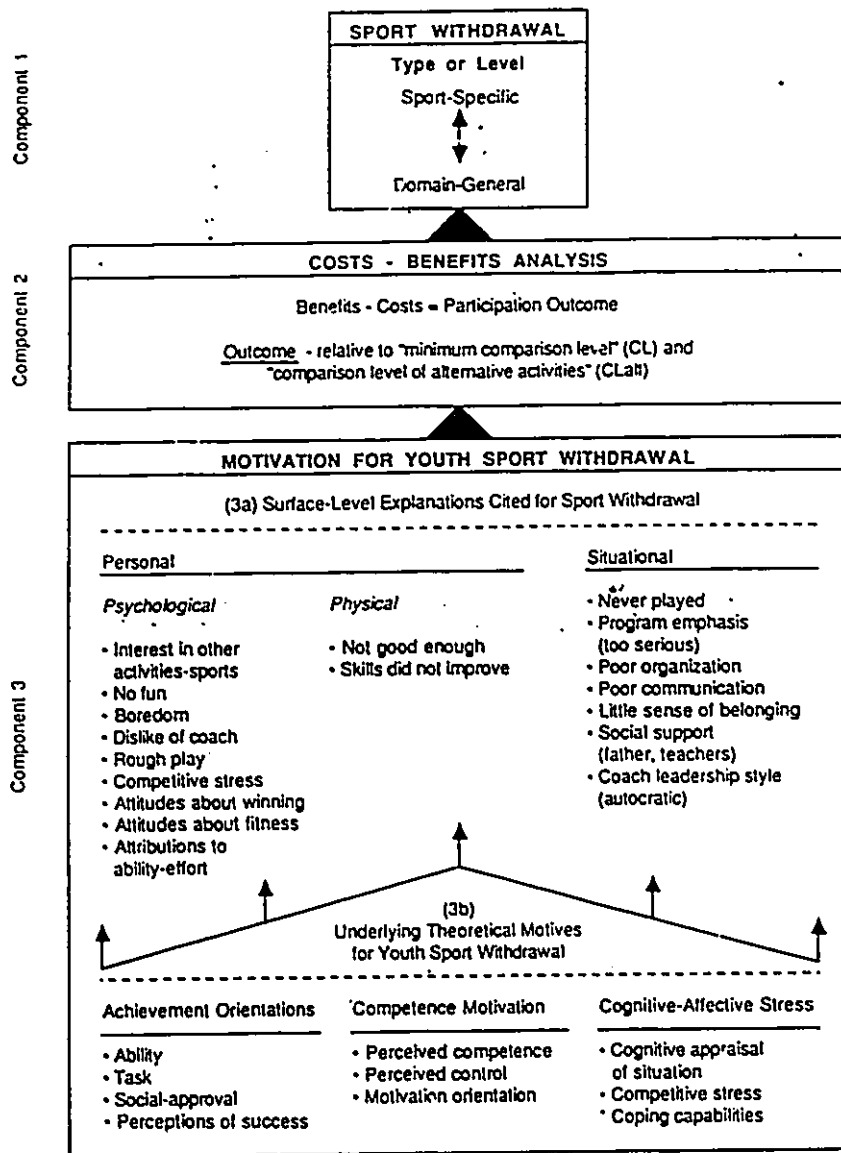


Figure 1. A motivational model of youth sport withdrawal.

Note. From *Children in Sport* (p. 163), by F. L. Smoll, R. A. Magill and M. J. Ash, 1988, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

found that 80% of them reentered or planned to reenter sport. Klint and Weiss (1986) found that 35 of 37 of the youth they interviewed dropped out of one sport and reentered the same or another sport. In contrast, other studies have shown that some youth dropped out and did not intend to participate in organized sport again (Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988). Component 1 of the model is very important as it describes sport withdrawal in a continuous manner. The finite term "dropout" may be misleading when it fails to recognize that dropping out of one level of sport can lead to becoming involved in another level of the same sport or in another sport.

The second component of the model (costs-benefits analysis) depicts the decision-making process that athletes use. An athlete will decide what level of sport or what sport in which to participate. The athlete then weighs the perceived benefits and costs of participation in the various alternatives, and bases the decision on a combination of this and the athlete's level of satisfaction with the current activity and with the alternative activities.

Component 3 of the model is subdivided into two subcomponents which represent the motivational explanations for sport withdrawal. Subcomponent 3a represents the surface-level explanations cited, which were reported in the descriptive research done on sport withdrawal. These surface level motives focus on psychological, physical and situational motives cited by young athletes. The physical and situational explanations are the most relevant to this study, as they are related to learning opportunities for skill development provided to young athletes. Reasons for withdrawing included (a) not good enough, (b) skills did not improve, (c) never played, (d) overserious program emphasis, (f) poor organization, and (g) poor communication from coaches.

The second subcomponent, 3b, represents three theoretical motives that underlie the surface-level reasons for sport withdrawal. These include Harter's (1978) competence motivation theory, Maehr and Nicholls' (1980) cognitive interpretation of achievement orientations, and Smith's (1986) cognitive-affective model of stress.

The motivational model of youth sport participation (Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988) includes three major components which can be used to gain an understanding about why children continue participating in youth sport (see Figure 2). Component 1 consists of subcomponent 1a, representing the surface-level motives children cite for participating in sport, and subcomponent 1b, representing the underlying theoretical motives. The surface-level motives children identify include a variety of personal (psychological and physical) and situational motives for participating in sport. The most relevant motives for this study are the physical and situational ones, including skills improved, learn new skills, playing time, and positive coaching. Numerous researchers have found these motives consistently rated among the most important reasons for children's participation in sport (Aicinena, 1992; Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Passer, 1982).

Subcomponent 1b includes the same three theoretical frameworks previously described as possible explanations of the underlying causes of both withdrawal and participation. These are Harter's (1978) competence motivation theory, Machr and Nicholls' (1980) cognitive interpretation of achievement orientations, and Smith's (1986) cognitive-affective model of stress.

Component 2 of the model refers to the costs-benefits analysis children use in deciding whether to continue participating in an activity. As described in the withdrawal model, the decision to prolong participation is not solely based on weighing the costs and benefits available, but also considering the level of satisfaction of current activities with alternative ones.

Component 3 refers to the type and intensity of sport involvement for the athlete. Involvement can be specific to one sport, or more general, including several sports. The intensity of sport participation refers to how actively involved athletes are in their sport, ranging from a highly active, Olympic caliber athlete training several hours a day, six days a week, to a novice athlete practicing once a week. The type and intensity of sport involvement affect the athletes' participation motivations. Klint and Weiss (1986) found

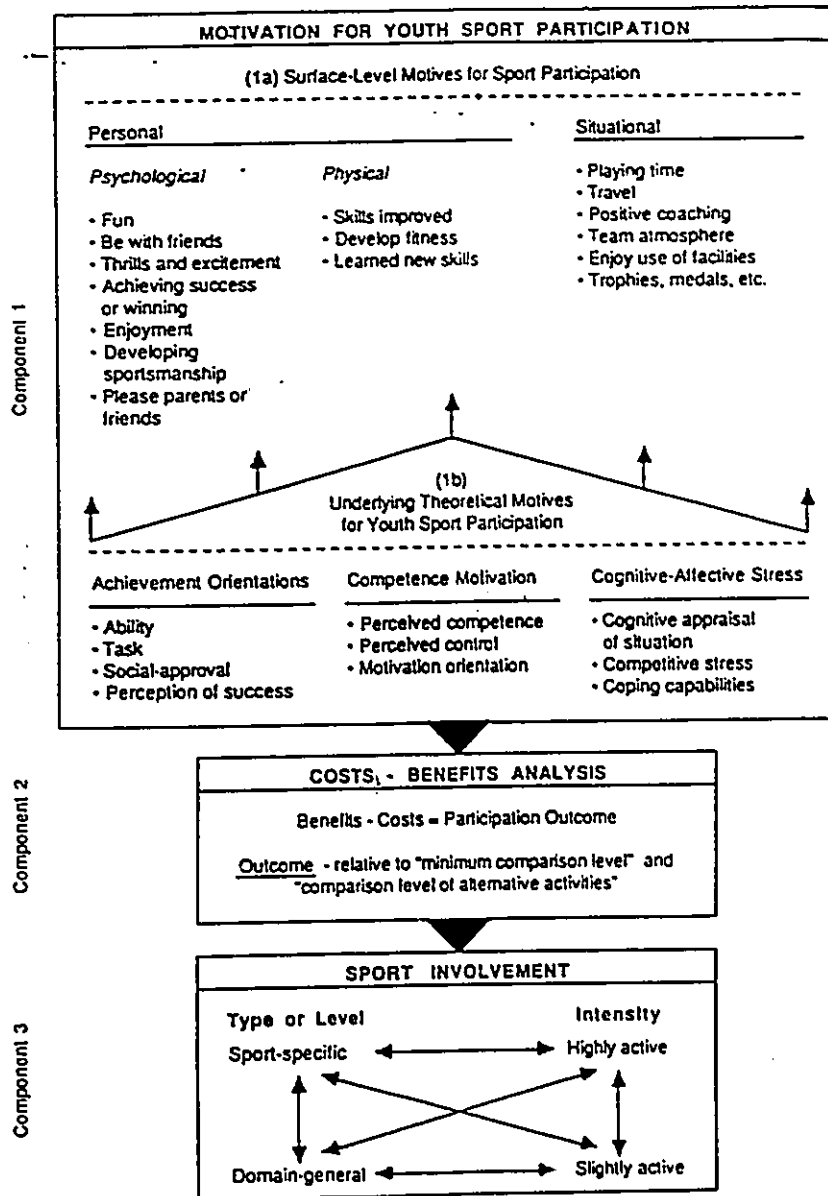


Figure 2. A motivational model of youth sport participation.

Note. From *Children in Sport* (p. 167), by F. L. Smoll, R. A. Magill and M. J. Ash, 1988, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

that competitive gymnasts, recreational gymnasts, and former gymnasts cited different motives for participating in gymnastics. The competitive gymnasts cited fitness and challenge as their motives; recreational gymnasts cited fun and situational factors as motives; and former gymnasts cited fun, challenge and action as their main motives for participating in gymnastics.

These two models by Gould and Petlichkoff (1988) provide a conceptual framework which integrates the descriptive and theoretical literature on participation motivation and withdrawal. However, it will be important to go into greater depth in additional areas, such as coaching and parental influences, women in sport, and women's ice hockey in Canada, in order to more completely review the topic of participation motivation of female youth ice hockey players.

Coaching Influences

Smoll (1986) found that coaches occupied a central and critical role in youth sports, by teaching skills, promoting fitness, and influencing personal and social development. The quality of an athlete's sport experience was enhanced by a positive relationship between the athlete, the coach and the parent. It was also found that coaches played a critical role in the motivational process, and that the manner in which coaches communicate with their athletes could help in determining whether the sport experience was beneficial or detrimental to the athletes (Petlichkoff, 1993). Several studies focusing on coaching behaviors have been conducted using systematic observation of coaches or questionnaires measuring athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behavior during practices and/or games. Coaching behaviors or perceptions of their behaviors have then been linked to children's attitudes about their sport experiences and about themselves.

Smith, Zane, Smoll and Coppel (1983) have studied the relationship between observable coaching behaviors and young athletes' attitudes to their organized sport experiences. Coaching behaviors during basketball games were analyzed using the Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS). The attitudes young male basketball

players had concerning the sport, their coach, their teammates, and themselves were measured using a questionnaire. The results indicated that instructionally related coaching behaviors, such as corrective technical instruction and mistake-contingent technical instruction, were most highly predictive of player attitudes in basketball. Positive post-season player attitude related directly to the frequency of coaches' responses to mistakes with corrective technical instruction. Maintaining control by stopping misbehavior, general encouragement, punishment, and general communication all correlated negatively with players' attitude toward the coach and liking of the sport. This negative correlation of general communication and player attitude was explained as being distracting and irrelevant during games. It was also found that coaching behaviors were most highly related to player attitudes toward the sport, suggesting that the coach really does affect the child's enjoyment of sport participation.

Barnett, Smoll and Smith (1992) have completed a study where they examine how athlete attrition and coach/athlete relationships are affected by an intervention program, the Coach Effectiveness Training (CET) program. This program was directed at modifying certain coaching behaviors of Little League Baseball coaches. The CET consisted of a series of behavioral guidelines designed to increase positive coach-player interaction, which involved promoting positive reinforcement, corrective and technical instruction. The program also emphasized the importance of decreasing undesirable behaviors, such as nonreinforcement and punishment, as well as encouraging a focus on the concept of success or "winning" as giving maximum effort. The results showed that 5% of the players of the CET-trained coaches dropped out of sport the year following the study, while 26% of the players of the untrained coaches dropped out the next year. There was no difference in mean team won-lost record between the two groups, which indicated that attrition was not due entirely to lack of team success. Reasons given by the youth for discontinuing sport varied between the two groups. Players of trained coaches cited reasons such as conflict of interest and inconvenient practices and games, whereas players of untrained

coaches cited more negative reasons such as not having fun, feeling too much pressure, and lacking ability. The results of this study suggested that attrition rates in youth sport can be reduced by modifying coaching behaviors.

Horn (1985) has examined the relation between coaches' feedback and changes in female athletes' perceptions of physical competence. Softball coaches were observed using the CBAS, and the athletes' self-perceptions were measured with three separate scales. Player ability was also estimated in order to control for the influence which sport competence has on player's level of perceived competence. Horn found that inappropriate or excessive praise or positive reinforcement from coaches set lower expectations for players' performance and induced negative self-perceptions. Criticism given after a failure induced higher expectations when athletes attributed failure to lack of effort as opposed to lack of ability. Criticism was also contingent to performance errors and was often combined with instructional information on how to improve performance. Horn (1985) suggested that the nature of the feedback from coaches, whether contingent, informative and appropriate to performance or not, was a crucial element in understanding and evaluating the effects of coaching feedback on children's self-perceptions. Horn also stated that particular characteristics of young women and individuals at the beginning levels of a skill, was that they appeared to be more dependent on adult evaluation.

Black and Weiss (1992) have conducted a study to determine whether perceived coaching behaviors are related to athletes' self-perceptions of ability and motivation in competitive age-group male and female swimmers. Results indicated that coaches who were perceived as giving more frequent information following desirable performances were associated with athletes who perceived higher levels of success, competence, enjoyment, and preference for optimally challenging activities. There were some differences between age groups and gender and how perceived success and competence was related to coaching behaviors. Athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behaviors were related to their self-perception and motivation, except for the youngest age group of 10 to 11 year olds. Young

women scored significantly lower than young men on perceptions of praise and competence. This might be accounted for by actual coaching-behavior differences, where coaches gave less contingent and appropriate reinforcement to young women than young men. Alternatively, young women may be more dependent on adult feedback than young men are. Though they were unable to determine the exact cause, the results showed that young women in this study perceived that they received less praise than males. In general, it was indicated that young athletes' self-perception and motivation were significantly related to the quantity and quality of coaching feedback they received for performance successes and errors.

Trudel and Côté (1994) have summarized the results of recent North American articles written on the learning opportunities coaches provide to young athletes during training sessions and games. Coaches were found to spend most of their time observing and organizing rather than teaching, and that on an individual basis, athletes were found to be engaged in motor activities for only one third of the training session time. These results were based on direct or systematic observation of coaches' and athletes' behaviors during training sessions.

Bloom (1985) has conducted a study over a four-year time period in which he examined the development of talent in children. The talented participants in the study included pianists, sculptors, research mathematicians, research neurologists, Olympic swimmers, and tennis champions. Individuals identified as having attained a world-class level of competence in a field were interviewed in an attempt to understand the developmental and educational processes that were important in enabling them to reach high levels of competence in their field. The parents of these individuals were also interviewed in order to gain a more complete description of processes involved. In the sporting area, it was determined that both the coach and the parents played significant roles in the development of talented athletes.

Bloom (1985) identified three stages of development in the athletes' careers, the early years, middle years and later years, within which the role of the coach varied. In the early years, the coach provided motivation for the child to become interested in the sport and spend time practicing. They made the sport fun, put an emphasis on drillwork or practice, introduced the athlete to competition, and often took a special interest in the child who showed motivation and a willingness to work. In the middle years, the role of the coach changed towards emphasizing technical skills, strategy, and competition. Often a new coach was needed in order to provide these elements at an appropriate level. In the later years, the coach had the primary role of refining strategical and psychological aspects of the sport. At this stage, coaches collaborated more with the athletes in order to prepare each individual athlete fully for competition.

Throughout these stages of development, athletes were required to make the decision to continually increase their commitment towards the sport. This decision was never made solely by the athletes, but required the necessary support from their families. Bloom's (1985) study provides evidence that coaches have a significant influence on the continued sport participation of youth and, in the early stages of sport involvement, the coach has an important role in making the sport fun and teaching skills.

Parental Influences

Researchers studying the influence parents have on children's involvement in sport stressed the strong positive and negative effects of parents' involvement on their children's sport experiences. Parents are usually the primary role models for their child's entrance into sports, and their involvement shapes the direction of the athlete's sport participation in childhood and adolescence (Brustad, 1992). Statistics Canada collected data regarding the degree to which parents effect their children's participation in sport (Sport Canada, 1994). It was found that a father's participation in sport increased the participation of his children by 11%, while the participation of the mother had an even greater effect, increasing the participation of her children by 22%.

Brown, Frankel, and Fennel (1989) examined the influence that significant others, including parents and peers, have on the continuing involvement in sport by young adolescent women. They found that young women who received more encouragement and support for their involvement, who perceived that their significant others viewed sport as an appropriate form of social participation for young women, and who reported increasing support for their sport participation as they grew older had stronger patterns of continuity than others who received less positive influences.

The support of parents has been found to be a necessary factor in the child's continued development in sport, especially in the development of talent and world-class status (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1993). Bloom (1985) has described the great sacrifices in terms of time, energy, and money which are required of parents when cultivating the talents of gifted youth. For any child, support from parents in terms of time, money and encouragement is a large factor in the child's continued involvement in sport.

Studies have also shown that parents can have an influence on certain psychological aspects of sport participation (Bloom, 1985; Brustad, 1993b; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1993; Harter, 1978). Bloom (1985) has described how parents instill in their children the intense belief in the traditional values of hard work and doing well. Csikszentmihalyi and his colleagues (1993) have found that parents can create an environment of challenging opportunities for their child, where stability and stimulation play key roles. Promoting independent, playful exploration facilitates behavioral flexibility and cognitive development.

Brustad (1993b) has found support for Harter's (1978) statement that parents have an influence on the perceived competence of a child. Brustad has found that higher parental encouragement is linked to greater perceived competence. Perceived competence is in turn highly significant in predicting a child's attraction to physical activity. Brustad also found that in the sporting environment boys tended to receive more parental encouragement than

girls, and consequently reported higher perceived competence than girls. Harter has further described the role of significant adults in a child's feelings of competence. When children receive positive reinforcement for their independent mastery attempts in early childhood, they become intrinsically motivated, and develop their own self-reward system.

Women's Participation in Sport

According to Volkwein (1993), until the 1970s girls' interest in sport was widely ignored in most countries. In 1972, the U.S. Amendments Act "Title IX" prohibited sex discrimination from educational programs or activities receiving federal funding. This contributed to the presence of almost as many sport programs for young girls as for boys in the 1990s. Branta, Painter and Kiger (1987) stated that society's attitudes toward women in sports seems to be changing, which is reflected in the implementation of Title IX, the inclusion of new Olympic events for women, and young girls and women playing ice hockey and other traditionally male-dominated sports.

There have been several articles written on the differences between young boys' and girls' motives and attitudes towards sport participation. One finding in the literature was that girls rated social aspects of sport, fitness, and having fun higher, while boys had a stronger orientation towards learning skills and competition (Borman & Kurdek, 1987; Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Romar, 1994; White & Duda, 1994). In some studies researchers found that young female athletes rated "playing well" higher than nonathletes (Nicholson, 1979), and that both male and female athletes rated winning as being more important than nonathletes (Sage, 1980). Sage also found that both male and female athletes emphasized the skill dimension of sport, with male athletes stressing the importance of victory to a greater extent than female athletes. While studies have found differences between male and female athletes' motives for participating in sport, skill development seems to be an important factor for the enjoyment of both male and female athletes.

According to Richardson and Tandy (1985/86), coaches need to be aware of the physiological, sociological and psychological similarities and differences among male and female athletes. In preadolescence, female athletes tend to perform similarly to male athletes, and in sports not requiring strength and speed to excel, women can perform equally even after adolescence. Richardson and Tandy found that psychologically, some female athletes believe they perform better in "feminine-labeled" sports, while others reject the sex-stereotypical approach and perceive all sports as appropriate for men and women. Richardson and Tandy also stated that coaches may need to use more confidence building behaviors with female athletes than male athletes to prevent them from giving up when faced with failure. Young women also tended to attribute success to external factors, such as luck or opponent's ability, whereas young men attributed success to internal factors, such as their own skill and effort. It can be concluded that coaches should recognize the potential differences between male and female athletes, and be aware of how their supportive coaching behavior may help motivate some athletes.

Women's ice hockey in Canada

The number of participants in women's ice hockey in Canada has increased considerably since the first recorded women's game held in Barrie, Ontario, in 1892 (MacKinnon, 1993/94). Within the last six years, Canadian women's ice hockey has seen a 200% increase in registered players, making a total of 23,922 registered female ice hockey players in 1996 (Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, 1995/96). Alongside the tremendous increase in women's ice hockey registration is the increase in status due to its inclusion as an official event in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games. Despite its growing popularity, there has been very little empirical research done in the area of women's ice hockey.

One important aspect about ice hockey is that it is a sport in Canadian society which has long-standing traditions of male domination, where women teams and competitions are relatively new (MacKinnon, 1993/94). Gruneau and Whitson (1993) reported how

"hockey in Canada developed historically as a male preserve. ... The professional game that Canadians have listened to on radio and watched on television has been entirely male" (p. 168). The prospect of women playing ice hockey may have threatened this image of male domination.

Vaz (1982) described men's ice hockey as having a "subculture of violence," which is depicted by rule violation and reinforces values such as aggressiveness, toughness, and having guts or courage. Vaz defined subculture as "a circumscribed world of techniques, judgments, and attitudes . . . a way of dealing with problems, defining situations, and evaluating and categorizing people . . . yet participants also act upon the subculture, transforming it, adding to it, and taking from it" (p. 89). The allowance of body checking in men's ice hockey is an important factor in the generation of this subculture, but it is not the sole factor. Vaz stated that young players are formally or informally taught to violate rules and perform illegitimate tactics. From the start of their training, players are taught that the expected way of playing ice hockey is to be rough and physical. Vaz found that players tended to accept these expectations and perform accordingly. Professional hockey was also found to largely influence the style and content of ice hockey played by youth in minor and junior leagues. Characteristics of professional hockey which were reinforced in the minor and junior leagues included physical intimidation, disciplined use of the body, and play in spite of pain (Vaz, 1982).

The "subculture of violence" in men's ice hockey, as described by Vaz (1982), does not appear to be present in the newly emergent sport of women's ice hockey. Currently, body checking is not allowed in women's hockey. Beaulieu (1994/95) has found through interviewing women's hockey organizers that the exclusion of body checking is a method of injury prevention for the players, as well as a way to make ice hockey less threatening to young female participants and their parents. Aggressiveness and toughness are not traditional characteristics of women's gender identities (Oglesby, 1984), although competitiveness has been found to increase in female athletes as opposed to

female nonathletes (Gill, 1992). For these "new players" of ice hockey, the acceptance and promotion of rough physical contact and aggression present in men's ice hockey, may have been replaced with other behaviors. According to Beaulieu (1994/95), women's ice hockey concentrates on performing technical skills such as skating, maneuvering and stick handling. It would seem, then, that the development of these skills should be a critical element in women's ice hockey for the players, coaches, and parents.

In a recent article, Theberge (1995) conducted a case study on a high level Canadian women's ice hockey team with players aged 16 to 30 years. The athletes' experiences of team membership was examined. Theberge (1995) stated that "one of the most significant features of sport participation involves the experience of team membership" (p. 389). The processes and activities that enabled the women to construct their own sense of community in the male-dominated world of hockey was explored in this study. The author found that the construction of community on the women's hockey team was grounded in a shared identity and passion, where the players saw themselves, and wished to be seen, as hockey players. Their experience in the sport offered regular confirmation of their status as athletes. Theberge (1995) suggested that the most significant aspect of team membership was that it offered a context in which women hockey players collectively affirmed their skills, commitment, and passion for their sport.

There is little empirical research published on women's ice hockey, however, there are a number of newspaper articles from major Canadian cities as well as articles from ice hockey journals written on the topic of women's ice hockey. Some of the issues that have been discussed in non-refereed journals are the recruitment of qualified coaches as well as the involvement of skilled players in women's ice hockey as opposed to men's hockey. The number of girls interested in playing ice hockey is growing so quickly that ice hockey organizations are having trouble recruiting enough volunteers and associations to support women's ice hockey (MacKinnon, 1993/94). Yet despite the growth in organized women's ice hockey, there are still girls playing on boys' teams, either due to lack of girls' teams or

a desire to play on boys' teams, with body contact and perhaps higher skill levels. MacKinnon (1993/94) points out the need for skilled girls to participate in women's ice hockey in order to increase the number of players, and improve the level of play.

Another newspaper article (Faulder, 1996) provided a description of some of the unique characteristics in women's ice hockey. Faulder (1996) identified several factors observed on young women's hockey teams, which seemed more apparent than on young men's teams. These factors included the presence of cheering, the team cohesion in the locker room, the desire to play against boys, and the players' enjoyment of simply playing.

Conclusion

Through the review of the empirical literature and the motivational models on participation and withdrawal motives, the importance of skill development on children's self-perception and motivation was described. Relevant literature was then used to describe the influence of coaches and parents or youth sporting experiences. Finally, specific characteristics of female athletes, as well as women's ice hockey were described.

Skill development has been found to be an important aspect of both male and female athletes' enjoyment of their sport experiences and their continued participation (Gould, 1987; Gould & Petlikchkoff, 1988; Nicholson, 1979; Sage, 1980). However, looking specifically at athletes' perceptions of learning skills and how it affects their enjoyment in sport is an area which has not received much research attention. Gaining a better understanding of how athletes perceive the learning opportunities offered in sport, would be valuable knowledge for the adults involved in providing organized sport activities to youth.

The significant role coaches and parents have on the sport experiences of young athletes has also been supported in the literature presented in this review. There has,

however, been limited research done on whether coaches and parents are in tune with how young athletes feel about the learning opportunities provided in organized sport. It would be valuable to investigate further into how similar athletes' perceptions are to coaches' and parents' perceptions of what athletes like and dislike about skill development in sport.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants

The participants in this study were people involved with competitive peewee and bantam teams in the Ottawa District Women's Hockey Association (ODWHA). Prior to recruiting participants, written permission was obtained from the president of the Ottawa District Women's Hockey Association regarding the involvement of its members in this study. An overview of the participants in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Groups Participating in Focus Groups

Participants	Groups	Acronym	n
Female ice hockey players	Pee wee A players (12-13 years)	PW	9
	Bantam A players (12-15 years)	BA	12
	Bantam B players (12-15 years)	BB	12
Parents	Parents of peewee A players	PPW	16
	Parents of bantam A players	PBA	10
	Parents of bantam B players	PBB	4
Coaches	Group 1 of peewee and bantam coaches	CA	4
	Group 2 of peewee and bantam coaches	CB	3

One group of peewee level female ice hockey players aged 12 to 13 years ($n = 9$), and two groups of bantam level female ice hockey players aged 14 to 15 years ($n = 24$) participated in the study. In addition, three groups of parents ($n = 30$) of female ice hockey players, and two groups of peewee and bantam level coaches ($n = 7$) participated in the study. The player focus groups included athletes from three different teams. The parent focus groups were comprised of 16 mothers and 14 fathers of players from the three teams participating in the study. Coaches were selected from a variety of competitive peewee and bantam teams in the ODWHA. Three women coaches and four male coaches participated. The age range of the coaches was from 19 to 51 years, and their experience coaching in women's ice hockey ranged from 3 months to 16 years.

Data Collection Procedures

Information and consent forms (see Appendix A) were signed by each of the research participants prior to data collection. Data were obtained through focus group interviews lead by a moderator and an assistant moderator. Each subject participated in one focus group session of 60 to 90 minutes in duration. The focus group interviews with the parents were conducted during a regular practice of their daughters' team at their home hockey rink. The focus groups with the players were conducted immediately following a regular practice. The focus groups with the coaches were held at a centrally located hockey rink apart from any scheduled practices or games. The focus group sessions were audiotaped and later transcribed for analysis. Field notes were also taken during the interviews by the moderator and the assistant moderator. The focus groups were conducted early in the regular hockey season in order to facilitate participants commenting on past and present experiences.

According to Krueger (1994), a focus group is repeated several times with different people in order to identify trends and patterns in perceptions. For this study, eight focus group interviews in total were conducted; three different focus groups with players, three

with parents, and two with coaches. The objective was to identify the patterns in perceptions of each of these populations.

The discussion during the focus group interviews centered on the participants' perceptions of the participation motives of the athletes and about the learning opportunities in women's ice hockey. The players were asked to discuss their own perceptions regarding their motives for playing ice hockey, and how they perceived the learning opportunities during practices and games. The coaches and parents were asked to discuss their ideas on what they thought motivates young women to play ice hockey, and how they think the players perceive the learning opportunities during practices and games.

Instruments

There were three data collection instruments included in the present study. The discussion guidelines for the focus group interviews was the primary instrument. Complimentary information was obtained from two other sources (a) a written background questionnaire for the coaches, and (b) fieldnotes taken by the moderator and assistant moderator during the focus group interviews. The moderator used similar discussion guidelines for each group (see Appendix B), so that each group's answers to similar questions could be compared in the analysis (Morgan, 1993).

The questions in the discussion guideline were developed by the research team based on criteria described by Krueger (1993, 1994). As Krueger (1994) recommended, the discussion guidelines included 10-12 questions worded in a manner which was comprehensible to the participants. The questions followed a sequence of general to specific to the purpose of the study, which allowed participants to gradually move deeper into the topic of discussion. Initial discussion guidelines developed for this study were used during a pilot study in order to determine whether they met the above criteria. The questions were subsequently evaluated and modified in wording and sequencing by the research team.

In addition to the oral discussion, written background questionnaires were administered to the coaches (see Appendix C). Questions related to coaching experience, coaching certifications, experience as an athlete, and demographic data (i.e., age and occupation).

Fieldnotes were taken by both the moderator and the assistant moderator during the interview sessions. Included in the field notes was information not readily available by listening to the audiotapes or reading the transcripts of the interviews. Noted was the seating arrangement of the participants, facial expressions and body language, the presence of dominant or quiet participants, and whether any participants underwent a shift in opinion during the course of the interview.

In addition to well planned discussion guidelines, the effectiveness of the moderator played a vital role in the success of the focus group. For this study, the moderator's and assistant moderator's skills were developed through a combination of reading pertinent literature on focus groups (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988 & 1993; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), conducting a focus group session with peers, conducting several focus group interviews during two pilot studies, and consulting with other researchers familiar with focus group techniques. The specific role and tasks of the moderator and the assistant moderator were similar to those suggested by Krueger (1994) are outlined in Appendix B. Additional guidelines related to conducting effective focus group interviews with young participants have also been described.

Focus Groups

In order to address the particular research questions in this study, focus group interviews were chosen as the method of data collection due to their advantage over other forms of qualitative data collection, such as individual interviews and participant observation. Morgan and Spanish (1984) stated that:

The strengths of focus groups come from a compromise between the strengths found in other qualitative methods. Like participant observation, they allow access to a process that qualitative researchers are often centrally interested in: interaction. Like in-depth interviewing, they allow access to the content that we are often interested in: the attitudes and experiences of our informants ... they do a better job of combining these two goals than either of the other two techniques. (p. 260)

Morgan and Krueger (1993) described four situations when it is advantageous to consider focus groups. First, this includes a situation where there is a powerful differential between participants and decision makers, such as young athletes and their coaches and parents. Second, when one needs a research method that is respectful and not condescending to the target audience. Third, when the goal is to learn more about the degree of consensus on a topic, the interaction present during focus groups can give insight into the range of opinions or experiences people have. Finally, and most importantly, when investigating complex behavior and motivation, the interaction in focus groups often creates a cueing phenomenon that can potentially extract more information than other methods (Krueger, 1994).

The advantage of the interaction between participants during focus group discussions is described in detail by Krueger (1994):

The focus group interview works because it taps into human tendencies. Attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts, products, services, or programs are developed in part by interaction with other people.... Evidence from focus group interviews suggests that people do influence each other with their comments, and in the course of a discussion the opinions of an individual might shift. The focus group analyst can thereby discover more about how that shift occurred and the nature of the influencing factors. (p. 11)

As in all data collection techniques, focus groups have certain limitations which should be recognized. With careful planning and preparation, many of these limitations can be reduced, while others remain accepted parts of the study. Krueger (1994) described several of the limitations of focus groups, beginning with the fact that the researcher has less control in the group interview compared to the individual interview. The moderator is required to keep the discussion focused if participants go off topic. Second, the data collected from focus groups can be difficult to analyze, where comments must be interpreted within the context of the group's social environment. Third, trained moderators are required in order to achieve the most accurate results. Fourth, each focus group has unique characteristics; some are dull or lethargic, while others are exciting and energetic. It is important to include several groups in the study to balance the idiosyncrasies of individual groups. Finally, focus groups can be difficult to assemble at a prescribed time in an environment conducive to conversation. Participant incentives, in addition to careful planning and recruitment, may promote participation.

An additional factor which should be addressed for the present study is that focus group interviews were conducted with young people, female ice hockey players from 12 to 15 years of age. Krueger (1994) stated that "focus groups have considerable potential for discovering how young people think about issues, programs, and opportunities; however, special logistic procedures and moderator skills are often essential" (p. 213). Focus groups and other forms of group interviews with young people have been successful in past research (Dallaire & Rail, 1995), and are common forms of data collection in community health projects (Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992). There were some modifications from adult focus groups which were done in order to facilitate the effectiveness of conducting focus groups with youth (see Appendix A). An important factor which was considered in the present study was that the subject matter of the discussion would not include personal feelings about specific coaches and teammates. This, along with the strategies described to

develop rapport with the young participants, enhanced open discussion during the focus group interviews.

Pilot studies

Two pilot studies were conducted. The first pilot study was conducted with players, parents, and coaches of women's youth softball in the South Ottawa Little League. The second pilot study was conducted with male ice hockey players, aged 14 and 15. The main goals of the pilot studies were to provide training for the moderator and assistant moderator, to test the effectiveness of the discussion guidelines for all three participant populations, and to ensure that adequate information would be obtained from the participants during the focus group interviews. Immediately following each group interview, the assistant would debrief the session with the moderator, where their impressions of the interview and the effectiveness of each moderator was discussed. The pilot studies also provided an excellent opportunity to perform the planning and implementation of the data collection procedures, and discover any problem areas requiring modification.

Data Analysis

All focus group interviews were transcribed into a microcomputer and then printed. The group interviews were analyzed through the process of inductive analysis, where categories were generated from the data (Flores & Alonso, 1995). There were several steps taken during this process. First, the initial coding was done by dividing the text from each interview into chunks of text which conveyed a specific meaning to the researcher. These were then given labels, called codes. The names of these codes were chosen by the researcher as being logically related to the data they represented. Second, the initial codes were regrouped into slightly larger categories. The categories were revised during the analysis process until a stable coding system was achieved. These two steps were in line with the coding procedures suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995).

The third step in the analysis process was to examine the characteristics of the larger categories. This included (a) determining the relative level of importance of categories, and (b) examining the degree of agreement and disagreement of the participants' comments. The relative level of importance of the categories was determined by the researcher, and was based on participants' use of emphatic expressions such as "love," "hate," and "really like," the frequency the participants discussed the topic, and how many groups discussed the topic. Three different levels of importance were developed, with each level representing the degree of emphasis and frequency the categories were discussed by the participants.

The final step in the analysis was to create tables depicting the categories cited by each group, and the relative levels of importance of the categories. These tables facilitated comparisons between the groups. In this study, two types of group comparisons were completed: intragroup comparisons among the three player groups, the three parent groups, and the two coach groups; and intergroup comparisons between the player, parent, and coach groups.

The fieldnotes taken by the moderator and assistant moderator during the focus group interviews, and the written background information obtained from the coaches, were used to supplement the information obtained from interview transcripts. A description of each focus group was written, which included information about the characteristics of the group discussion, such as the degree of interaction among participants, presence of dominating and quiet participants, and so forth. This helped the researcher verify that the focus group interviews functioned as they were designed to, resulting in valid information to use in the analysis of the interviews.

Various steps were taken during the analysis process to enhance trustworthiness. First, the process of coding the interview text was conducted independently by the moderator who was most familiar with the participants and the context of the interview (Flores & Alonso, 1995). Second, after completing the initial coding of the interviews, the moderator re-read each transcript and ensured that texts with similar meanings were

consistently given the same code. Third, meetings were held between the moderator, the assistant moderator and other members of the research group to discuss preliminary findings. These meetings were used to reduce the interviewer bias that may have occurred, by stimulating the moderator to observe the whole picture. Finally, the assistant moderator read a coded transcript to check the accuracy and consistency of content within the coded items. Few discrepancies were found.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The first section of the results chapter consists of a description of the players', coaches', and parents' perceptions of factors influencing female players' initial involvement and continued participation in women's ice hockey. The second section focuses on the players', coaches', and parents' perceptions of the players' likes and dislikes about hockey. The factors that are related to learning opportunities provided in women's ice hockey are highlighted. In both of these sections, similarities and differences within and between the player, coach, and parent groups are described.

Initial Involvement in Women's Ice Hockey

During the focus group interviews, players, coaches, and parents were asked to discuss what factors they thought influenced young girls' initial involvement in women's ice hockey. A summary of the categories generated from the participants' discussions is shown in Table 2. The asterisks indicate how important the categories seemed to the participants. The relative level of importance of each category was determined by the researcher, based on the criteria described in the analysis section, such as the participants' use of emphatic expressions such as "love," "hate," and "really like." The three levels of importance represent the degree of emphasis each factor was discussed, frequency the categories were discussed by the participants, and how many groups discussed each category. All of the categories discussed by the participants are included in the table.

The categories "family and friend influence," "not completely satisfied with ringette or figure skating," and "advertisement" were factors mentioned by the players, the coaches, and the parents. One of the strongest influences for the three groups seemed to be that the

players' fathers or brothers played ice hockey, and therefore they also wanted to play. This theme was discussed in detail in each focus group:

My brother and his friends used to always play street hockey when I was little and I'd always join them. And my dad asked me if I wanted to play hockey. He put me into the development, it has its own circuit. (BA)¹

I think they just hear from friends or have another family member ...and now a days it's available to them, so it's just an option they have to do it. (CB)

My daughter always wanted to play hockey, ALWAYS. ... And I think it was part, too, in that her brother and father, she wanted to share something that was theirs. (PBA)

Table 2

Perceptions of Players, Coaches, and Parents on Factors Influencing Initial

Involvement in Women's Ice Hockey

Initial Involvement	Player	Coach	Parent
Family & friend influence	***	***	***
Not completely satisfied with ringette/ figure skating/boys' hockey	***	***	***
Advertisement	*	**	**
Interest in sports		*	
Parents forcing child into hockey			**
Teacher influence			*
Earlier involvement in Mini-blades			*
Child's own idea			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The second factor was that players "not completely satisfied with ringette, figure skating, or boys' hockey" to participate in women's ice hockey. Though the actual act of switching sports was mentioned in all three population groups, the reasons behind the switches varied within individual groups and between the different groups. One reason cited by several players was that their mother or father wanted them to play women's

¹ BA refers to the group from which the quote originated from. BA refers to the banatam A team. See Table 1 for the acronyms of the other focus groups.

hockey, either because physical contact was becoming a negative factor in boys' hockey, or because the parents preferred the game of hockey over ringette. One girl stated that:

I played ringette for eight [years] and my dad kept trying to convince me to try hockey because it's much faster paced and I guess that he felt the change would be better. So he convinced me to go to a hockey camp one summer, which I did and then I tried hockey and ringette one year, and then I loved hockey so I stayed. (BA)

The second reason players cited for switching to hockey was because they chose to themselves. One girl said that:

I think I really like speed and I was in figure skating and that was really slow. And then I went to ringette and that was faster, but you always had to stop on the blue line, so it was relatively boring. And then I got into hockey and it was a lot of fun. (BA)

Both coach groups mentioned the occurrence of players switching from other activities into women's hockey. Most of the coaches commented specifically about how they or their daughters became involved in women's ice hockey. One coach described various reasons his daughter switched to women's ice hockey:

She started playing boys' atom hockey at four. ... By seven she didn't like the idea of being with the boys in the room and all this kind of stuff, so we went and played ringette. ...She wanted to get back into hockey. It was more action, better game, she liked the contact, the physical end of it. Ringette was...boring. (CA)

For the parents, players switching into hockey from other activities was linked to the factor "parent forcing child into hockey." As was revealed in the player and coach interviews, there were various reasons underlying girls switching from other sports into women's hockey, and one of these reasons was that parents wanted and sometimes even forced their daughters to play hockey. One parent said that:

I tried to force them for the first few years. She was four, I bought her a pair of boys' skates. When she was six I bought her a pair of boys' skates. The first skates were worn once and the second skates were twice, then it went to figure skates. I never drove her into ringette. I didn't want nothing to do with ringette. Twenty-seven years of hockey, all I wanted my daughter was to play hockey... Then she went out ... to play with [a friend] in house-league hockey. (PPW)

Other parents indicated that the child herself might have made the choice to switch to hockey:

My daughter always wanted to play hockey, ...I made the mistake of saying "no, boys play hockey and girls play ringette." And she played one year of ringette and that was it, she said "I'm not going back, I want to play hockey." (PBA)

The players, coaches, and parents also described the role of "advertisement" in attracting girls to play ice hockey. Participants listed several types of advertisement that influence involvement in women's hockey, such as community flyers, television, and World Championships. One player mentioned that she became involved in hockey after her mother saw an advertisement on women's ice hockey in their local newspaper. The coaches mentioned that the world championships for women's ice hockey held in the area had been a means of drawing young women toward hockey:

There seemed to be a big growth after the world championships were here. That next fall, there seemed to be a new crop of kids that came out, they wanted to play this game that they had seen earlier. (CA)

The remaining factors listed by the coaches and parents, such as "interest in sports," "teacher influence," "earlier involvement with Mini-blades program," and "child's own idea," show the diverse ways that girls are influenced to become involved in women's ice hockey. These factors did not seem to have as strong an influence as the first three.

To summarize, the players', coaches', and parents' perceptions of factors influencing girls' initial involvement in women's ice hockey seemed to converge on "family and friend influence," "not completely satisfied with ringette" (or other sports), and "advertisement" as the most important factors. Differences between the groups were that the coaches and the parents mentioned additional factors to those stated by the players.

Continued Participation in Women's Ice Hockey

The participants of the focus group interviews were asked to discuss what factors they thought influenced young women's continued participation in women's ice hockey. The perceptions the players, coaches, and parents described are listed in Table 3. The categories have been grouped into factors which relate to positive aspects promoting

continued participation, and negative aspects which were perceived as decreasing the probability of continued participation.

Table 3

Perceptions of Players, Coaches, and Parents on Factors Influencing Continued Participation in Women's Ice Hockey

Continue Playing	Player	Coach	Parent
Positive aspects			
Social aspect	***	*	**
Love of hockey	***	***	*
Work toward future athletic goal	***	***	**
High level of play	**	**	*
Part of identity	**		
Family influence	**		
Something to do	**		
Competition	**	*	
Coach influence			**
Negative aspects			
Conflict with job, school, or other interests		*	***
Drop-out and continue later		*	
Lack of social support		*	**
Tired of hockey			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The players, coaches, and parents all mentioned "social aspect," "love of game," "work toward future athletic goal," and "high level of play" as factors promoting continued hockey participation. The first three factors were discussed in all three player groups, and seemed to be very important to them. The players described the strong influence the social aspect of playing hockey had on their continued participation in women's hockey:

It might be the dressing room atmosphere that makes it so different, because you're with the people before and after. In basketball or something like that at school, you just go, then you play, then you leave. (BA)

Another player described the feeling of connection with the group. This feeling of connection was also linked with the factor "high level of play," where the feeling of

connection with other players was intensified when the players were on a competitive team requiring greater commitment to the game and the team:

It could have a lot to do too with the level we're at. That's not to say that people who play house-league don't love hockey, they might love it just as much as us. But you get connected to everyone, we all love it and we play hard at it. You work very close with these people so you continue. It might have something to do with that, because we're out here a lot of times, and at the lower level teams you're only out there [a little]. (BA)

The coaches and parents recognized the factor "social aspect," though they seemed to perceive it as a less important factor influencing players' continued participation in women's hockey. Later in the results section, however, we will see that the coaches and parents perceived "social aspect" as a very important factor in the players' enjoyment in hockey.

The factor, "love of hockey," was very important for both the players and the coaches. One player stated:

I just love [hockey]. It's awesome!... You just love doing it. (BA)

The factor "love of hockey" was linked to another factor the players mentioned, "part of identity." One player described the meaning hockey had for her in the statement:

It's a big part of who you are, and some people know you by that, and they know what kind of person you are. It just becomes so important to you, you love the sport so much. ... this is just a great place to be. (BA)

On the same factors, a player from a different group described the reason she continued playing hockey by saying:

I think it's fun. It's just kind of part of me now because I've been playing it for so long. Not playing it, I can't imagine that because I've always just played it. We used to always have a street hockey game every single day during the summer and we still do. (BB)

A discussion on the players' love for the game of hockey occurred among several coaches, which indicated their perception of the importance of this factor on players'

continued participation in hockey. The coaches stated that girls continue playing because of their love for hockey (C = coach):

C1: They're enjoying it.

C2: Their love for the game.

C3: I think that keeps most people in the game, they just like to play. (CA)

One parent stated that her daughter's love of hockey was the only reason she would not give up hockey.

The factor "work toward future athletic goal" was cited by players, coaches, and parents as a reason that motivated players to continue playing hockey. Working towards a future goal in hockey was described by a player in the following way:

I'm kind of working up to a goal, I want to play on the Olympic team and stuff. I want to go somewhere and get a scholarship and do something with my life. I don't want to be like the rest of the people, just slugging off all the time. I want to be something when I grow up. (BA)

The emergence of women's hockey as an official Olympic sport seemed to have a lot of meaning as a future goal for many of the players in the focus groups. This theme was discussed during one focus group (P = player):

P1: I don't know if you guys remember or if you heard about it, but the women's Canadian team? I think that would be great to play on that.

P2: There's going to be women's hockey at the Olympics now, and we've waited a long time for that.

P3: That will be amazing.

P2: We've waited a long time just for women's hockey.

P4: Since I've started playing I've watched the Olympics and it's always the guys' Canada team and there was a Canada team for girls but they wouldn't be in the Olympics. But I think some of us, our goal is to be in the Olympics for team Canada. (BB)

The coaches also recognized that many players continue participating in hockey in order to "work toward a future goal." As with the players, this future goal often included playing at a higher level of hockey. The coaches described players as having an opportunity to work towards playing on university teams and receiving scholarships. One coach stated:

I understand that there are some opportunities now, ...some of the universities, if they have a varsity men's team they've got to have a varsity women's team. (CB)

Two parents from different focus groups mentioned that a factor keeping some players committed to playing hockey was to work toward a future goal, such as a university scholarship or playing on the women's national hockey team:

I think what's going to keep their commitment going is as they hit bantam and midget, ...you have the opportunity to play university teams, and that starts that whole other kind of road towards an American scholarship or being able to get into the Canadian university of your choice. Hopefully that will open the door for you or some of them will keep the dream of playing on the national team. That's where you make that commitment. (PBA)

The factor "high level of play" was also a factor identified by the players, coaches, and parents. For the players, the high level of competitiveness on the team was also linked to the players' love of hockey and was identified as a contributing factor to continued participation. One coach group also stated how a high level of play on a competitive team could be a reason young women discontinue participating:

I think they have good incentive to move on, but it's got to depend on if they're in the competitive mode or if they're in the house league mode. If they're in the competitive mode I don't know what levels of competitive hockey there are after midget, other than the Capitals. (CB)

One parent mentioned that the "high level of play" had an impact on the number of players who continued regular participation in hockey:

I think it's all relative. I know that when we only play on a house-league team or when we played both house-league and the all-star team, there was a big difference in turn out, for our team anyway, at the house-league level than there was at the competitive level. (PBA)

A major difference between the players and the rest of the participants was that the players only described positive aspects influencing continued participation in hockey, whereas the coaches and parents discussed both positive and negative aspects. In addition to the four positive factors common to all three groups which have been described, the players identified three factors which were not mentioned by coaches or parents. These were: "part of identity," "family influence," and "something to do." The factor "part of identity" was described as being linked with the factor "love of hockey." The factor "family

influence" illustrates the importance of continued support of family in players' involvement in sport. One player emphasized this point by stating:

I think it's my brother and my friends who are keeping me in hockey, because they're always encouraging me to stay in doing my sports and stuff. And it's probably the only encouragement I get from my brother, because you don't get too much from your siblings. My sister actually wants me to stay in it and she detests the game. So she just thinks that I do well at it most of the time, and I enjoy it so much, it will keep me busy and out of trouble. (BB)

The coaches and parents described several negative factors which could prevent players' continuation in hockey. The factor, "lack of social support," was cited by both coaches and parents, and is related to the players' positive factor of "family influence." One parent described "lack of social support":

What happened too was that ... if they had a brother playing, too, when they get older the brother starts to take more importance because he might get somewhere. So, the parents sort of back off on tournaments. They'll go with the brother and send her with other people. Or even I've seen at one point when they get to a certain age it's, "you want to play hockey, you pay it." And it gets too much for the girls. They just can't do it, so they quit. (PBB)

The coaches and parents had also experienced player attrition due to "conflicts with school, job, or other interests." One parent stated:

I've seen it with my oldest daughter, I think that when they get to grade 12, 13, that you see a lot of them leave then. ... I think it's the pressure from the competitive world out there that you have to perform in grade 13 or you won't get where you want to go for university. You want to be accepted, so some girls find it very difficult, especially if they have to work, too. They work, then they have grade 13 and then try to fit in hockey. It gets difficult for some of them. And the odd one, it will be because of a boyfriend, but that doesn't happen too often. (PBB)

Another factor which was mentioned by the parents, but not by either the player or the coach groups, was "coach influence" on the continued participation of players. One parent described the importance of this factor when she said:

I think a lot of hockey is very much dependent on the coaches. [The players'] experiences and how much they want to stay with it, how much they want to continue. (PPW)

To summarize, the players, coaches, and parents all identified "social aspect," "love of game," "work toward future athletic goal," and "high level of play" as factors influencing them to continue playing hockey. The importance of these factors seemed to

vary slightly among the groups. The players only mentioned factors which have a positive effect on continuation in sport, whereas the coaches and parents described several factors which have a negative effect on continuation, such as "conflict with job, school, or other interests," "drop-out and continued later," "lack of social support," and "tired of hockey."

Perceptions of what Players Like and Dislike about Ice Hockey

The players, coaches, and parents participating in the focus group interviews were asked various questions in order to gain an insight into what they thought young female hockey players liked and disliked about hockey. Examples of the types of questions asked are: "What do players like and dislike about games?", "What do players like and dislike about practice?", and "What are things coaches, parents, and teammates do that players like or dislike?" The organization of the various categories generated from the focus group discussions is presented in Figure 3. The categories were grouped into two main sections related to (a) context, and (b) people. The context section was divided into two main areas; competition, which included games and tournaments, and practice. The competition and practice factors were subdivided into psycho-social aspects and physical aspects. Psycho-social aspects refer to factors which relate to the players' psychological and/or social satisfaction. Physical aspects refer to physical movements and achievements. The people section was organized into three headings, coach, parents, and teammates. The factors under these headings represent actions or events associated with these people. The specific factors generated from the discussions in the various focus groups are presented in Tables 4 through 10.

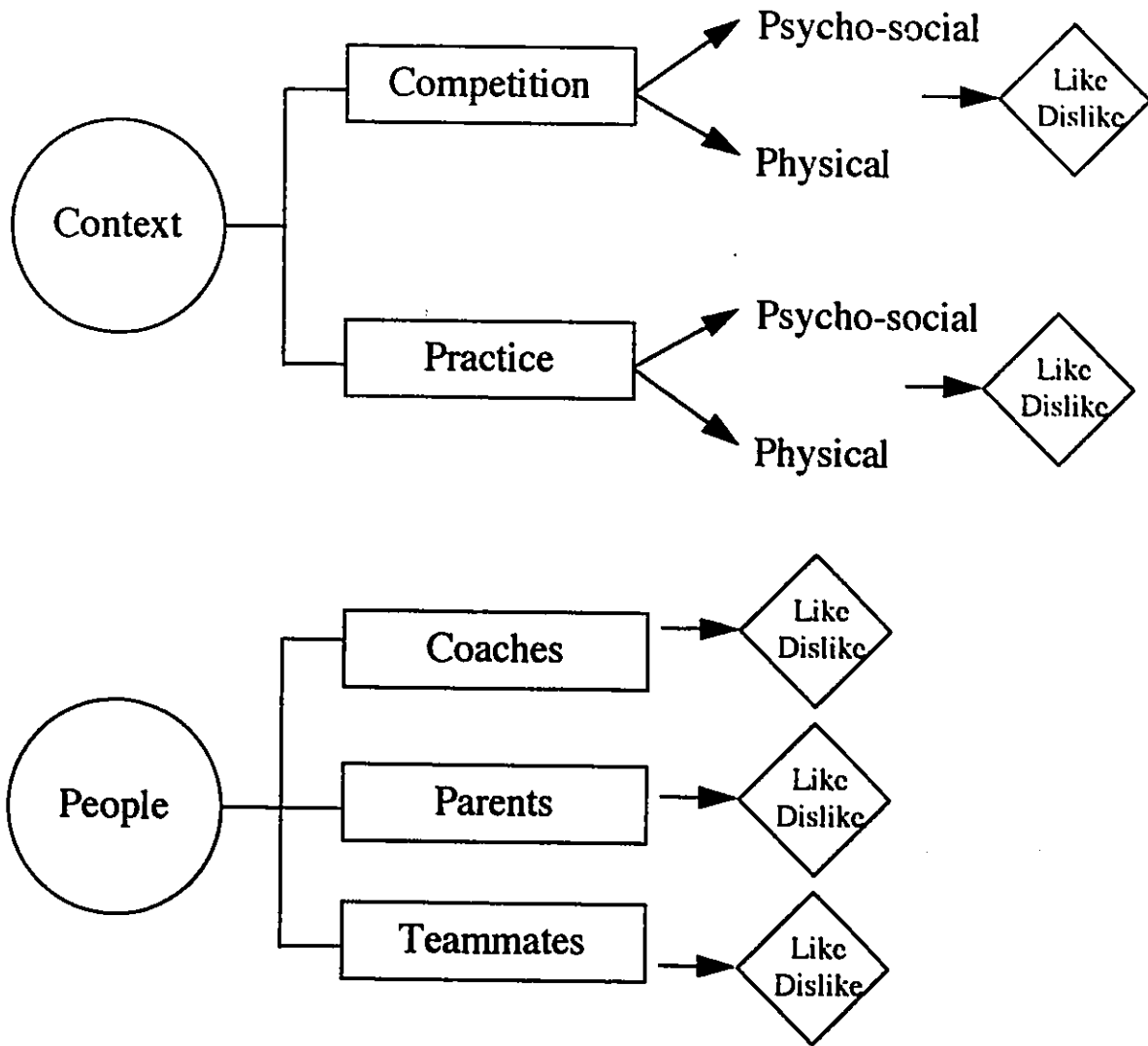


Figure 3. Perceptions of what players like and dislike about ice hockey

Perceptions of players' likes and dislikes during competition: Psycho-social aspects

There were many similarities in perceptions of what players like and dislike about competition among the players, coaches, and parents. The categories generated from the participants' discussions about the psycho-social aspects of competition are presented in Table 4. The three psycho-social factors which seemed very important to the players, the coaches, and the parents were "achieving success," "playing boys' teams," and "social aspect."

Table 4

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Competition: Psycho-social Aspects

Psycho-social aspects Competition	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Achieving success	***	***	***
Playing boys' teams	***	***	***
Social aspect	***	***	***
Challenge & excitement	**	**	***
Women in hockey	**	*	*
Travel & tournaments	*	***	***
Stress release	*		
Fun	*		*
Personal choice to play		**	
Prestige of the team			***
Fairness			*
Dislike			
Poor sportsmanship	***	*	***
Afraid to make mistake	*	**	
Losing badly	*		**
Poor officiating	*		*
Too intense	*		
Playing poorly		*	
Too much pressure to win			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The players stated that they enjoy "achieving success" by playing well and winning:

The intensity and being competitive, when you're in close games where you're equal with the other team and you have to work all the harder to beat them. And that's very satisfying when you do it. (PW)

The coaches cited that the players like "achieving success" by working towards a goal, such as winning the provincials or the league, winning a game, successfully completing a team drill, and playing well:

Winning, of course, is the ultimate goal. They like the satisfaction after the game. I have always stressed, I've played games where we've lost but I've felt maybe I played my best game. And win or lose, if you've given your all, you should feel good about yourself. (CA)

The parents stated that they thought the players like "achieving success" by playing well, playing better as a team, and winning:

A good game doesn't necessarily mean that you win it. [My daughter] feels very good if they went out and the team did really good, they played a really tough team, even if they lost, but if there were good plays and fast paced action and energy. (PBA)

The factor "playing boys' teams," and specifically beating boys' teams, was also very important in the players' enjoyment of hockey. There were various reasons underlying why the female players liked to play boys' teams. Some players stated that playing boys is more fun because the game is faster, more aggressive, and there's more contact. Several other female players said that they liked playing boys because they get the chance to disprove what they described as an assumption they perceive some people have that only boys can play hockey. A discussion between several players in one focus group exemplifies this point (P = player):

*P1: If you beat [boys] you get to pound it in, because,
P2: They get really embarrassed when you beat them.
P3: And you get to gloat when you beat guys who are at your school,
P4: Because they always think you're inferior, that you can't play.
P5: It gives us a chance to prove ourselves. Prove how good we can be, and beat the guys. Like, they're not the most important people in the world. (BB)*

A player from another focus group echoed this statement:

[Boys] think they're better at hockey, and they're like "ya, we'll beat you because you're girls." ... And then we go out and give them a good game. (BA)

The coaches recognized the female players' enjoyment in playing boys' teams. As with the players, the coaches described various reasons why girls like playing boys' teams, such as more competitive games. The coaches also refer to the varying attitudes people have towards women in the traditional men's game of hockey. These issues emerged in the following discussion during one focus group (C = coach):

C1: They'd much rather play the boys than play the girls.

C2: I think it's a bit more competitive.

C1: I think it's something, too, about taking that little knife and turning it.

C3: Well, unfortunately, there still is the attitude that hockey is not hockey. There's a difference between the way a male plays it and the way that a female plays it. But to me, having coached the girls for as long as I have, women's hockey can be as entertaining if not more so, because it is a skilled game. It's not a physical, intimidating game, it's a game of skill. (CA)

The parents also stated that players enjoy "playing boys' teams" and beating the boys. They described how the players seemed to have more fun, they enjoy the challenge, and they play more competitively against boys' teams:

I think from the feedback that I see from my own daughter and some of the others, that's quite a challenge that they're showing the boys that they can do equal or better. And I think that that's an extension of the challenge. Like if it were just girls, I think that would only be part of it, but the fact that they can compete with the boys on their own terms, I think that's quite important. (PPW)

The factor "women in hockey" was also linked to "play boys' teams," and was also mentioned by the players, the coaches, and the parents. The players described the attitudes they felt some people have toward women playing ice hockey. They described the supportive attitudes some male players and parents exhibit toward women in hockey, such as guys showing respect to female players, and parents cheering harder for the girls' team than the boys' team during a game. A discussion among several players revealed the special

attention and respect the female players received from older male players in hockey camps, and how this made them feel special (P = player):

P1: A lot of [guys] give us respect, too.

P2: Because they look up to us because "wow, a girls plays hockey, and she's good!"

P3: You feel special. ... The year before I was the only girl.

P4: You get lots of attention, too.

P5: I think the older the guys are the more respectful they are. (BA)

Several players described the negative attitudes toward women in hockey that they perceived. One player stated:

In a way we kind of have to stick together, not to sound like, "yes, us women stick together," but you get a lot of pressure from guys who say, "oh, girls suck and they can't play hockey." I've got people in my classes who every day put a lot of pressure on you and make fun of you. And you feel like you're inferior. They're trying to make you feel like, "we're the real men of the sport and you suck and you shouldn't be playing, you should be in the kitchen." ... Hockey is really sexist in a sense. (BA)

One parent also cited examples of some people's reactions towards women in hockey:

[My daughter] likes playing against the boys. She thinks it's funny. She likes the reactions of the dads in the stands, because what happened a lot last year was that the fathers would cheer for the girls, or the mothers on the boys' team, and she thinks that's funny because most of them have never seen girls play, I guess. And I remember one game last year, we had played these boys twice, and beat them every time, so we were playing them again, and by the time the score was 4 to nothing there was the little brothers in the stands of the boys' team, and a few mothers, and after we scored one more goal they took out paper bags with faces on and put them on their heads. (PBB)

The factor "social aspect" was also discussed by the players, the coaches, and the parents. Meeting new people and doing things with friends were important factors in the players enjoyment of hockey. One player stated:

Nobody ... makes you want to quit. Everybody just keeps on making you try. You're always happy to go to hockey because you i:now you have friends there that want you to be there. (BA)

The coaches also perceived that it was very important to the players that they had opportunities to meet new people and spend time with their friends:

The dressing room atmosphere, the socializing in the dressing room is probably, I think, more important with the girls once they join than it is with the guys. The friendships that are developed over the course of time. Travel, particularly with competitive teams, there's more travel involved, so they're going to other cities, they're meeting other girls from other teams. (CA)

Similar to the players and the coaches, the parents perceived "social aspect" as being very important. Several parents suggested that the "social aspect" of hockey was the most enjoyable factor for the players:

The social aspect is probably the biggest draw for all of them. (PPW)

In contrast to the numerous similarities between the perceptions of the players, coaches, and parents, were two main differences between the groups. First, the coaches and parents perceived that "travel and tournaments" was very important to the players' enjoyment, while the players seemed to feel this factor was less important. One coach stated:

Tournaments are BIG. To be able to go away two of three times and travel, stay in hotels, run around the hotel lobbies, and whatever else. Ya, that kind of stuff. Those are all highlights of the whole season. (CA)

The parents felt that "travel and tournaments" was important to the players because it helped to enhance the social aspect on the team (P = parent):

P1: That's what enhances the tournaments, I think. Hanging out in the hotels, running around the lobbies, they're constantly together. The social aspect is their main draw.

P2: I agree with that. I think they enjoy games and tournaments away from the city. (PPW)

Second, the parents felt that "prestige of the team" was a very important factor, whereas the players themselves did not mention this factor. Some parents felt that the players enjoyed the prestige of being on the region's representative team, though other parents recognized that it may be the parents' who enjoy the prestige, not the players. One focus group discussed this factor (P = parent):

P1: One thing that they like about being on this team and this is a special kind of team, because it is THE TEAM, this is the team for this age group. And that's important to all the players, because they're all anxious to make the team at the beginning of the season. And that, I think, is very, very important. The camaraderie stuff, you can get that by being on your school volleyball team. If I was to go a step further here, this is THE BIG TEAM.

P2: There's a little prestige involved.

P3: Sure, you're representing a whole area, a whole region.

P2: Ya, it just carries the girls a little bit more to say, "What team do you play for? Well I'm playing for Team X." They're a region wide team, and it just gives them a little bit of pride.

P4: I don't think they say that, I'd say something like that.

P2: Ok, I'd say something like that. [Laughter] (PBA)

The only psycho-social factor that the players, coaches, and parents all perceived the players dislike about hockey competition was "poor sportsmanship." Players from all three focus groups stated that they disliked poor sportsmanship from teams they play against. Players from one focus group discussed this (P = player):

P1: I don't like playing against teams who are really dirty and cheap. ...They couldn't skate and keep up with us so they just bashed into you. It's just not fun.

P2: It's not fun,

P3: Because you're just terrified about getting hurt. (BA)

The coaches mentioned "poor sportsmanship," though they seemed to perceive as a less important factor for the players. Similar to the players, the parents perceived "poor sportsmanship" as a very important factor that players dislike about competition. One parent cited:

[The players] have a very strong sense of when they've been beaten fair. If they've been beaten fair then they don't complain, but if they've been beaten by a dirty team that's, you know, giving them the stick behind the back and all that, they really have a strong sense of outrage about that. (PPW)

The main differences between the players', the coaches', and the parents' perceptions was that the players mentioned they dislike "losing badly," "poor officiating," and the pressure being "too intense," and the coaches did not recognize these factors. The parents, however, cited two of these factors, "losing badly" and "poor officiating." Parents of the peewee level players noticed their daughters' awareness of the officiating during games:

Especially in games, one of the things I noticed is that girls really notice the officiating. They get really bummed if there's bad officiating, and I hear them complaining. ...It's interesting because they also know when there's really good officiating. ...They seem to notice that during games. (PPW)

To summarize, there are many similarities in the perceptions of psycho-social aspects of competition between the players, coaches, and parents. All three population groups cited "achieving success," "play boys' teams," and "social aspect," as being very important to the players' enjoyment of hockey. The main differences were that coaches and

parents perceived "travel and tournaments" as being more important than the players did. In addition, the parents felt "prestige of the team" was very important to the players, while the players themselves never mentioned this factor.

Perceptions of players' likes and dislikes during competition: Physical aspects

Several of the factors cited by the participants concerning the physical aspects of competition are directly associated with learning opportunities. The categories generated from the participants' discussions about the physical aspects of competition are depicted on Table 5. Physical factors the players, the coaches, and the parents all identified as reasons the players like competition included "applying practice to game," "characteristics of hockey," "physical contact," and "learning new things."

Table 5

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Competition: Physical Aspects

Physical aspects Competition	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Applying practice to game	***	***	*
Characteristics of hockey	***	*	***
Physical contact	**	*	**
Learning new things	*	***	*
Fair playing time			*
Dislike			
Getting hurt	***	*	
Being benched	**	***	*
Playing unfamiliar position	*		*
Unequal playing time			**
Not enough ice time			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The players, coaches, and parents all stated that players like to feel that they can apply what they learn in practice to a game and see it work:

You learn new plays in practice and then you do it while in a game. It feels really good. (BA)

Most of the girls know whenever you teach them something at a practice and then they plug it into a game. They see it and they're like, "oh ya, cool!" (CB)

If they can work on a play or something during a practice and when they get to put that into practice during a game and it works, it's just really a nice sense or a good feeling about doing it. (PBA)

For "characteristics of hockey," the players stated that they like skating, shooting, slap shots, saving shots, playing aggressively, body checking, and the fact that they're always moving. The coaches mentioned that the players like skating. The parents cited that the players like the sport hockey, the speed, the strategies, skating, passing, being on the ice, and putting on the equipment. One parent said:

Hockey is a different type of sport in terms of the intensity of the physical part of it, and if there's any girls on the ice right now who don't really enjoy that really intense focus and just going full out and coming back sweaty and stinky and fulfilled to some extent. Because it's just a real intense effort and I think that's something unique to the sport, and my kids like it. (PBA)

The players, coaches, and parents also stated that players enjoy the "physical contact" of hockey. The players said that they liked a physical game, although there was some debate in one focus group as to when playing physical is still fun when the opposing team plays dirty. This factor then links to the factor of the players' dislike for "getting hurt." Two players stated that (P = player):

P1: I like playing a physical game, I think we all like playing physical.

P2: But when a team is dirty and they're just doing it to hurt you it's not fun. (BA)

The players, coaches, and parents all mentioned that players also enjoy "learning new things." This factor was mentioned by the participants in relation to the context of competition as well as practice, and will be presented in Table 6. At some points it was difficult to determine whether the participants were referring to learning new things specifically during games or practices.

The participants in this study mentioned that players enjoyed learning new things both in practices and games. The players stated that they enjoyed it when coaches showed them new things:

Our coach is good and he explains, and he shows us new things. And it's the first year I'm learning from the coach. (BB)

The coaches also mentioned that they felt players enjoy learning new things:

They want to learn. That's the big thing. (CB)

The parents cited that the players learn by playing against better teams.

This issue of coaches teaching (and players learning) that may be possible during games or practices was discussed among the coach groups. The coaches' comments illustrated the variability in opinions, where some believed that coaches could teach during games, others felt teaching occurred during practice, and some felt teaching was done in both (C = coach):

C1: I think in both.

C2: Ya. Like you have your board with you when you're in the game, and if you want to show them [the players] something you just draw it up on your board. ...

C3: I think that you learn, like all the teaching, I think anyway is in the practice, because you're right beside them. ... But in a game, as they come back you can show them on the board. But I find that they're just reinforcing some of their bad habits in the game, where in practice you can be right beside them when they're doing [a skill]. (CB)

The one factor that the players, coaches, and parents all stated that players dislike was "being benched":

It's good if they [the coaches] are competitive, but not really, really competitive because if you make a mistake on the ice when you're doing your best they'll bench you and stuff, and it isn't fun. You're trying your best, but even people make mistakes. (PW)

They hate being sat. They hate missing their shift, because they all think they should be on the power play. (CB)

My daughter, as a goalie, she didn't appreciate being pulled playing against the intermediates because that's the way the goalies each get a league game, and if they do poorly then they're being pulled. So, she was pulled after 5 games, so she thought that was a reflection on her performance. And when you're a goalie, confidence is number one, so she'll have a hard time going into her next game, because she thinks that she's not good enough. (PBB)

The differences in perceptions among the three groups were mainly in factors which the participants felt players dislike. Both players and coaches mentioned that players dislike "getting hurt," while the parents never mentioned this. Another difference was that the parents felt that players liked "fair playing time," and disliked "unequal playing time" and "not enough ice time," whereas the players never cited any of these factors.

In sum, many of the factors mentioned by the participants which relate to the physical aspects of competition are directly associated with learning opportunities. These include "applying practice to game," "learning new things," and the factors referring to amount of playing time. The players, coaches, and parents all stated that they felt players like "applying practice to game" and "learning new things," and players dislike "being benched." However, only the parents mentioned other factors referring to the amount of playing time.

Perceptions of players' likes and dislikes during practice: Psycho-social aspects

The categories generated from the participants' discussions about the psycho-social aspects of practice are depicted in Table 6.

Table 6

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Practice: Psycho-social Aspects

Psycho-social aspects Practice	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Fun	***	***	***
Social aspect	*	**	*
Dislike			
Too serious	**		
Less challenge than game			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

There were two psycho-social factors mentioned about practice, "fun" and "social aspect," and they were cited by the players, the coaches, and the parents. One player stated that:

It's fun because you actually get to talk to your friends and people on the team, it's not all like totally intense. When the drills get started it is, but you also get time to talk and you can have fun. (PW)

The coaches recognized that the players like to have fun and like the social aspect in practice:

You've got to let them talk. You got to let them socialize, you got to let them have fun. (CB)

One parent described how her daughter linked having fun to improving her skill:

My daughter said ... "the better I am the more fun I'm going to have out there. The more things I can do on the ice with my mind and things like that." (PBA)

A difference in the perceptions among the groups was that the players were the only ones who mentioned that they disliked practices that were "too serious." One player said:

I really don't like when coaches get really ticked off at us, and they just make us puke on the ice. They just make us keep on skating and they don't make it FUN. They don't realize that hockey's just for FUN and they take it seriously. (PW)

To summarize, there were few factors mentioned by the participants which referred to psycho-social aspects during practice. All three groups mentioned the players like "fun" and "social aspect" during practice. The players cited that they dislike "too serious" practices, while neither the coaches nor the parents mentioned this.

Perceptions of players' likes and dislikes during practice: Physical aspects

The categories generated from the participants' discussions about the physical aspects of practice are also presented in Table 6. The players, the coaches, and the parents all identified "type and variety of drills," "skills improved," "learning new things," and "well organized and planned" practice as reasons players like practice.

The factor "type and variety of drills" was important to the players, the coaches, and the parents. The players described the types of drills they like, such as fun drills, one-on-one drills, challenging drills, team drills, scrimmaging, and skill work. The coaches

stated that the type of drills players seem to enjoy were fun drills, a variety of different drills, new challenges in drills, and scrimmaging. The parents described players like such activities as challenging drills, working on many skills in one drill, 1-on-1 and 2-on-1 shooting drills, and fun drills.

Table 7

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes During Practice: Physical Aspects

Physical aspects Practice	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Type & variety of drills	***	***	**
Skills improved	***	**	**
Learning new things	**	*	***
Well organized & planned	*	**	**
Develop fitness	*	*	*
Work hard in practice	*	*	
Dislike			
Poor planning	***	**	**
Purposeless drills	**		
Early morning	*	*	*
Skating drills		**	
Poor attendance			*
Standing on ice for theory			*
Don't learn enough			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The players, coaches, and parents also perceived that it was very important to players to improve their hockey skills:

What I like about practices is improving your skills, like just doing different drills that you can tell what skills you're improving. (PW)

I think they also like to develop skill and maybe more about the sport and become better at it. They're not just out there to have fun, they want to develop their own personal skills put to where they're pleased with. (CB)

The reason my daughter like to come to practice is so they can learn and so they can get better. ...There's a question of being more successful because of that. And I think that if you don't push them and challenge them like that, their interest will fall away. (PBA)

All three groups felt that players liked "learning new things" in practice. A group of players described their feelings about learning new things in practice, and how it can also be linked to applying practices to games (P = player):

P1: You learn new plays in practice and then you do it while in a game, it feels really good.

P2: It feels like you've actually learned something.

P3: You see what I like is where we're learning how to do what to do. I mean in certain situations, like 3-on-2s and stuff. (BA)

The coaches and parents also felt that "learning new things" was very important to the players:

That they're actually learning something, that it's not the same practice all the time. And that as long as they can see that they can relate that into a game, plug it into a game, then it makes sense. (CB)

[The players] enjoy the opportunity to learn in the practices, because you notice that they work with the girls on this team, they're working on slap shots. And then the next practice, all the girls go out and they're all practicing what they learned before. They just keep on going and going, they're striving for something new all the time. (PPW)

The factor "well organized and planned" practice was also cited by all three groups.

The players seemed to really enjoy practices that run smoothly:

This year everything is good at practices because our coach is so organized. He'll have everything planned. (BA)

One coach commented about the importance of organization during practice:

Practices are run a lot better, because you keep the kids going almost 50 minutes, whereas before there was a lot of stops and starts. ...If you keep them going and you change over at the right times, then everything will just flow, and the enjoyment is there. (CA)

The parents felt that "well organized and planned" practices were very important to the players. One parent stated that:

What [the players] like is when there's stations similar to hockey camp where you've got maybe your team divided in three groups and there's three stations. So, on each particular station there may only be six kids and then you rotate. ...So, they're doing a lot. ...You've got to keep them moving and keep them busy. (PPW)

Physical aspects of practice which the players, coaches, and parents all stated the players disliked included "poor planning" and "early morning" practices. The factors "poor

planning." "purposeless drills," "standing on ice for theory," and "don't learn enough" are related to learning opportunities.

For "poor planning," the players described situations which were too repetitive, where (a) no new drills and skills were introduced, (b) not everyone was involved in the drill, and (c) there was too much standing around on the ice, either as goalies waiting or while the coach taught theory to the whole team on the ice. For "poor planning" the coaches perceived that the players did not enjoy situations which were too repetitive or where the players were standing around on the ice for too long. The parents described "poor planning" situations such as boring practices where players stand around and don't do anything, players having to wait to be involved in the activity, and when the same drill is done for too long.

The factor "early morning" was mentioned by some players as being something they dislike. With the high demand for ice time by all users, many of the players' weekend practices were scheduled for 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. The coaches and parents also recognized that players dislike "early morning" practices.

There were few differences between the perceptions of the players, coaches, and parents for the physical factors players like and dislike. One difference was that the players mentioned that they dislike "purposeless drills," while the coaches and parents did not state this. The peewee players (12 to 13 year olds) were the only participants to describe their dislike for "purposeless drills." They discussed in detail specific drills which they felt were inappropriate or seemed to serve no purpose, such as the goalies doing drills that are meant for players, and modified drills that seemed to be repetitions of previous drills.

In sum, several of the factors cited by the participants concerning the physical aspects of practice are directly associated with learning opportunities. These included factors relating to learning and skill development, type and variety of drills, and planning and organizing. The players, coaches, and parents all mentioned many of the same learning opportunity factors as being important to players.

Perceptions of coaches' actions

The categories generated from the participants' discussions about things coaches do that players like and dislike are presented in Table 8. The players, the coaches, and the parents all identified "instruction," "positive feedback," and "corrective feedback" as things coaches do that are very important to players' enjoyment in hockey.

Table 8

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes of Coaches' Actions

Coaches' Actions	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Instruction	***	***	**
Positive feedback	***	***	***
Corrective Feedback	**	***	***
Good attitude	**		*
Maintain control	**		
Humor	**	*	
Motivating pre-game talk	*	*	
Dad as coach	*		
Recognition	*		
Female role model		**	
Clear rules & expectations		*	**
Respect players			*
Immediate feedback			*
Friends with players			*
Dislike			
Negative feedback	***	*	***
Negative behavior	**	*	**
Unclear rules & expectations	*		*
Dad as coach	*		
No recognition	*		
Embarrass players		**	
No feedback			***
Favoritism			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

Coaches giving "instruction" about hockey tactics or the players' technique was a very important factor for the players enjoyment. One player stated that:

A lot of [coaches] take the time to ...make sure that you've got it down. And I like that, because ...you really get the picture, you understand totally. (BB)

The coaches described how they felt the players enjoyed receiving "instruction" from coaches, such as the coaches explaining the reasoning behind drills, and illustrating players' actions on a game strategy board. The parents described how the players liked (a) to receive explanations about what they should and shouldn't be doing, (b) that the players preferred instructions given in a positive way, and (c) that players liked coaches showing instructions by using a strategy game board.

Coaches giving players "positive feedback" about their actions was also very important to the players. The players liked receiving encouraging comments, compliments, feedback on the good things the players did, and support from coaches. One player said:

I like when the coaches...say "you did good, you made some nice saves." I like when they do that. It gives you encouragement and you have fun when you go out and play the next period. (PW)

Another player stated that:

I think it's important that a coach gives you positive feedback and that he supports you. If you don't get support, then you're not confident. (BA)

The coaches and parents also felt "positive feedback" was a very important factor:

[The players] love when you say, "oh that was great." They love to be told that they did something good. (CB)

[The players] do like praise, there's no doubt. They like to be rewarded or told if they're doing something well. Girls particularly like to be praised. (PPW)

Several players talked about the importance of receiving corrective feedback from coaches. Players stated that they did not mind being corrected or criticized, as long as they were told the correct action:

I like when [coaches] ask you "Do you know what you did wrong?," and they tell you how to improve it. (PW)

The coaches also felt that giving "corrective feedback" along with positive comments is important to the players:

I think probably one of the most important parts of the practice is that when you are doing drills and you're watching and you are correcting that you realize very quickly that you have to keep your comments positive. You know, even though the pass may not have been made correctly, and it may have been errant, the fact that the process behind the technique was good, like "good rolling of the wrists," or "bring the stick down, turn it over," "good foot work," things like that. If they hear these positive comments it makes it more enjoyable for them. (CA)

The parents pointed out that receiving "corrective feedback" from coaches is also very important to the players. The parents described how they felt the players appreciate being told whether they performed correctly or incorrectly and how they could improve:

[The players] want to be told if they did something wrong and they want to learn. And if they did something really good they probably want to be told that, too, but if they just get "nice play, great play" all the time that's not [enough]. (PPW)

Other actions of coaches the players cited they liked were "good attitude," "maintain control," and "humor." The players cited that they enjoyed themselves when coaches possess good attitudes and humor:

It's just really awesome when your coaches have good attitudes because it just pumps you up even more. (BA)

The players described that they liked coaches to "maintain control," although the players stated that they did not need and did not experience being disciplined by coaches (P = player):

*P1: [The coach] has to have control over a team. If you just let them do whatever they want, they'll be in trouble, they won't have respect for any of the coaches.
P2: Not necessarily, because I had a coach once and he was really nice to us and everybody still listened to him. (PW)*

The players, coaches, and parents all mentioned that they felt players dislike "negative feedback" and "negative behavior" from coaches. The players stated that they dislike "negative feedback" from the coach, which includes yelling at the players and criticizing the players' actions:

[The coach] can't just tell you negative things all the time or else you have no confidence and you just, you go out there and you never want to touch the puck because you're always afraid you're going to do something wrong. (BA)

The coaches recognized that players don't like negative feedback:

Nobody likes to hear negative all the time, that's for sure. (CA)

Similar to the players, the parents described "negative feedback" as including yelling at players and criticizing the players' actions without offering corrective alternatives:

The problem [is] that some people don't carry it that step further. They just say "well you should have been down here," but they don't draw it out to the full thing. I think to adults who've been playing the game for a long time, it almost seems obvious to them, like their intentions are, "ok, you shouldn't have been down here." But maybe they just assume the kid knows where they should have been. But [the players] don't like to hear negatives. (PBB)

The players, coaches, and parents all cited that players dislike "negative behavior" from coaches, such as yelling at players, and yelling or criticizing referees.

The parents were the only participants that stated players disliked coaches giving "no feedback." One parent said that:

Last year we were in a situation where nothing happened on the bench. ...And it drove [my daughter] crazy. If you made an excellent play, nothing happened, if you made a terrible play, nothing happened. You just did your routine and off you went. (PPW)

To summarize, several of the factors cited by the participants concerning the coaches' actions relate to learning opportunities. These include "instruction," "positive feedback," "corrective feedback," "negative feedback," and "no feedback." The players, coaches, and parents all mentioned many of the same learning opportunity factors as being important to players. The parents were the only participants to mention the factor "no feedback."

Perceptions of parents' actions

During the focus group interviews, participants were asked whether they liked and disliked any specific parent actions. The categories generated from the participants' discussions about things parents do that players like and dislike are depicted in Table 9.

The players, coaches, and parents cited several actions of parents that players liked, such as "social support," "cheering," and "positive comments." The factor "social support" included being present at games, being supportive to players during and after games,

financial support, and driving to and from games and practices. One group of players discussed the importance of parents being present at games (P = player):

P1: It's good when your parents come to the games and stuff because they're there and they can alert you of 'hings, like if there's someone behind you should cover, maybe you can't see them but when they tell it then you know.

P2: I like when your parents come to the game because you actually feel good ...and feel wanted. ...It would make me feel bad if they didn't want to watch. It's like I'm in my own world, ...like "we don't really care about you, we just pay for your hockey, we don't want to go watch you."

P3: If they're there it really helps. ...If they're there then they can tell you what you did wrong and what you did right.

P3: They can do all sorts of stuff that'll make you feel a lot better, but if they're not there they don't know anything. (PW)

Table 9

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes of Parents' Actions

Parents' Actions	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Social Support	***	***	***
Cheering	***	*	***
Positive comments	**	*	*
Corrective comments	**		
Humor	*		
Dislike			
Negative comments	***	***	**
Car ride home	***		
Interfere with coach	***	**	
Embarrass players	*		*
Lack of social support	*	**	
Pressure to play		*	
"Coaching from stands"			***
Yelling at referees			**

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The coaches also stated that they perceived the players liked parents being present at games and cheering at games. Many parents felt very strongly that their daughters liked having them present and cheering at games, while some parents felt that this was becoming less

important with the players' increasing age. A discussion among several parents illustrates this (P = parent):

P1: One thing I think they still like at this age. ...I think they really still like having their family and maybe some friends watching them play. ...They like to play in front of their family and friends, and they like to know you're there cheering. And I think it's important still, even at this age.

P2: Ya, I still think it's really important for them. They're performing in front of you and they want you to cheer. It's still very important.

P3: I think that's changing a bit.

P4: That's the way it always used to be, but I think now I don't know if she would care so much if we come or not.

P5: Ya, we've noticed that same change, but it seems to be before it was always the parents. It was a real big thing if the grandparents showed up. There's not that real urgency to play in front of the grandparents anymore.

P6: Now it's in front of Josh or Kevin.

P7: Or it's in front of her peers and the people that she plays with or hangs around with at school, and most of her male friends are all hockey players. And most of them play on high level teams, and if they all show up, well gees! (PPW)

The players described how the parents "cheering" were very important to them:

When parents are up there, they're yelling and cheering, that's really good. It helps the team. It actually helps the relationship with father and daughter. (PW)

The players, coaches, and parents stated that players enjoy receiving "positive comments" from parents. One player said:

You kind of look up to your parents, so if they're really encouraging and stuff, well then it makes you feel good. (PW)

The players, coaches, and parents all cited that players dislike "negative comments" from parents:

Well, one time my mom, she told me that I shouldn't bother playing hockey any more because it's no use and stuff. It puts you down a lot and you're thinking, "well maybe I shouldn't, am I hurting my team or something?" I'm not doing well. And that feels really bad and it makes you play worse. (PW)

The last thing a young hockey player or even an older hockey player needs on the way home is to hear about all the things that they didn't do, because then the enjoyment goes. (CA)

We [the parents] don't try and nag them, but they think we try and nag them. It's 15 and 14 year olds. (PBB)

The parents also described how they felt the players did not like "negative comments" or criticism from parents.

The players and coaches discussed the confusion players faced with parents who "interfere with the coach," where the parent tells the player on thing and the coach tells them something different. One player stated that:

My dad tells me to do one thing, so I do it. And then the coaches come up and say, "no, no, no, you're supposed to do this." And then my dad corrects me again. Like, "I'm so confused!" (PW)

The coaches recognized the players' confusion:

I've seen coaches telling the player to do one thing and the parent telling the player to do another. Where does the kid go? ...And I find a lot of kids ...are torn, "daddy's telling me to do this, the coach is telling me to do this. What do I do?" And therefore it's effecting their play of the game. (CA)

Similar to parents "interfering with the coach," the parents described how they perceived the players disliked parents "coaching from the stands" and telling the players what to do in games. A discussion among several parents illustrates this perception (P = parent):

P1: Either on the way home or to a game, if I try to sort of psych [my daughter] up, tell her a couple of things who's got to do, like keep moving, quick starts, short, choppy steps, don't be afraid to go into the corners, challenge the puck carrier. Sometimes she listens, but she'll also turn the radio up if she's had too much.

P2: They get enough coaching. My daughter tells me that the coach tells her all things, I don't have to tell her those things.

P3: But as a parent I feel I have to tell her these things. [laughter] (PBB)

The factor "car ride home" was cited solely by the players. This factor is closely linked to "negative comments," as the car ride home after a game seems to be the place where players have experienced negative comments from their parents. One player said:

I can't have both my parents come to a game at the same time, or at least not in the same vehicle because I'll be sitting in the back and they'll be in the front and they'll be arguing over what I did right and what I did wrong, and I'll be sitting there, "don't get me involved." (BB)

To summarize, the players, coaches, and parents all cited "social support," "cheering," and "positive comments" as action of parents that the players like. All three groups mentioned that players dislike "negative comments" from parents, as well as parents interfering with the coach and coaching from the stands. The players were the only participants to discuss players' dislike for the "car ride home."

Perceptions of teammates' actions

During the focus group interviews, participants were asked whether they liked and disliked any specific actions of teammates. The categories generated from the participants' discussions about things teammates do that players like and dislike are presented in Table 10. The players, coaches, and parents all cited that players like "team cohesion" and "positive comments," and dislike "negative team atmosphere."

Table 10

Perceptions of Players' Likes and Dislikes of Teammates' Actions

Teammates' Actions	Player	Coach	Parent
Like			
Team cohesion	***	***	***
Positive comments	***	**	**
Corrective comments	*	**	
Humor	*		
Recognition		*	
Admire good plays			**
Challenged by each other			*
Empathetic			*
Focused on the game			*
Dislike			
Negative team atmosphere	***	*	***
Negative comments	***		
Inappropriate recognition	*		
No commitment		**	
Not focusing on the game			*

- *** = Factor emphatically discussed in all groups
- ** = Factor moderately discussed in 2 or 3 groups
- * = Factor slightly discussed in 1 or 2 groups

The players discussed the importance of feeling like part of a team, through supportive actions of teammates. The players described how they liked it when teammates would defend and help each other on the ice, be friendly, communicate positively, and play as a team. One player stated that:

What I like about games, when we play a team if we communicate, we encourage each other and do better. We just play as a team. But like she says, if one person is down, it brings the whole team down. [I like it] if everyone tries to help each other and we want to improve our game. (PW)

The coaches talked about how players enjoyed playing as a team, working with their line in practice, a positive dressing room atmosphere, and picking a team name or a team captain:

The dressing rooms are as much fun as the games, I'm sure, for most of them. I guess the team sport, most of them are in it because they like team sports. They like the idea of playing as a group. That's probably the main, principle reason most of them are in it. (CA)

The parents thought that the players liked the communication and interaction among teammates, players displaying positive attitudes towards each other, supporting each other, and playing as a team.

The players stated that they liked "positive comments" from their teammates:

It's really fun to get compliments from your own players. Like coaches a lot of times, they tell you what you're doing wrong and then they tell what you're doing right. But when other players say "hey, that was a good play," or whatever, you feel really good about yourself. (BB)

The coaches stated that they felt the players liked teammates encouraging and cheering each other, and the players liked receiving corrective comments and recognition from other teammates. The parents also felt players liked positive comments and encouragement from teammates:

Positive comments. Encouragement from each other. Commenting on the good play you did or effort you put in. And they do support each other a lot. (BB)

All three population groups stated that players dislike "negative team atmosphere."

The feeling of positive team atmosphere was very important to the players, and they did not like actions from teammates which they felt jeopardized this. The players described several things which promoted a negative team atmosphere, such as players with bad attitudes, no team play, players insulting other players, players starting fights, players yelling at other players when they made mistakes, and players hating other players.

The coaches also mentioned that players disliked "negative team atmosphere," such as cliques forming among the team, which caused tension and disrupted play during games. The coaches did not seem to perceive this factor as being as important as the players did, though. The parents perceived that the players disliked teammates having a negative

attitude in the dressing room after a game, divisions among teammates, and players criticizing each other.

The players emphasized their dislike of negative comments from their teammates. This factor was not mentioned by either the coaches or the parents.

In sum, there were several similarities and differences among the players', coaches', and parents' perceptions of actions of teammates which players like and dislike. The similarities were that players like "team cohesion" and "positive comments" from teammates, but dislike "negative team atmosphere."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the major findings from the results section are presented and subsequently compared to other studies in the literature. The discussion is organized into four parts. First, the major participation and withdrawal motives cited by the participants are listed. Second, coaching influences which relate to players' enjoyment are discussed. Third, parental influences which reflect on players' enjoyment of ice hockey are presented. Finally, factors related to women's participation in ice hockey are discussed. When appropriate, factors related to learning opportunities are discussed.

Participation and Withdrawal Motives

Participation and withdrawal motives are divided into four areas (a) initial involvement in ice hockey, (b) continued participation, (c) perceptions of what players like and dislike about hockey, and (d) learning opportunities.

Initial Involvement in ice hockey

The participants in the present study mentioned factors influencing young girls' initial involvement in sport, such as "family and friend influence," "not completely satisfied with ringette or other sports," and "advertisement." In the present study, the participants cited fathers and brothers playing hockey as one of the strongest factors influencing young girls' initial involvement in ice hockey. The influence of mothers was not mentioned by the participants. The athletes in the present study may be considered first-generation female ice hockey players, where few mothers had participated in women's ice hockey. The mothers were supportive of their daughters playing ice hockey, which was illustrated by 16 mothers out of a total 30 parents participating in the focus group interviews held during regularly scheduled practices. Perhaps in future generations, young girls will follow their mothers into participating in ice hockey. The factor "family and friend influence" has also been reported by other researchers (Brustad, 1992; Lewko & Greenörförfer, 1988; Sport Canada, 1994), where parents were found to have a strong

influence on their children's entrance into sports. Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) stated that parents, siblings, and peers have the potential for influencing a child's sport involvement, and that this broad base of support from significant others is particularly important for young girls. Statistics Canada (Sport Canada, 1994) reported that a father's participation in sport increased the participation of his children by 11%, while the participation of the mother had an even greater effect, increasing the participation of her children by 22%.

The factor "not completely satisfied with ringette or other sports" exemplifies how athletes may withdraw from one sport and go on to participate in another sport. This occurrence was also found by several researchers (e.g., Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Gould, Feltz, Horn & Weiss, 1982; Klint & Weiss, 1986). Gould and Petlichkoff (1988) stated that there are varying levels of withdrawal, and that children may withdraw from one sport and continue in a different sport. Both Gould et al. (1982) and Klint and Weiss (1986) found in their studies that the majority of youth who dropped out of one sport reentered the same sport or another sport.

In the present study, the participants mentioned "advertisement" as a factor influencing young girls' initial involvement in hockey. This factor has not been reported in the literature on youth's motivation to participate in sport. It may be that the increased media exposure of female participants in ice hockey within the last six years has had a special significance for the increased participation numbers in women's ice hockey. The participants in the present study cited the importance of such events as the World Women's Hockey Championship in 1990, and women's ice hockey becoming an official event in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in influencing young girls' participation in women's ice hockey. Gruneau and Whitson (1993) reported how television coverage of the 1990 World Women's Hockey Championship provided exposure for women's hockey and its levels of skill to be demonstrated.

To summarize, results from the present study indicated that young women initially become involved in ice hockey mainly due to "family and friend influence," by "not being completely satisfied with ringette or other sports," and through "advertisement."

Researchers examining this area reported similar findings in all the above factors except "advertisement" (e.g., Brustad, 1992; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988). To date, little literature is available on the effects advertisement has on influencing youth to participate in sport.

Continued Participation

The participants in the present study mentioned factors influencing young women's continued involvement in sport, such as "social aspect," "love of game," "work toward future athletic goal," and "high level of play." The players seemed to focus on the present, citing factors keeping them in hockey. They did not talk of quitting or mention factors which may cause them to withdraw from hockey. In contrast, the coaches and parents predicted what may happen in the future based on their experiences with other athletes. The coaches and parents reported their experiences with young women dropping out of hockey due to "conflict with other interests," "lack of social support," "tired of hockey." They also related how young women may "drop-out and continue later" in hockey.

The factor "social aspect" represents the importance that being with friends has for the young female players. This is consistent with the literature (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Romar, 1994), where findings indicated that young girls rated friendship and fun as being very important to the players' enjoyment in sport.

In the present study, the participants cited "love of hockey" as an important factor for the players' continued participation in ice hockey. This specific factor has not been mentioned in the literature. In previous studies on participation motivation (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; McCullagh, Matzkanin, Shaw & Maldonado, 1993) researchers tended to pose more general questions, without asking

about characteristics of specific sports. In this focus group study, the participants were free to comment about the sport of hockey. Therefore, there was an opportunity for factors such as "love of hockey" to be cited. This discrepancy with the literature may be due to a difference in methodologies in data collection, where the focus group interview technique used in the present study allowed a wider variety of factors and sport specific items to be raised by the participants. In previous studies (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; McCullagh et al., 1993) questionnaires designed by the researchers were used to elicit information on the ranking of participation motives of athletes from various sports. Almost all of the motives listed in these questionnaires corresponded with comments of participants from the present study, although the discussions during the focus groups were specific to women's ice hockey, and the participants were not asked to rank the motives.

The factor "work toward future athletic goal" was also found to be important for players' continued participation in ice hockey. The participants in this study stated that female hockey players had ambitions to play on higher level teams, such as university teams or the Olympic team. A similar factor, "desire to go on to a higher level," was also included in Gill, Gross and Huddleston's (1983) study. These researchers found that this factor was of high importance in young girls' reported reasons for participating in sport. McGarry (1996) suggested that with the recent prospect of Olympic glory in women's ice hockey, coaches and parents may be tempted to impose a competitive goal structure on female players. The result of this may be players who value competitiveness and achieving external rewards, such as international recognition or monetary benefits.

In the present study, the factor "high level of play" was found to contribute to young women's desire to continue playing hockey. For the players in this study, the high level of competitiveness on their teams increased their enjoyment in participating. Similar findings have been found in the literature. Gould and Petlichkoff (1988) stated that the intensity of sport involvement can effect the athletes' participation motivations. In a study

conducted by Klint and Weiss (1986), competitive gymnasts, recreational gymnasts, and former gymnasts cited different motives for participating in gymnastics. Competitive gymnasts cited fitness and challenge as their motives, while recreational gymnasts and former gymnasts cited fun and situational factors as their main motives for participating in gymnastics.

The coaches and parents in the present study also stated that players may eventually withdraw from hockey due to "conflict with other interests," "lack of social support," or being "tired of hockey." The players may also "drop-out and continue later." These motives for withdrawal are in line with findings from other research (e.g., Brown, Frankel & Fennel, 1989; Burton & Martens, 1986; Gould, 1987). Burton and Martens (1986) found that conflicts of interest was the primary reason young athletes drop out of sport. Brown, Frankel, and Fennel (1989) reported that young women who reported increasing support for their sport participation as they grew older had stronger patterns of continuity than others who received less positive influences.

In summary, results from the present study indicated that young women continue participating in women's ice hockey primarily due to factors such as "social aspect," "love of hockey," "work toward future athletic goal," and "high level of play." The players did not mention any factors which may cause them to drop out of hockey, though the coaches and the parents reported that young women may withdraw due to "conflict with other interests," "lack of social support," "tired of hockey," and players may "drop-out and continue later."

Likes and Dislikes

In the present study, the likes and dislikes of female hockey players were organized into practice and competition situations. This distinction between practice and competition was not made in any of the literature to date. By making this specification in the present study, it was possible to determine differences between participation motives in practice and competition.

The main difference found between practice and competition was that the players seemed to want practice to be fun and social, while competition was seen as more serious. In the context of practice, factors related to the psycho-social aspects which players liked were "fun," and "social aspect." Players disliked practice being "too serious." Factors related to the physical aspects which players liked included "type and variety of drills," "skills improved," and "learning new things." Players disliked "poor planning" in practice. Improving skill during practice was found to be highly related to players' enjoyment. A quote by one parent exemplifies this finding:

I think the practices are very important. I know my daughter went to play soccer and didn't make the competitive team, went to house-league, and she said "there's no practices, how are we going to get any better? The better I am the more fun I'm going to have out there, and the more things I can do on the ice with my mind and things like that." (PBA)

The players seemed to perceive competition as being more serious. The factors which players liked about competition included "achieving success," "playing boys' teams," "challenge and excitement," and "women in hockey." Players disliked "poor sportsmanship," "getting hurt," and "being benched." They enjoyed winning and playing well in general, winning and playing well against boys' teams, showing others that women can play hockey, and the challenge and excitement of competition. The players did not like getting hurt and being benched during games.

The above factors were specific to the context of practice or competition. In the literature, the context was not accounted for when researchers determined the importance of the participation motives in youth sport. If we look at these factors outside of the specific context of practice or competition, and compare them to the literature, there are many similarities plus several gaps in the literature. The factors "fun" and "social aspect," cited by participants in the present study, are similar to findings in the literature (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Romar, 1994). These researchers found that young girls reported a high importance of fun and friendship in sport participation. The young female athletes from the present study also reported enjoying

factors such as "skills improved," "learning new things," "achieving success," and "challenge and excitement." These results were consistent with findings in the literature (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; McCullagh et al., 1993). The investigators all found that these factors were among the most important participation motives of young female athletes.

The factor "achieving success" was reported as being very important to the female hockey players in the present study. The athletes in the present study played on highly competitive women's ice hockey teams, and the participants felt the players perceived achieving success as playing well, winning, playing better as a team, and working towards goals. Some researchers have reported that young men tend to have a stronger orientation towards winning and competition than young women (Borman & Kurdek, 1987; Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983), although other investigators have found no significant differences between the two genders (Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; Ryckman & Hamel, 1995). In other studies, researchers found that young female athletes rated "playing well" higher than nonathletes (Nicholson, 1979), and that both male and female athletes rated winning as being more important than nonathletes (Sage, 1980). McGarry (1996) suggested that due to the inclusion of women's ice hockey as an official Winter Olympic event, players with increasing levels of outcome orientation (focusing on winning) over performance orientation (focusing on playing well) may become more prevalent.

The factors players disliked about practice and competition, such as "too serious," "poor planning," "poor sportsmanship," "getting hurt," and "being benched" seemed to correspond with withdrawal motives reported in the literature (e.g., Burton & Martens, 1986; Gould, 1987). These factors do not represent motives athletes in the present study have for withdrawing from sport, since they are still playing hockey. They are, however, similar to reported reasons athletes ultimately drop out of sport.

Several factors cited in the present study, such as "playing boys' teams," "women in hockey," and "type and variety of drills" were not mentioned in the literature. In the

past, researchers (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; McCullagh et al., 1993) have used questionnaires that did not allow the subjects to offer comments about topics of their choice. During the focus group interviews of the present study, the participants cited factors specific to women's ice hockey which the young female athletes enjoy, such as "playing boys' teams" and "women in hockey," and factors specific to hockey practice, such as "type and variety of drills."

In the present study, the vast majority of perceptions of the players, coaches, and parents were similar to each other. Specifically, the most important factors the three groups mentioned concerning players' likes and dislikes were often identical. There were also some important differences between the groups. One difference was that the parents felt that "prestige of the team" was a very important factor, while the players did not mention this factor. Some parents described how they felt that the players enjoyed the prestige of being on the region's representative team, and enjoyed wearing the team jackets. Other parents in the focus groups commented that it may be the parents who enjoy the prestige, not the players (P = parent):

P1: They're a region wide team, and it just gives them a little bit of pride.

P2: I don't think they say that, I'd say something like that.

P1: Ok, I'd say something like that. (PBA)

This finding differs from the results of McCullagh, Matzkanin, Shaw and Maldonado's (1993) study. McCullagh and colleagues (1993) found that parents felt being on a team and wearing the team uniforms were less important motives to the athletes than the youths themselves reported.

The perceptions of the participants in the present study also contrasted in that both the coaches and the parents felt "travel and tournaments" was very important to the players' enjoyment, while the players felt this factor was less important. This difference between athletes', coaches', and parents' perceptions has not been reported in the literature. Few studies to date have investigated the differences in perceptions of young athletes' participation motives among the athletes, coaches, and parents. McCullagh and colleagues

(1993) examined the differences between athletes' and parents' perceptions of youth participation motives, though they did not ask the participants about their perceptions of travel and tournaments. Gill, Gould, and Huddleston (1983) studied participation motives of young girls and boys, and found that the young athletes in their study rated "travel" as a less important motive for participating in sport. In the present study, the participants were interviewed on newly formed teams early in the hockey season, prior to any travel or tournaments. It may be that the coaches and parents remembered the excitement the players felt about travel from previous years, while the players considered their present situation more. Further research is needed to investigate the differences in perceptions among young players, coaches, and parents before conclusions can be drawn.

To summarize, the present study indicates that young female ice hockey players like factors in practice such as "fun," "social aspect," "type and variety of drills," "skills improved" and "learning new things," and dislike practice being "too serious" and "poor planning." Participants also reported that players like "achieving success," "playing boys' team," "challenge and excitement," and "women in hockey" in competition. They cited that players dislike "poor sportsmanship," "getting hurt," and "being benched" during games. In the literature, participation motives were not reported in the context of practice or competition.

Learning opportunities

Several factors were cited by the players, coaches, and parents which illustrated the importance of learning opportunities in the players' enjoyment of ice hockey. These factors included "learning new things," "applying practice to game," "type and variety of drills," "skills improved," and "well organized and planned (practice)" as things the players liked. Things the players disliked about ice hockey practice and competition were "being

benched,” and “poor planning.” Skill development seemed to be an important element in women's ice hockey. One coach stated that there is a difference in the type of hockey game women play:

There's a difference between the way a male plays [hockey] and the way that a female plays it. But to me, having coached the girls for as long as I have, women's hockey can be as entertaining if not more so, because it is a skilled game. It's not a physical, intimidating game, it's a game of skill. (CA)

Other researchers have reported that young female athletes cite the importance of factors related to skill development to their enjoyment in sport (e.g., Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz, & Weiss, 1985; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Klint & Weiss, 1987). In a recent study, Ryckman and Hamel (1995) found that young female athletes wanted to enhance their personal development by strengthening their athletic, personal, and social skills:

Young adolescent females are not concerned with winning at any cost when they participate in competitive activities, ...but rather in developing their capacities to the maximum. Not only do these females want to develop their athletic skills, as suggested by many investigators, ...but they also want to enhance their personal and social development as well. Such a focus on learning and personal development goals is associated with a willingness in young adolescents to seek challenging learning opportunities, even when they are confronted by failure (p. 391).

The Ryckman and Hamel finding highlights the importance of learning opportunities to young female athletes.

To summarize, participants in the present study reported that factors which enhance learning opportunities for skill development are very important to young female ice hockey players. Similar results related to youth in various sports have been reported by other researchers (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Ryckman & Hamel, 1995).

Coaching Influences

Feedback and instruction from coaches also enhance the learning opportunities athletes have for skill development. Participants in this study cited "instruction," "positive feedback," and "corrective feedback" from coaches as important factors influencing the enjoyment, fun, and confidence of players. The participants also stated that players dislike "negative feedback" and "negative behaviors" from coaches. Similar findings were found in the literature (e.g., Black & Weiss, 1992; Coakley, 1987). In other studies (e.g., Horn, 1985; Smith, Zane, Smoll & Coppel, 1983) where researchers used systematic observation techniques to analyze coaching behaviors, they found that encouragement and punishment were independent of one another, not necessarily at opposite ends of a single dimension. Black and Weiss (1992) and Horn (1985) have both reported that young women may be more dependent on adult feedback than young men.

The participants in the current study reported that "instruction" from coaches was very important to the players' enjoyment. They stated that players liked receiving explanations as to what they did right or wrong, specifically illustrated on a game strategy board, in order to increase the players' understanding. Similarly, Black and Weiss (1992) found that coaches who were perceived as giving more frequent information following desirable performances were associated with athletes who experienced higher levels of success, competence, enjoyment, and preference for optimally challenging activities. Smith and colleagues (1983) also found that instructionally related coaching behaviors, such as corrective technical instruction and mistake-contingent technical instruction, were most highly predictive of positive player attitudes.

Coaches giving players "positive feedback" was perceived to be important to the participants in the present study. They cited that encouraging comments, compliments, support, and specific feedback helped increase the level of fun and the players' confidence. One player stated:

I think it's important that a coach gives you positive feedback and that he supports you. If you don't get support, then you're not confident. (BA)

Horn (1985) examined the relationship between coaches' feedback and female athletes' self-perceptions. Horn found that appropriate and performance-contingent feedback from coaches facilitated athletes' perceptions of competence. In contrast, inappropriate positive reinforcement or excessive praise from coaches set lower expectations for players' performance and induced negative self-perceptions.

Participants in the present study cited that they liked "corrective feedback" from coaches. The players stated that they did not mind being criticized, as long as they were told the correct action. Similarly, the parents felt the players appreciate being told whether they have performed correctly or incorrectly, and how they can improve. Smith et al. (1983) found that positive post-season player attitude related directly to the frequency of coaches' responses to mistakes with corrective technical instruction.

In the present study, participants stated that players disliked "negative feedback" and "negative behavior" from coaches. Participants described "negative behavior" as yelling at players, and yelling or criticizing referees. Similar findings were reported in the literature (Coakley, 1987; Smith et al., 1983). Coakley (1987) stated that coaches who "act in a punitive and critical manner tend to be viewed negatively by the children on their teams" (p. 53). Smith and colleagues (1983) found that coaching behaviors designed to stop misbehavior, as well as punishing behaviors correlated with negative attitudes from athletes.

To summarize, results from this study indicate that female hockey players have fun and feel confident when they receive instruction, and positive and corrective feedback from their coaches. Further, the participants cited that players dislike negative feedback and negative behaviors from coaches. Researchers examining coaching influences in youth sport (e.g., Black & Weiss, 1992; Coakley, 1987) reported similar findings. Researchers investigating systematic observation of coaching behaviors found that positive and corrective feedback appropriate to performance correlated with positive player attitudes, while inappropriate, general encouragement and punishment correlated with negative

players attitudes (e.g., Horn, 1985; Smith et al., 1983). Coaches would therefore want to increase instructive and corrective behaviors appropriate to athletes' performance, while decreasing general encouragement and punishment, in order to enhance positive player attitudes. These behaviors of coaches would also enhance the learning opportunities for skill development available to athletes.

Parental Influences

In the present study, the participants cited that "social support," "cheering," and "positive comments" from parents increased players' enjoyment in sport. Participants also stated that players dislike "negative comments" and parents "interfering with the coach." The participants reported how players enjoy parents attending games, as well as being supportive and committed to the game. A group of parents discussed the support they gave their daughters in ice hockey (P = parent):

P1: We buy their equipment, we pay for their hockey, we bring them here, and to the tournaments.

P2: That's right. You spend your winter living in arenas. So, there is a commitment for the parents.

P3: And we are committed to not only sign them up to hockey, but to give up whatever activities we might be doing so that they can be here. (PBB)

Parental support and encouragement has been found by several researchers to be important for young female athletes' continued enjoyment in sport (Bloom, 1985; Brown, Frankel, & Fennel, 1989; Brustad, 1993b; Coakley, 1987; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1993; Streaan, 1995). Bloom (1985) reported that support in terms of time, energy, and money as well as encouragement are necessary from parents when cultivating the talents of gifted youth. In a recent study, Streaan (1995) examined the importance of contextual factors, such as the role of parents, in young athletes' sport experiences. Many parents were seen by coaches in Streaan's study as being "good solid supportive parents" (p. 27). Streaan concluded that parental involvement in youth sport is a positive aspect in children's success and enjoyment.

The participants in the present study cited that players dislike parents giving "negative comments," "interfere with coach," and "coaching from the stands." There is

some empirical evidence of similar findings in the literature regarding the actions of parents that players dislike. Brustad (1993b) found that in the sporting environment young girls tended to receive less parental encouragement than young boys, and consequently reported lower perceived competence than young boys. Streat (1995) also reported negative aspects of parental involvement in youth sport, such as parent behaviors which can create stress for children. Streat described these behaviors as parents teaching their children sport skills or tactics that conflicted with what the coach was trying to convey, or shouting instructions to their children from the stands.

In the present study, the participants' comments about parental actions players dislike were quite similar to each other, though there were some differences. The participants all cited that players dislike "negative comments," and parents who "interfere with the coach" or "coach from the stands." One difference was that the players were the only ones who cited that players dislike the "car ride home" with the parents after games, due to the negative comments they receive in those situations. There were no findings in the literature to support this result.

In summary, results from the present study indicated that young female hockey players enjoy "social support," "cheering," and "positive comments" from parents. Participants also cited that players dislike "negative comments" and parents "interfering with the coach." These findings were similar with those found in the literature (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Brustad, 1993b; Streat, 1995). Accordingly, in order to enhance children's enjoyment in sport, parents should provide social support, cheering and encouragement to their daughters, while minimizing negative comments and interference with coaches.

Women's Participation in Ice Hockey

Several factors specific to young women playing women's ice hockey were cited by the participants in the current study. These factors were that the female players liked "playing boys' teams," "women in hockey," and "team cohesion."

Participants cited that young female ice hockey players enjoy playing and winning against boys' teams. Although there is limited literature available on women's ice hockey, one author of a newspaper article (Faulder, 1996) found that young female hockey players reported they like playing against boys. Faulder (1996) did not investigate what specific factors female athletes liked about playing against boys' teams. In the present study, the participants cited various reasons young women enjoyed playing against boys' hockey teams. The players stated that playing boys is more fun because the game is faster, more aggressive, and there's more contact. In addition, they enjoy the opportunity of giving the boys a good game, or even beating them, since the young women perceive that the male players think boys are better at hockey. The coaches and parents cited that the female players seemed to have more fun, enjoy the challenge, and play more competitively against boys' teams. This phenomenon of young women's teams playing young men's teams may not occur that often in youth sport, where competition is usually limited to similar age groups and gender. This type of mixed competition requires further research in order to gain a deeper understanding of its implications on the athletes.

The participants in the present study also cited that the players like being "women in hockey." They described both positive and negative elements that the players experienced by being women in a traditionally men's sport. The players described how they enjoy the supportive attitudes, special attention, and respect some male players, coaches, and parents exhibit toward women in hockey. They also cited the lack of support they've experienced in women's hockey, and the negative attitudes they've experienced from male players who don't think young women can play hockey as well as men. The parents described situations where parents and coaches of boys' teams have shown disrespect for young women's hockey teams. Research in the field of women in sport reported the different reception men's and women's sport receive in society (Theberge, 1995). Theberge (1995) stated that male athletes receive widespread attention and support, while "women athletes often

compete in obscurity and with little public support" (p. 390). Theberge described how the adult players of a women's ice hockey team, aged 16 to 30 years, experienced their role in hockey:

Players on the Blades understand and on occasion are annoyed by the stereotypes of women athletes and the attendant pressures they experience to counteract these stereotypes. In contrast, they see themselves, and wish to be seen, as hockey players. (p. 401)

This finding is in line with comments from the participants in the present study, although the participants in Theberge's study are older than the 12 to 15 year old players in the present study. Whether the players experience positive or negative attitudes from others, they report wanting to play well and be seen as hockey players.

Participants in the present study cited "team cohesion" as a very important factor in the young players' enjoyment of ice hockey. The participants reported that the players liked it when teammates would defend and support each other on the ice, interact and communicate positively, play as a team, and maintain a positive dressing room atmosphere. One coach explained how important the dressing room atmosphere seemed to be to the players:

The dressing rooms are as much fun as the games, I'm sure, for most of them. ... They like the idea of playing as a group. That's probably the main, principle reason most of them are in it. (CA)

Team cohesion, or team spirit, has also been found by other researchers to be an important motive for both young girls and boys in their sport enjoyment (Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983; Gross, Feltz & Weiss, 1985; McCullagh et al., 1993). Although team cohesion is not a motive cited solely by female athletes, team cohesion and the dressing room atmosphere has been reported to be very important in women's ice hockey (Faulder, 1996; Theberge, 1995). Theberge (1995) found that team cohesion, or team membership, was

enhanced on a women's ice hockey team through interaction in the dressing room, and that team membership was very important in the athletes' sport experience:

Perhaps the most significant aspect of team membership is that it offers a context in which women hockey players collectively affirm their skills, commitment, and passion for their sport. (p. 401)

The importance of this grouping of female athletes who enjoy a common activity was also reported by participants in the present study.

To summarize, participants in this study cited three factors which are particularly important in women's ice hockey. These were that young female ice hockey players enjoy "playing boys' teams," "women in hockey," and "team cohesion." Participants cited enjoying some aspects of "women in hockey," and disliking other aspects. Although there is little research available on women's ice hockey, two articles report similar findings to female ice hockey players enjoying "playing boys' teams" and "team cohesion" (Faulder, 1996; Theberge, 1995). Theberge (1995) also found that players feel the presence of positive and negative aspects of being "women in hockey." Further research is needed to explore the effects participating in traditionally men's sports has on young women. Coaches should be aware of some factors which are particularly important in women's ice hockey, such as playing boys' teams, being women in a traditionally men's sport, and maintaining team cohesion.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study show a marked similarity in the perceptions cited by the participating players, coaches, and parents. Perceptions among the participants of what factors influence initial involvement and continued participation in women's ice hockey, as well as what the players like and dislike and how they perceive the learning opportunities provided in women's ice hockey, had many similarities. This reflects very positively on young women's organized ice hockey, where it seems that in many areas the coaches and the parents are well in tune with how the players perceive their hockey experiences.

There were areas in which the adults' perceptions differed from the athletes' perceptions, though. These differences include: (a) the low emphasis coaches placed on the "social aspect" factor influencing continued participation, (b) the high importance the coaches and parents placed on the factors "travel and tournaments" and "prestige of the team," (c) the low emphasis coaches placed on players' dislike of "poor sportsmanship," (d) the lack of emphasis coaches and parents placed on players' dislike of "getting hurt" during games, (e) the coaches' low emphasis on players' dislike of "negative feedback" from coaches, and (f) the coaches' and parents' lack of mentioning the players' dislike of the "car ride home" after games. It is recommended that coaches and parents of young female ice hockey players take into account the numerous factors athletes like and dislike about hockey in order to enhance the players' enjoyment and continued participation in this sport.

The results also suggest that skill development is an important aspect of youth women's ice hockey. Coaches reported that women's hockey is a game of skill, not intimidation (see quote on p. 81). Researchers have found that young male and female athletes rated factors related to skill development as being important to their enjoyment of sport (e.g., Gill, Gross & Huddleston, 1983). Moreover, all of the participants in this study perceived factors related to learning opportunities for skill development as being

important to young female ice hockey players. The players, coaches, and parents all reported that players enjoy improving and learning new skills, and applying things learned in practice to games. The participants reported that players like factors which enhance their skill development, such as instructive, positive, corrective feedback from coaches, well organized and planned practices, and appropriate types and varieties of drills. Participants also cited that players dislike factors which detract from players' skill development, such as being benched during a game and poorly planned practices. Coaches should be aware of the important role they play in providing learning opportunities which optimize skill development in young athletes. It is vital that coaches plan and organize practices and competition in order to optimize playing time for athletes, as well as provide instructive, corrective, and positive feedback to players in order to achieve positive learning opportunities for skill development.

An important aspect to consider is that athletes' skills should be developed in the context of a social and fun environment. The players in this study reported enjoying several aspects of participating in hockey, among which were factors related to skill development. The players also stated they liked factors such as the social aspect of hockey, physical contact, and team cohesion. Coaches and parents should be aware that several factors contribute to female athletes' ice hockey enjoyment, and that single elements should not be isolated.

Finally, we can conclude that the focus group interview methodology used in this study was instrumental in providing detail about how young athletes, coaches, and parents perceive factors related to learning opportunities, as well as many other factors influencing young women have for participating in women's ice hockey. Focus groups could be conducted with athletes in other sports to gain insight into motives specific to those sports.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE LA SANTÉ
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM (Athletes)

The main objective of this research project is to investigate the perceptions of athletes concerning the learning opportunities and issues related to female ice hockey. This research project is directed by Deanne Boyd and Professor Pierre Trudel of the University of Ottawa. In this project, focus group sessions will be conducted with female ice hockey players to investigate their perceptions concerning the learning opportunities and issues related to female ice hockey. We will not ask questions concerning specific coaches, athletes or parents.

The athletes will be asked to participate in a group discussion led by the focus group moderator. Each focus group sessions will last about 90 minutes. The focus group sessions will be tape recorded, and the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. Individual responses in the discussion will be accessed only by the immediate research team.

We want to inform you that you are under no obligation to participate in this study and you can withdraw at anytime before, during or after the study without fear of reprisal. If you choose to withdraw, your contribution in the discussion transcripts will be destroyed, and will not be included in the study.

I consent to participate in this research project.

I understand that there is no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. A report of the investigation will be sent to me if I wish. Also, I understand that the results will be kept strictly confidential and that my name will not appear in any publications. Maximum anonymity will be ensured by the reporting of group data only.

Signature of the athlete _____ Date _____

I consent that my daughter participates in this research project.

I understand that there is no direct benefit to her from participating in this study. A report of the investigation will be sent to me if I wish. Also, I understand that the results will be kept strictly confidential and that my daughter's name will not appear in any publications.

Signature of the parent _____ Date _____

Please feel free to contact us at any time:

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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE LA SANTÉ
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INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM (Coaches)

The main objective of this research project is to investigate the perceptions of coaches concerning the learning opportunities and issues related to female ice hockey. This research project is directed by Deanne Boyd and Professor Pierre Trudel of the University of Ottawa. In this project, focus group sessions will be conducted with coaches of female ice hockey to investigate their perceptions concerning the learning opportunities and issues related to female ice hockey. We will not ask questions concerning specific coaches, athletes or parents.

The coaches will be asked to participate in a group discussion led by the focus group moderator. Each focus group sessions will last about 90 minutes. The focus group sessions will be taped, recorded, and the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. Individual responses in the discussion will be accessed only by the immediate research team.

We want to inform you that you are under no obligation to participate in this study and you can withdraw at anytime before, during or after the study without fear of reprisal. If you choose to withdraw, your contribution in the discussion transcripts will be destroyed, and will not be included in the study.

I consent to participate in this research project.

I understand that there is no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. A report of the investigation will be sent to me if I wish. Also, I understand that the results will be kept strictly confidential and that my name will not appear in any publications. Maximum anonymity will be ensured by the reporting of group data only.

Signature of the coach _____ Date _____

Please feel free to contact us at any time:

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INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM (Parents)

The main objective of this research project is to investigate the perceptions of parents concerning the learning opportunities and issues related to female ice hockey. This research project is directed by Deanne Boyd and Professor Pierre Trudel of the University of Ottawa. In this project, focus group sessions will be conducted with parents of female ice hockey players to investigate their perceptions concerning the learning opportunities and issues related to female ice hockey. We will not ask questions concerning specific coaches, athletes or parents.

The parents will be asked to participate in a group discussion led by the focus group moderator. Each focus group sessions will last about 90 minutes. The focus group sessions will be tape recorded, and the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. Individual responses in the discussion will be accessed only by the immediate research team.

We want to inform you that you are under no obligation to participate in this study and you can withdraw at anytime before, during or after the study without fear of reprisal. If you choose to withdraw, your contribution in the discussion transcripts will be destroyed, and will not be included in the study.

I consent to participate in this research project.

I understand that there is no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. A report of the investigation will be sent to me if I wish. Also, I understand that the results will be kept strictly confidential and that my name will not appear in any publications. Maximum anonymity will be ensured by the reporting of group data only.

Signature of the parent _____ Date _____

Please feel free to contact us at any time:

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APPENDIX B
DISCUSSION AND MODERATOR GUIDELINES

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Introduction:

Welcome to this focus group discussion

- Hello and welcome to our session today.
- Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion on women's ice hockey.
- My name is Deanne Boyd, and this is Pam Seaborn. We are both graduate students at the University of Ottawa working on our Sport Psychology Master's degree.
- I am doing my thesis on what girls enjoy and learn in women's ice hockey.
- I will be conducting group discussions with current players, parents, and coaches who are involved in hockey in the Ottawa area to share their perceptions and ideas about hockey.
- Each one of you play a special role in this project, and **your** thoughts and ideas are valuable to this discussion.
- The object of this discussion is to discuss a **range of opinions, not come to a consensus**, so please feel free to say your opinion even if it's different than what was already stated.

Overview of the topic

- The general topic of discussion will be women's ice hockey, with a focus on what motivates girls to play hockey and what they enjoy learning during practices and games.

**** We are more interested in your previous experiences than the specific team you are involved with now.**

**** We will not specifically discuss the present coach.**

Ground rules

- Before we begin, let me share some ground rules:
- This meeting is strictly for research and there are no sales involved.
- We're tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. Please speak clearly, and only one person at a time.
- We will be on a first name basis today, and in our later reports no names will be attached to comments.
- You may be assured of complete confidentiality.
- Keep in mind that we're just as interested in **negative comments** as **positive comments**.
- Remember that you as a group do not have to come to an overall agreement. We would like a **broad range of opinions**.
- **Pauses** in the conversation are **ok** - they give us a chance to think.
- Our session will last about one hour/ one and a half hours.
- We've placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names.

The first question

- Let's find out more about each other
- Tell us your name and a favorite hobby of yours (**NOT HOCKEY!**)

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES (Players)

Introduction: Welcome to this focus group discussion

Ground rules

Overview of the topic

Ice-breaker & written forms

1. What are some of the things you enjoy most about playing ice hockey (like learning, like doing, specific things)?
- 2.a) What do you like about practice? (probe: can you give me an example?)
- 2.b) What do you dislike about practice?
- 3.a) How did become involved in women's ice hockey?
- 3.b) Did you play for the same team and coach last year?
4. What are some specific things that coaches/parents/teammates do during practice that you like and dislike?
- 5.a) What do you like about games? (probe: be specific, give example)
- 5.b) What do you dislike about games?
6. What are some specific things that coaches/parents/teammates do during games that you like and dislike?
7. What would you like to learn more about, or do more of in ice hockey?
- 8.a) What kind of support do you get from coaches, parents, and teammates?
- 8.b) What kind of support would you like more of?
9. Why do you continue to play ice hockey?

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES (Coaches)

Introduction: Welcome to this focus group discussion

Ground rules

Overview of the topic

Ice-breaker & written forms

1. How do girls become involved in ice hockey?
2. How did you become involved in coaching women's ice hockey?
3. What do you think the athletes enjoy most about playing ice hockey? (probe for specific situations, people, factors, etc.)
- 4.a) What do the girls like about practice? (probe: can you give an example?)
- 4.b) What do the girls dislike about practice?
5. What are some specific things that coaches/parents/teammates do during practice that the players like and dislike?
- 6.a) What do the players like about games? (probe: be specific, give example)
- 6.b) What do the players dislike about games?
7. What are some specific things that coaches/parents/teammates do during games that the players like and dislike?
8. What are the major differences in learning during practices and games?
9. What would the girls like to learn more about in ice hockey?
10. What support do the athletes get from coaches, parents and teammates?
11. What kind of support would they like more of?
- 12.a) Why do girls continue to play ice hockey?
- 12.b) Are there any girls on the team you coached last year?

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES (Parents)

Introduction: Welcome to this focus group discussion

Ground rules

Overview of the topic

Ice-breaker & written form

1. What do you think the athletes enjoy most about playing ice hockey? (probe for specific situations, people, factors, etc.)
- 2.a) How do girls become involved in ice hockey?
- 2.b) How many years has your daughter played with this team?
- 3.a) What do the girls like about practice? (probe: can you give an example?)
- 3.b) What do the girls dislike about practice?
4. What are some specific things that coaches/parents/teammates do during practice that the players like and dislike?
- 5.a) What do the players like about games? (probe: be specific, give example)
- 5.b) What do the players dislike about games?
6. What are some specific things that coaches/parents/teammates do during games that the players like and dislike?
7. What support do the athletes get from coaches, parents, and teammates?
8. What kind of support would they like more of?
9. Why do girls continue to play ice hockey?

MODERATOR GUIDELINES

The effectiveness of the moderator plays a vital role in the success of the focus group. Krueger (1994) outlines important roles and tasks of the moderator and assistant moderator, which is summarized here.

Moderator:

- creates a permissive environment in the focus group which promotes the contribution of different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants into reaching a consensus.
- should be familiar with group processes, respect the participants, communicate clearly and precisely, maintain self-discipline by holding back their personal opinions, and exercise a mild, unobtrusive control over the group.
- can use two techniques; the 5-second pause and the probe, to help solicit additional information from the group.
- strategically places shy participants and dominant talkers at the beginning of the focus group in order to help balance contributions from all participants.

Assistant moderator:

- facilitates audiotaping procedures.
- takes field notes and provide a brief oral summary to the participants during the group interviews. This summary of the key points can be used as a form of verification that the researcher has adequately understood the intent of the participants. The participants can then verify the accuracy of the summary, and add any additional comments that may have been missed.
- aids in the evaluation and analysis of the focus groups.

Additional strategies to develop rapport with young participants:**Recruiting participants:**

- make an effort to get to know the potential participants before hand.
- provide an incentive when recruiting. This can be food, but a more productive incentive to the focus group discussion would be to tell the youth about the purpose of the group interview session, and how discussing these issues can benefit them.
- recruit players from a number of different teams to participate in the same focus group, so inner-team conflicts will not effect the atmosphere of the focus group.

Location:

- choose an informal location where the young people feel unthreatened; this should be a neutral local, not associated with one particular team.
- the atmosphere should be comfortable for the participants, and their confidentiality should be secure.

During the focus group interview:

- be less authoritative than perhaps they are used to in relationships with adults.
Moderator and assistant moderator sit in opposite sides of room.
- clearly explain the ground rules of the focus group prior to the session. Include information about the confidentiality of their comments.
- do an initial ice-breaker to promote free discussion in the group.
- some participants may take more time to become involved in the discussion. This is alright.
- rephrase questions when no responses are given, but allow pauses to occur when participants may be formulating comments.
- provide signs of acceptance and encouragement (nodding and positive responses) during the discussion. Paraphrasing participants' responses can also be helpful in assuring proper understanding of their comments.

APPENDIX C
BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRES FOR COACHES

ICE HOCKEY COACHES BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Years experience as head coach in female ice hockey. _____
2. Level and age of athletes. _____

3. Years experience as assistant coach in female ice hockey. _____
4. Level and age of athletes. _____

5. Have you ever coached male ice hockey? (# of years, age of players)

6. Coaching certification (theoretical, technical, general or sport specific)

7. Experience as player (sport, number of years, level)

8. What is your age and occupation?
