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Adams, C., & Stevens, J. (2007) "Change and Grassroots Movement: Re-conceptualizing Women's Hockey Governance in Canada," *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 2(4): 344-461

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Change and grassroots movement: reconceptualising women's hockey governance in Canada

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Abstract: In Canada, female hockey governance structures vary as different regions of the country may better suit integrated or partially-integrated governance approaches based upon their unique local histories and individual dynamics. Indeed, the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) is the only female hockey provincial association in Canada that endorses and endeavours to maintain a separatist philosophy. However, women's hockey governance in Canada as a whole has not progressed in a manner where the authority of female hockey participants and leaders has increased. This paper initiates dialogue about women's sport governance by utilising women's hockey in Canada and specifically a case study of the OWHA, as a context in which to develop a new perspective and renew efforts to place women's sport governance on the agenda. In order to develop a sport and governance dialogue for women's hockey specifically and women's sport more broadly, we present a theoretical discussion that integrates critical feminist and grassroots movement perspectives.

Keywords: governance; change; women's hockey; grassroots movement; critical feminism; social action.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Adams, C. and Stevens, J. (2007) 'Change and grassroots movement: reconceptualising women's hockey governance in Canada', *Int. J. Sport Management and Marketing*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp.344–361.

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1 Introduction

Although evidence suggests the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) has been a catalyst for female hockey participation in Canada, it has not been a catalyst for female hockey governance. In its 1995 strategic plan, the OWHA recognised two key critical issues that faced the organisation in the 1990s: How to increase the effectiveness of the provincial executive body in terms of administration, communication and governance processes and how to develop a single voice within the women's hockey community to lobby for separate control over the female game (OWHA, 1995). The second of these goals, separate control, has been difficult to achieve as the OWHA is the only female hockey provincial association in Canada that endorses and endeavours to maintain a separatist philosophy. Female hockey governance structures vary as different regions of the country may better suit integrated or partially-integrated governance approaches based upon their unique local histories and individual dynamics. However, women's hockey governance in Canada as a whole has not progressed in a manner where the authority of female hockey participants and leaders has increased.

Women's sport governance is an under-researched area in sport management. Previous work has addressed governance in specific contexts, such as the global sport forum (Thoma and Chalip, 1996) and college athletics (VanderZwaag, 1998) or in terms of sport industry segments (Hums and MacLean, 2004). Research has also addressed issues related to gender and public policy in sport (Shaw and Slack, 2002; MacKay, 1997; Hall and Richardson, 1982), women's sport participation in the Canadian context (Hall, 2002; Lenskyj, 1986) and, more specifically, women's involvement in specific sports such as ice hockey (Avery and Stevens, 1997; Etue and Williams, 1996; Theberge, 2000). However, collectively, these studies fail to explicitly raise the importance of governance in the advancement of women in sport.

Sport policy and sport governance are intricately linked (Hums and MacLean, 2004). The ability to increase opportunities for women and girls in sport relies largely on one's influence within policy decision-making forums. Newman and White (2006) suggest that for transformations to occur, women must be brought "...in from the margins of the policy process" as active contributors to the decision-making process (p.131). Governance is important because it deals directly with the power and authority of female sport leaders within sport organisations. We draw upon the following definition to demonstrate this point:

Sport governance is the exercise of power and authority in sport organizations, including policy making, to determine organizational mission, membership, eligibility, and regulatory power, within the organization's appropriate local, national and international scope (Hums and MacLean, 2004, p.5).

Members of sport organisations, particularly at the community level, make critical decisions related to women's and girls' sport provision and therefore, governance can play an essential role in advancing the women in sport objectives.

The purpose of this paper is to initiate a dialogue about women's sport governance by utilising women's hockey in Canada, as a context in which to develop a new perspective. The discussion will first focus upon the concepts that are critical for a discussion on women's hockey governance to evolve and second, on the importance of governance to overcome challenges facing women and girls in hockey. This paper will begin with a discussion that integrates critical feminist and grassroots movement perspectives and proceed with a descriptive analysis of the state of women's hockey governance in Canada, with a focus on the situation in the province of Ontario and more specifically the OWHHA.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 *Critical feminism and transformation*

The current state of women's hockey in Canada is problematic. While governing bodies such as the OWHHA are committed to increasing participation, still there are many women and girls who do not have the opportunity to participate. For those who are involved, their opportunities are far from equal or equitable. The inequality in resources, lack of recognition, limited access to leadership positions and weak voice in the broader hockey community¹ suggests that women are accommodated into the male game and begs the question: should women's hockey focus on a game of their own, with an independent governance structure? The answer to this question can be partially addressed by a critical feminist view, which promotes activism and places the experiences of women and girls at the centre of female hockey governance structures.

Women's and girls' hockey at the grassroots level needs to be grounded in the primary goal of freeing "...women from the imposition of so-called 'male values', and creating an alternative culture based on 'female values'" (Willis, 1984). The critical feminist perspective that Beasley (2005) labels 'Gender Difference' feminism, offers a theoretical foundation for a movement towards an alternative governance model for female hockey in Canada. This perspective supports the notion that "...there is no *singular* universal human nature that can form the basis of 'equality'" (Beasley, 2005, p.46). Seeking equal opportunity in sport assumes a commonality between males and females; indeed, "what seems impartial or gender neutral is actually male-defined" (Beasley, 2005, p.46). Women's and girls' hockey should be considered on its own terms not in relation to the male model. 'Gender Difference' theorists accept and even celebrate difference – a difference which should not be an assumed inferiority (Showalter, 1985; Squires, 2001). Consequently, a perspective that incorporates a greater degree of separation between female hockey and male hockey streams than currently exists in the Canadian hockey system, would recognise female hockey as a distinct game as well as place greater authority within the hands of its leaders.

If any form of separation is to emerge, then change or emancipation is needed and strategies to achieve this goal rely heavily upon social action. Change can only occur if individuals organise, take action and demand change (Martin, 1993). Kincheloe and McClaren (2005) identify that a critical emancipation view can be problematic when those taking action focus their efforts on enabling individuals to attain an ideal

empowered position. They argue that there is never one ideal condition as issues of power and oppression pervade all socio-political contexts. Given this cautionary stance, our use of the term emancipation recognises that individuals may reach different conclusions in their efforts to battle social forces that shape their social condition and that these conclusions may be imperfect. We are mindful of the problems associated with the term emancipation. However, we have carefully included it in this discussion in order to heighten a key point: future governance efforts should reflect a movement towards greater individual freedom and autonomy for female hockey players within the hockey system. Hence, our view of critical theory couples the notion of emancipation with a tangible change.

In order to ensure that our critique of gender, sport and governance does not fall short, we promote a critical perspective that embraces and endorses action. Critical theory enables scholars to analyse the social experience of individuals and identify a need for change. Always evolving, the critical tradition encompasses many perspectives (Kincheloe and McClaren, 2005). The diversity of views is further compounded by the post-discourses, which contend the issue of democratic egalitarianism should be reassessed. The post-discourses, which have gained prominence within sport studies (Birrell and Cole, 1994; Rail, 1998), enable one to be highly critical of power and social conditions, but it is important to ask: how relevant is this perspective in efforts to actively assault the limiting effect of the hockey system on the advancement of women's and girls' hockey in Canada? Creating alternative female hockey governance structures is a political struggle and understanding issues of power is important; however, our emphasis is that the critical perspective must be grounded in action. A critical feminist perspective works to actively derail the assumptions of the mainstream in terms of men and male practices and institutions being at the centre with women a part of the periphery (Beasley, 2005).

The London Feminist Salon Collective (2004) published a 'viewpoint' piece that raises the question of how to 'do' critical practice while recognising nuances of difference and complexity. In the piece, Becky Francis argues that "post-structuralist approaches have helped recognize and explore nuances of power *but* [emphasis added] strong post-modern views withdraw the tools with which to critically engage/act" (p.27). When exploring the notion of self with agency, the Collective made the following comment:

The notion of feminist communities of practice was revisited ...we considered how movements in theory towards different understandings of the self are not necessarily matched within practice and/or social change... (p.31).

Hence, we are left with a sense that post-discourses are not easily applied since these views generate an awareness but not a method of change.

The literature suggests the critical theory-action bridge is difficult to cross. For example, Kincheloe and McClaren (2005) suggest criticality is ever-evolving because it seeks "new ways to irritate dominant forms of power" (p.306), which unfortunately places it on the academic margins and makes any transfer to practice difficult. Kitschelt (1993) suggests it is important to understand the catalysts of social collective movements and the factors that influence the communication of new claims into the political process that impact policy and governance, but offers little in terms of rational strategies.

The feminist perspective outlined in this section does not call for a rejection of mainstream (male-dominated) hockey. In reality, women's and girls' hockey organisations must connect with the larger male hockey network at some level. The

current full-integration governance approach that dominates within the local, provincial and national levels of hockey in Canada and the limitations for the participation of women and girls that results from such an approach, calls for the recognition of an existing 'problem,' diagnosis of the problem and the experimentation of alternatives (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000). If the democratic institutions established within the Canadian hockey network systematically under-privileged women and girls, and if the governance rules of Hockey Canada are impossible to change, which seems to be the case after 30 years of OWHA efforts, new options must be considered. Grassroots development is a fundamental value of the OWHA. The OWHA is only able to expand and build legitimacy within the larger hockey network through its connection with local women's and girls' hockey associations.

Kitschelt (1993) contends that, in such a situation where a problem is recognised and change is needed, "dissenters can only step outside the established framework of political governance and engage in protest" (p.17). Consequently, we prefer to develop a rational approach where agency is carefully considered and acted on. However, this raises a key question: where and how will the social mobilisation of female hockey enthusiasts occur? In the following section, we turn to the literature on grassroots movements in order to address how to initiate change at the grassroots or community level of the hockey system.

2.2 Grassroots movement

Thoma and Chalip (1996) identify three main levels of policy analysis – national, organisational and individual. National-level analysis examines policy in terms of government goals and objectives. Organisation-level analysis addresses the impact of various organisations involved in formulating and implementing policy. Individual-level analysis considers key participants in policy development – who are involved and what are their goals, interests and influences. Thoma and Chalip (1996) also argue that changes in sport policy can effect changes in sport governance, which implies policy change is driven from the highest or national level, to the lowest or individual level of the sport system.

Thoma and Chalip (1996) suggest that an effective means by which to examine the individual policy level is through stakeholder analysis. They argue that stakeholder analysis enables one to derive strategies to anticipate stakeholder impact on sport governance and as such is proactive. Other policy scholars recognise the need to accommodate community-based views, specifically in terms of how national sport policy is negotiated and enacted at the local level. Green (2004) suggests future research on the nature of active citizenship in public sport provision, particularly in the UK where new planning dictates for elite sport have recently emerged between government agencies and national sport governing bodies.

For this discussion on female hockey governance, a more detailed understanding of grassroots movement is required. Taylor (2003), writing an insightful account of public policy in the community, details the changing fortunes of community by describing three main stages of development. Firstly, in the 1960s, various Western countries created extensive government programs in response to post-war optimism and the rise of the welfare state, which led to greater community empowerment. However, by the 1980s, economic recession advanced a new market mentality of welfare and subordinated state initiatives, including those within communities, to an economic

growth agenda. Recently, however, a third stage has resituated the community in a central, albeit different role. Taylor (2003) explains this recent change as follows:

The marketization of welfare continues, but as the costs of the globalization of the economy become more apparent, and neither government nor the market seem equipped to address the challenges facing society, 'community' has been brought back in from the cold (p.8).

Taylor (2003) identifies various triggers that contribute to refocusing the community – a rapidly increasing demand for welfare, the breakdown of moral cohesion and responsibility, the breakdown of democracy and political legitimacy, increasing uncertainty and the need for sustainable development.

A similar transition has also occurred within the subsector of Canadian amateur sport. Scholars highlight the creation and proliferation of a public amateur sport system where several government programmes in sport and recreation were created in the 1960s and 1970s (Harvey and Proulx, 1988; Macintosh and Whitson, 1990; Macintosh et al., 1987). Research also identifies a shift towards a corporate management model within the amateur sport domain, which coincided with the fiscal crisis of the Canadian welfare state during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Here, dominant ideas such as efficiency and individual enablement were embraced within public sport and recreation policy (Glover and Burton, 1998; Harvey et al., 1995; Stevens, 2000). However, the sport management literature has not addressed the context of Canadian amateur sport in relation to the most recent stage identified by Taylor (2003) – community renewal.

Outside of the Canadian context, recent work by Elling and Claringbould (2005) researched the in/exclusionary mechanisms for sport participation in the Netherlands. They identify the importance of grassroots democracy in efforts to gain greater access of marginalised social groups to sport activities and facilities. The notion of grassroots movement can offer greater insight about overcoming the challenges facing women and girls in hockey. The re-emergence of community relates closely to issues of grassroots democracy and citizen participation. This new approach shifts the focus away from change via federal government and national sport policy to change via municipal government and grassroots sport action.

A community-based approach redefines the citizen as a participant in, rather than a consumer of, social programmes. Taylor (2003) suggests the new welfare market "offers communities the opportunity to take more control over the production of their own services" (p.30). A consumer mentality suggests that if individuals do not like the service they receive, they can exit to another provider. However, as Taylor (2003) points out, the service exit view has been criticised because it oversimplifies the consumer's position, especially when a consumer's ability to exit is constrained by need, buying power or the absence of an alternative provider. Hence, she argues:

... consumerist policies allow power in the selection and use of a service, but they do not allow the public power as citizens over the range of services that are available to them or in determining the rights that people should have to those services. Any analysis of participation needs to consider whether communities are involved only in implementation, however important this may be, or whether they are involved in agenda setting and policy development" (Taylor, 2003, p.119).

Female hockey participants have very little choice over a provider and their authority and control are minimal. Power, control and authority in the Canadian amateur hockey system rests within a national sport governing body, an organisation

within each province/territory and a minor hockey association in each local jurisdiction. Consequently, the options for female hockey participants and leaders are very limited – do not play at all, play within a governance structure that inhibits your opportunity or become your own service provider.

3 Female hockey governance structures in Canada: past and present

Women and girls have been playing hockey in Canada since the late 1880s; however, an organised system with leagues and governing bodies was absent until the 1920s. The Ladies Ontario Hockey Association (LOHA), the first provincial governing body for women's hockey in Canada, was formed in 1922 (Kidd, 1996). Despite efforts to pattern the governing body after the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA), the governing body for the men's game, the women's association was not accepted by the male hockey community. Indeed, in 1923, at a meeting in Port Arthur, Ontario, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association voted unanimously against giving the LOHA official recognition (OHA, 1923). Plagued by a lack of acceptance in the broader hockey community, limited access to resources and inconsistent membership numbers, the LOHA spent the majority of its 19-year existence challenging traditional notions of appropriate feminine sport practices. Ultimately, the governing body was unsuccessful in securing a place for women in Ontario's hockey community and, as a result, by 1941 ceased to exist.

To organise hockey at the national level, the Dominion Women's Amateur Hockey Association was formed in the early 1930s. Its primary purpose was to establish and coordinate the women's Dominion championship series – the first was contested in 1933 (Avery and Stevens, 1997).² However, in 1940, the Dominion Championship was cancelled and the event and the governing body disappeared. Between 1940 and the early 1960s, women continued to play in their communities mostly in exhibition matches and informal games, but there was no formal governance structure as the momentum from the 1920s and 1930s disappeared. The history of women's hockey governance has been tenuous, inconsistent and often contested.

During the past ten years, women's hockey has experienced rapid national and international expansion (Avery and Stevens, 1997). Yet, despite claims that women's hockey has grown significantly, women and girls who wish to play still face many barriers (Etue and Williams, 1996; Stevens, 2000b, 2006a). An organisation that promotes female hockey and works to minimise the participation barriers that women and girls face is the OWHA. Established in the 1970s, the OWHA provides opportunities for women and girls of all abilities to play hockey provincially and leads the way in pushing the boundaries of women's hockey to national and international levels (OWHA, 2006). Promoting itself as “the only organised hockey association in the world of its kind” (OWHA, 2001, p.2), the OWHA continues to promote a unique and specific brand for the female game.

The OWHA has increased opportunities for women and girls in hockey. The OWHA governance structure is based upon an organisational mission that states: “Through a provincially unified, collective voice, the OWHA promotes, provides and develops opportunities for girls and women to play female hockey in Ontario” (OWHA, 2005, p.8). The OWHA's utmost concern is increasing members and attracting teams and leagues to participate under its organisational umbrella. By 2005, it boasted a programme with over 2100 teams and over 35,000 players, from age 3 to 84. During the 2004–2005

season alone, the OWHA membership increased by 130 teams and 1794 players (OWHA, 2005). The OWHA also reaches beyond the support of women's hockey in its provincial jurisdiction. Over the last three decades, it has effectively lobbied for the inclusion of women's hockey in the Ontario Winter Games, the Canada Winter Games, the national championships, the world championships and most prominently the Winter Olympics.

In the 1960s, there was little support for women's sport initiatives from the grassroots women's movement that tended to focus on questions of legal, political and ideological importance. Sport was marginalised as unimportant to the 'real' struggles over sexual equality (Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994). However, by the 1970s, like most areas of social life, sport found a place on the feminist agenda (Hall, 2002). Over the past two decades, feminist activism in sport has been predominantly 'liberal' in description with the primary focus on ensuring women and girls equal access to sport and recreation through systematic structural change. The reasons for this are complex, as Hall (1996) explains:

The structure of amateur sport in many Western countries is highly state-subsidized and not likely to produce individuals with a radical critique willing to bite the hand that feeds them. Most sports have an authoritarian power structure that demands discipline and obedience, and works against political awareness..." (p.89).

This limitation of action is also noted by Lenskyj (1991) who argues that because of "the tightly structured, hierarchical nature of Canadian sport systems, there are limited points of entry for feminist activists" (p.131).

The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS), established in 1981 and initially government funded, is a Canadian advocacy organisation that throughout its 25-year existence has negotiated various feminist visions of sport. In the 1980s, the purported purpose of the organisation was "to advance the position of women by defining, promoting, and supporting a feminist perspective on sport and to improve the status of women in sport" (Hall, 1996). Adopting a decidedly feminist perspective, the organisation focused on four primary activities: advocacy, research, leadership development and communication both within and external to the organisation. Hall (2002) suggests: "The fact that CAAWS was at the same time openly feminist and government-funded was not at all unusual given the politics of the state and the Canadian women's movement of the time" (p.174). During the 1980s, reacting to various human rights challenges, the women in sport agenda in Canada shifted from an 'equality' to an 'equity' focus (Hall, 2002). The result was a strategy that targeted the system as opposed to women and the movement began to have less of an impact. By 1990, CAAWS had abandoned its public feminist position and adopted a more socially-accepted liberal feminist orientation that focused on gender equity and increasing opportunities for women in sport with minimal ties to the larger and often negatively perceived, feminist movement.

In 1986, Sport Canada, the federal government department responsible for amateur sport, established a women's sport policy – a policy that has not been formally revisited or updated since its development 20 years ago. *The Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport* identifies the following goal: 'To attain equality for women in sports' with the purpose of creating "an environment in which no one is forced into a pre-determined role or status because of gender" (Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1986, p.14). Although the policy was a much-needed initiative, there are limitations that impede its effectiveness,

particularly in terms of establishing separate women's sport governance bodies. Firstly, its lack of integration with other Sport Canada and provincial/territorial policies resulted in slow execution and relatively little compliance (Strachan and Tomlinson, 1994). Secondly, the document contains very general goals³ and, as a result, specific action by national and provincial sport organisations is sporadic and inconsistent⁴ (Ponic, 2000). Finally, the poor compliance has been compounded by shifts in the political discourse on women's sport since the early 1990s, such as an ongoing debate on whether equality or equity should be the fundamental goal (Hall, 1996, 2002).

Established in 1975 during the initiatives of the 'second wave' feminist movement, the OWHA voiced the concerns of a specific female identity – female hockey players, and provided opportunities for the development of, what Newman and White (2006) describe as, 'womanspace' within sport. The vision of the organisation's leaders during this period was for the OWHA to equal the OHA in strength and membership – an ambitious goal given the historical mythology of hockey in Canada as the rightful place of boys and men. Feminist goals and values are clearly articulated through the objectives of the organisation. The defined purpose of the OWHA is:

- 1 "To promote the participation of girls and women in all aspects of female hockey"
- 2 "To foster and encourage leadership programs in all areas related to the development of female hockey in Ontario" and
- 3 "To promote hockey as a game played primarily for enjoyment but also fostering sportsmanship and life skills" (OWHA, 2000b, p.2).

Martin (1990) suggests that any one of five criteria can qualify an organisation as feminist, although some organisations will demonstrate several of the following: feminist ideology, feminist values, feminist goals, feminist outcomes and founding circumstances. Feminist values as outlined by Martin (1990, 1993) of personal growth, development and empowerment, coupled with an external action agenda aimed at improving women's status and opportunities both as participants and leaders within the hockey community are clearly articulated within all of the policies of the OWHA. In the following statements, the OWHA expresses its support of an alternative female hockey culture:

It is recognized that female hockey has its own identity....For the game to continue to develop to its maximum value, it is important to allow the differences to continue. There are many lessons to be learned from "male" hockey, but to impose "male" hockey regulations and standards to female hockey is not in the best interests of hockey (OWHA, 1998, p.3).

Female hockey is unique and should be directed by those who work within this side of the game. The OWHA has proven this to be true (OWHA, 2000a, p.2).

Offering a women-centred alternative within a male-dominated hockey community, from its beginnings, the OWHA has endorsed a feminist ideology of separatism.

The OWHA organisational ideology recognises women as oppressed and disadvantaged within the hockey community and endeavours to make change within the existing sport system. The independent separatist position that the OWHA espouses is grounded in a radical feminist women-centred perspective "that recognizes and celebrates differences among women and seriously questions male-dominated and male-defined sport" (Hall, 1996, p.91). The issue of separatism is not new to women's

sport. The separate versus integrated debate that stems back to the 19th century resulted in a model of 'feminine-appropriate' and 'masculine-appropriate' sports – an ideological foundation that has lingered in the 21st century (Hargreaves, 1994). Traditional male sports such as ice hockey tend to be the sites of the most intense struggles and the most forceful forms of separatism. Hargreaves (1994) suggests that these struggles have resulted in a separatist position that advocates female control over women's sport and supports female participation in sports that are associated with conventional images of masculinity such as boxing, wrestling or ice hockey. She suggests that "this form of separatism is not necessarily incompatible with the ideology of equal opportunity – it is seen as a way of balancing the advantages that men have had for so long" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.31).

The legal battle between 12-year-old Justine Blainey and the OHA was perhaps the OWHA's most public endorsement of its commitment to a separatist philosophy. In 1985, Blainey, supported by CAAWS and the Women's Legal and Education Action Fund (LEAF), lobbied the Ontario Human Rights Commission for the right to play on a boys' team in the Metro Toronto Hockey League (MTHL). Opponents to the Blainey case were the OHA, which had jurisdiction over the MTHL and the OWHA, which argued that "allowing Blainey to play on the boys' team would undermine the development of women's hockey in Canada and that numerous opportunities currently existed within the women's program" (Avery and Stevens, 1997). The OWHA executives feared a successful outcome of this case could lead to the end of their league or at the very least drain it of the top female players. In the end, the Blainey case led to the dismantling of a discriminatory clause in the Ontario Human Rights Code that specifically exempted athletic organisations and activities from its sex equality policies (Hall, 1996). While many feminists saw this as a victory for human rights, there were some women, including the executive members of the OWHA, who argued vehemently against Blainey's right to play boys' hockey. Hall (1996) suggests that they supported this position for two reasons:

- 1 "to assure the maintenance of separate-but-equal hockey for girls" and
- 2 "to ensure the legitimacy and recognition of *women's* sport" (p.95).

In the end, this action by the OWHA, had an adverse effect on the progress of women's hockey in Ontario because by 1990, the OWHA was still paying its expenses dedicated to the Blainey case which amounted to approximately \$100,000 (Etue and Williams, 1996)⁵.

The separatist philosophy of the OWHA has been eroded by a lack of authority within the broader provincial and national hockey communities. Hockey Canada, the national governing body for the sport in Canada, is comprised of 13 provincial and territorial branches, of which three come from the province of Ontario due to its large size: The Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF), The Ottawa District Hockey Association (ODHA) and Hockey Northwestern Ontario (HNO).⁶ Despite its provincial mandate, the OWHA has no branch representation in Hockey Canada. The following statements from OWHA documents demonstrate the context in which the association operates within the broader Canadian hockey system:

The OWHA will continue to work very closely with other [male] hockey associations in Ontario and also within the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association. It is very important that our members are given a strong voice and support at the provincial and national levels (OWHA, 1992a, p.9).

We have stabilized the position of the OWHA within the Hockey Canada structure. This was a very long process that was critical to the strength of female hockey in the province of Ontario. The successful resolve was accomplished due to the strength of the OWHA membership. It was completed with the result of the OWHA sharing a respectful and positive relationship with our brother association[s] in Ontario (OWHA, 2004, p.2).

The OHF, the ODHA and HNO designate jurisdiction over female hockey in Ontario to the OWHA. Despite its province-wide role, OWHA representation rests within only one Ontario Branch, the OHF, where it is one of seven members. This voice becomes even weaker at the national level where the OWHA is limited to one seat on the Female Council. The Chair of the Council is only one representative on the 43-member Hockey Canada Board of Directors. Thus, the influence of female hockey leaders, be they from the OWHA or other provinces and territories, is severely limited, as its representation is deeply nested within the larger male-dominated hockey structure.

The lack of recognition of the OWHA as a provincial branch coupled with the weak representation of female hockey within the other 12 provinces/territories, restricts national decision-making authority for female hockey since a great deal of power rests with the 13 Branch Presidents on the Hockey Canada board. The Chair of the Female Council is the only voice for female hockey on the 43-member national Hockey Canada board. Most consequential to the female hockey programme is that all development programme decisions within Hockey Canada, which impact the grassroots level, channel through the 24-member Hockey Development Council. A decision made by the Female Council is not final as Council recommendations are presented, debated and approved at the board level. As a result, the national Female Council is relegated to an advisory role with little control over the female game.

4 Future considerations for female hockey governance in Canada

The first women's world hockey championship, sanctioned by the International Ice Hockey Federation, held in 1990, signalled a new international era in the sport. Since that time, Hockey Canada has moved its programming away from female grassroots hockey development towards female hockey high-performance. Like many other Canadian national sport organisations, Hockey Canada reflects a corporate management model (Stevens, 2006b), which has constrained democratic aims, such as the provision of hockey opportunities for all women and girls. The existence of the OWHA is solidified from its community-based membership as opposed to its role in policy and governance structures within Hockey Canada. Examples of grassroots efforts are evident within OWHA documents that outline community-based strategies and initiatives:

Locally, our teams, associations and leagues throughout Ontario continue to grow and base their operations on very positive values (OWHA, 2000a,b, p.2).

The [OWHA] Development Committee is once again accepting applications for initiatives from associations and/or OWHA teams. The purpose of this grant is to promote the development of female hockey across Ontario... (OWHA, 1996, p.4).

We have revised the manual *How to develop your own Girls' Minor Hockey Association*. With this manual, plus initiative meetings, we respond to the many inquiries we receive about how to get girls' hockey started in a community (OWHA, 1992b, p.9).

I suggest profiling some local minor hockey associations, so we can learn from each other. I'd like to read about the traditions of the large successful [local] programs, and I'd be very interested in the progress of the female hockey programs in the last few years (OWHA, 1991, p.15).

These statements demonstrate the OWHA's recognition of the importance of community associations to expand its separate structure model. The utilisation of a grassroots movement to build the legitimacy of the association and the separate governance structure it purports, can be expanded both within the OWHA's provincial jurisdiction and in other regions of the country.

Given the integration of feminist and grassroots perspectives we proposed earlier in this paper and recognising how the historical success of the OWHA has in large part been based upon the development of local female hockey associations, we propose an approach that highlights the community sport level as the point to initiate changes to female hockey governance. While the majority of governance bodies within the current hockey system are male-dominated, the greatest proportion of female-dominated structures is at the local level. Some governance structures for female and male hockey are separate at the local level, partially linked at the provincial level and integrated at the national level. In order to generate change, one must have the power and authority to formulate a policy from the outset, reformulate a policy after its creation or interpret policy goals in ways that enable effective action during implementation (Taylor, 2003). Since the federal women's sport policy has remained unchanged during the past 20 years, we identify the last of these options – implementation – as an important area to initiate change. Our emphasis is not on the organisational structure of such governing bodies, but rather to propose that these structures, whatever their form, initially develop at the community sport level. By coupling grassroots movement ideals with an action-oriented stance, governance structures that meet the needs of female hockey players may take hold and flourish.

There are various factors that support initiating change at the grassroots sport level. Firstly, strategies mentioned by Thoma and Chalip (1996) may be useful for activating change in female hockey governance. For example, Thoma and Chalip (1996) refer to a build strategy where female hockey supporters recruit other stakeholders, namely high profile social sector leaders and create awareness of and interest in their cause. An alliance strategy presents an effective means by which female hockey supporters could align more closely with other stakeholders in a community, particularly those with greater power. In this case, female hockey leaders could coordinate with local parks and recreation leaders, be they staff or community volunteers, by highlighting shared concerns related to gender equity and youth physical activity.

A second area addresses how public policy domains are accountable to a public governance authority (Burbridge, 2005). In Canada, where amateur sport is strongly embedded within the public sector, a grassroots movement may harness public authority, specifically municipal governments and Parks and Recreation departments therein, as a resource to trigger governance change. For example, female hockey leaders could utilise accountability of public municipal institutions to human rights legislation in order to gain equitable access to facilities and allocation of public funds. The OWHA recommends

local girls' hockey organisers who wish to establish a new local association in their community refer to a handbook titled, *Level the Playing Field* (Sport Ontario, c.1994). The OWHHA encourages groups interested in founding new female hockey associations to draw upon the strategies presented in the document. In particular, the handbook states local level female sport leaders need "to become catalysts for change in the community and resources which level the playing field for women and girls" (p.1) and need "to assist you in bringing change forward at a pace and in specific areas, appropriate and relevant to your community" (p.2).

Ontario is not the only province where women's and girls' hockey leaders face challenges. Concerns regarding new governance models were raised in Quebec where the branch formed a committee to examine the poor state of female hockey in the province. The committee made the following recommendation:

[T]he gap between the number of players in the OWHHA and Hockey Quebec is considerable. However, despite the constraints present in Quebec, it would be possible to adapt the [OWHHA] model to the Quebec reality and to borrow certain methods in order to attract more young girls to the sport (Hockey Quebec, 2001, p.13).

Currently, female hockey governance structures in other regions of the country may or may not resemble the separate structure promoted by the OWHHA. For example, a minor hockey association may govern both girls' and boys' programmes or a distinct female hockey board within the provincial branch may manage the game and direct female hockey programmes for all local minor hockey associations.

A grassroots movement approach to governance is not a perfect solution to the challenges facing female hockey in Canada. Taylor (2005) suggests a participation-governance view as problematic because it has an over-emphasis upon the democratising role of stakeholder participation. This view places a great deal of faith in a democratic pluralist model of politics and does not consider the wider context in which grassroots political struggles exist. We recognise this is also the case when examining governance change in women's sport, particularly because gender and sport are highly contested political terrains. However, the important message we wish to emphasise is rather than target federal and provincial levels of the amateur sport system as initiation points for change, future female hockey governance efforts must capture the opportunities democratic grassroots movements at the local level offer.

We have presented a new viewpoint on the issues of gender, sport and governance that integrates critical feminist and grassroots movement views. This new perspective is buoyed by recent research on gendered non-profit organisations. Meinhard and Foster (2003) examine how women's voluntary organisations respond to changing public policy in Canada. They found these organisations represent a distinct subset of the non-profit sector because they are more critical of policy changes and spend more time engaging in political activity compared to gender-neutral organisations. Foster and Meinhard suggest this is due to a long tradition of women's organisations agitating for their own rights. In other words, action and a need for change are values instilled within and enacted by many women's organisations, including women's hockey organisations.

While much of what we propose is based upon the OWHHA model, it is important to acknowledge that the diverse strategies that may be used to initiate governance change at the grassroots level can result in a variety of organisational structures. Future research is required to examine the organisational characteristics of the governance structures that

exist in areas where community female hockey flourishes. Research within the gender and organisation literature (see e.g. Ferguson, 1984; Martin, 1990; Oerton, 1996) could be used to inform this work, particularly in terms of understanding the ideological and organisational nature of the community-based female hockey entities and how cultural and structural aspects interrelate within these entities. For example, Birrell and Richter (1994) found the women's softball league they researched reflected a feminist sport model with all-female membership, a play-based philosophy and a non-hierarchical authority structure.

In the social sector, research also indicates women's voluntary organisations include different organisational structures and systems. For example, women's organisations in Canada collaborate more than gender-neutral organisations (Foster and Meinhard, 2005a). These organisations also differ in their response to public policy challenges, such as decreases in public funding, by adopting different revenue generating strategies compared to non-gendered organisations (Foster and Meinhard, 2005b). Given how institutional pressures facing many non-profit organisations have been relatively broad in nature (Hall and Banting, 2000), it is fair to conclude that the differences are due to internal as opposed to external factors.

Our approach proposes change that focuses upon attaining separate female hockey governance that provides control and authority over the female game. In this way, female hockey leaders avoid what Grant and Tancred (1992) refer to as 'adjunct control positions' (p.121) where they participate in the management of hockey but have limited say in the development of hockey policies. Halford (1992) states that despite the problematic state and its bureaucratic apparatus, "many feminist goals can only be met by state institutions" (p.159). Thus, our approach also addresses the need to utilise public authority, albeit at the municipal as opposed to the federal government level.

5 Conclusion

In her discussion of women's hockey as a site of struggle, Stevens (2006a) states, "Without a governing association that exclusively serves the development of women's and girls' hockey, resistance or reorientation of the women's hockey model is unlikely" (p.97). A strategy to rejuvenate the female hockey model debate is to examine the gender-sport-governance relationship. Hums and MacLean (2004) argue that governance structures and policies must evolve in order to improve effectiveness. They identify economic survival as a key pressure influencing sport governance in the future. However, the pressure for change in women's hockey is far more fundamental than economics; it involves a social need to improve the power and authority of women's hockey leaders. While the OWHA has successfully expanded participation in female hockey, it cannot claim a similar record in the area of governance. This can also be said for other female sport organisations throughout Canada.

Consequently, this paper renews efforts to place women's sport governance on the agenda. By shifting the focus from participation to governance, it is possible to identify how shortcomings still exist for women and girls in hockey in Canada. We argue that effective change is not simply a matter of increasing female hockey registration numbers. Rather, it relates directly to issues of power and authority over sport, which is intricately connected to governance structures. The most effective strategy to address this concern will arise from a fresh and creative approach that integrates a critical feminist perspective

with a grassroots democratic focus. Over a period of time, women's sport governance research may help inform and may be informed by, governance issues for other marginalised groups in sport and perhaps even for male-dominated hockey associations. We hope future research on the development of women's sport in Canada will take up the challenge of how to initiate change by exploring and debating alternative women's sport governance according to this integrated perspective.

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Notes

- ¹Resources, recognition and leadership are all areas that must be addressed in women's hockey and female sport more broadly. In terms of resources, we are specifically referring to financial resources, administrative personnel and access to facilities and equipment. Girls' and women's hockey receives little recognition in the media (with the occasional exception of international events such as the Olympic Games), in the broader hockey community and within institutions of recognition such as the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, Ontario. Since its inception in 1943, there have been no women inducted into the HHOF as players or builders (Adams and Wamsley, 2005). Similarly, the continuing imbalance between men and women in coaching, administration and officiating in both hockey and sport more broadly suggests that women continue to have limited leadership roles.
- ²The Dominion Women's Amateur Hockey Association (DWAHA) was formed in 1933 to establish regulations for a national Championship series among the top women's teams from across the country. The first Dominion Championship was contested in 1933 with the Edmonton Rustlers defeating the Ontario champions the Preston Rivulettes.
- ³The *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport* is only 27 pages in length. It offers 13 brief policy statements and the proposed implementation activities in the areas of Policy and Programme Development, Sport Stratification, Sport Infrastructure, Leadership Development, High Performance Competition, Participation Development, Resource Allocation, Liaison, Research, Education, Promotion, Advocacy and Monitoring and Evaluation. For example, the Resource Allocation section states: "Greater Efforts will be made to ensure that financial resources are equitably allocated. In cases where inequities are demonstrated, Sport Canada contributions will be conditional on a guarantee from national sport organisations that resources will be more equitably distributed among males and females" (Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1986, p.23). The implementation activities associated with this statement include analysing the allocation of human and financial resources on a sport-specific basis and providing support for the generation of new resources and for the reallocation of present resources where inequalities are demonstrated.
- ⁴In 1994, the Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation published a policy statement on women and girls in sport, *Full and Fair Access for Women and Girls in Sport and Physical Activity*, in response to the 1986 federal government initiative that urged the provinces/territories to address the issue at the provincial and community level. Consistent with the national policy from 1986, this brief eight page document focused on Policy and Programme Development, Sport and Recreation Organisations, Leadership Development, Sport Participation and High Performance Development, Participation at the Community Level, Welcoming and Harassment-Free Environment and Education and General Awareness.
- ⁵Megan Williams conducted interviews with scholar's Nancy Theberge and Helen Lenskyj in 1995 and 1993, respectively. Both scholar's contend that the OWHA and its executive Director Fran Rider does a disservice to female players through the endorsement of a separatist philosophy for female hockey.
- ⁶The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association served as the national governing body for hockey from 1914 until 1994 when it merged with Hockey Canada to form the Canadian Hockey Association. In 2002, the organisation changed its name to Hockey Canada but should not be confused with the original Hockey Canada, which was one of the parent organisations for the merger.