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Women, Men and Sports: Planning for Change

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ABSTRACT

Women, Men and Sports: Planning for Change

L. McLellan

This study addresses gender inequity in college sports and in sports in general. An account of women's history in sport and research literature from the 1960's to the present, indicate that resistance to the male control of sport, have occurred. As well, there have been changes in many areas of sport. However, sport is still very much a male dominated institution.

An exploratory study of female athletes at a private college in Montreal is presented with the intention of discovering whether college sports are as inequitable as sports in general; if the research reflects the situation of female college athletes; and if these athletes have any suggestions for changes. Finally, it is argued that a strategy to generate change at the college level would be to develop a sports feminist course based on critical and feminist pedagogy.

DEDICATION

To Joyce Barakett for all her invaluable help and support both as a teacher and as an advisor; to Judy Leonard for her friendship, listening skills and sense of humor; to Steve Arsenault for his computer expertise and encouragement; and to all the female athletes who have taught me so much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 General Features of the Analysis of Sport.....	2
1.2 Constraints and Limitations.....	6
Chapter Two: Women in Sports: A Theoretical Base.....	9
2.1 A History of Women in Sports.....	10
2.2 Theories and Research.....	15
2.3 Theory of Role Conflict.....	16
2.4 Theory of Sport Masculinizing Female Athletes.....	17
2.5 Theory of Biologism.....	18
2.6 Socialization Theory.....	19
2.7 Feminist Theory.....	20
2.8 Liberal Feminism.....	21
2.9 Radical Feminism.....	22
2.10 Socialist Feminism.....	24
2.11 Attempts to Generate Change.....	25
2.12 Conclusion.....	28
Chapter Three: The Present Situation for Women in Sports.....	30
3.1 Media Representations.....	31
3.2 Where are we now?.....	34
3.3 Feminism, Cultural Studies and Sports.....	35
3.4 Resistance and Transformation.....	41
3.5 Strategies and Sites for Challenge.....	44
3.6 The Role of the Education System.....	48
3.7 Conclusion.....	49
Chapter Four: An Exploratory Case Study.....	51
4.1 Quebec Intercollegiate Statistics.....	52
4.2 The Exploratory Intercollegiate Study.....	56
4.3 Chosen Subjects.....	57
4.4 Procedure.....	57
4.5 Results and Discussion.....	59
4.6 Limitations of this Study.....	66
4.7 Conclusion.....	67
Chapter Five: Final Conclusions: A Plan for Action.....	70
5.1 Critical Pedagogy.....	72
5.2 Feminist Pedagogy.....	73
5.3 Critical Thinking.....	77
5.4 Conclusion.....	79

Bibliography.....	82
Appendix 1: Women, Men and Sports.....	89
Appendix 2: Quebec CEGEPS and Colleges Sports Statistics.....	91

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine whether there is gender inequity in college sports and in sports in general. It is important to look at both areas since the colleges are reflective of our society. This means that a woman's experiences in college sports are similar to those experienced in organized sports elsewhere. I will present and analyze statistics from Quebec colleges which show the male domination of sport, and as well, present an exploratory case study of a college in Montreal. As a female sports administrator working in this male dominated field, I have been working towards making sports gender equitable at my college over the past eight years. I have reached a point where I need to know if I am doing enough, what impact my work has had upon the female athletes at my college and what more needs to be done. I discovered some of these answers through a series of informal interviews that I did with a number of female athletes at my college. I will present their experiences, impressions and thoughts along with their suggestions for change. My intent was to discover if the present literature in Canadian sport¹ and research findings on women and sport would hold with these students. I will also present my rationale for a course on sports feminism based on critical and feminist pedagogy. This course, which will use and build upon previous theories, should present some suggestions on ways of bringing about gender equity in sports. My goal is for my research to have an impact and, as Duquin (1994) states, for it to be "transformative, creating images of what is not yet imaginable" (p. 144).

A feminist perspective will be used to analyze women and sports which

¹ For the most part, this thesis focuses on Canadian research.

have been, and continue to be, male dominated. "Feminist perspectives nullify the notion that anatomy is destiny and offer critical, corrective and transformative approaches for understanding the leisure experiences of women" (Henderson, 1990; p.237). Research in sport using a feminist perspective is relatively new and was first developed in the 1960's. The most recent trend is to focus on the relationship between sport and gender in order to come to an understanding of how ideology and hegemony in sport reflects our everyday gender relations. This study will also analyze feminist theories which focus on how resistance and transformation of gender inequity in sport can occur.

General features of the analysis of sport

The purpose of using a feminist analysis to examine gender inequity in sport is to assist in understanding the constraints of sport and to try and envision possibilities for change. Hall (1990) defines gender as "a set of power relations whereby men, as a social group, have more power over women than women have over them" (p.226). Hall sees these power relations as being socially constructed and as such, they are subject to historical change and can be transformed. This transformation, or social change, can occur through acts of resistance. Birrell and Theberge (1994) define transformation as "a fundamental change in the structure of relations of power and the ideologies that hold these structures in place. Resistance² is the process by which disempowered groups refuse to submit fully to their disempowerment" (p.363). An act can be considered to be resistant when it creates a real change in the structure of power. Birrell and Theberge feel that resistant acts need to be

² See also Weiler (1988), and Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) for their definition of resistance.

conscious, collective, political and public.

The terms sex and gender have often been used interchangeably in research. I use the term sex to refer to "the biological distinction between males and females" (Henderson, 1990; p.229). Gender is defined as "the cultural definitions of what appropriate male and female behaviour involves" (Henderson. p.229).

It is also important to differentiate between equality and equity. Equality in sports means "equality of opportunity... providing women with equal access" (Hall , 1996; p.90). In sports "equity seeks to provide girls and women with the same opportunities and resources as boys and men and to remove the barriers and constraints to their participation" (Hall, 1996; p.91). Gender equity in sports would mean the elimination of "discriminatory practices that prevent the full participation of either gender. Opportunities, resources and power become equally accessible to all" (Larkin & Baxter, 1995; p.4). To put it simply "Equality focuses on creating the same starting line for everyone. Equity has the goal of providing everyone with the same finish line" (Kidd, 1995, as cited in Larkin & Baxter; p.4).

Underlying the problem of equality and gender equity in sport is a belief system or ideology. I use the concept of ideology as it is defined by Marx. Marx defines ideology as a belief system, held by a group or a society, that justifies the position of dominant groups (Persell, 1977; p.9). These beliefs are usually based upon selective interpretations of the past and are generally grounded in commonsense assumptions. I define hegemony using Aronowitz and Giroux's (1993) definition of Gramsci's use of the term. "First, it refers to a process of domination whereby a ruling class exercises control through its intellectual and moral leadership over allied classes. Second, hegemony refers to the dual use

of force and ideology to reproduce societal relations between dominant classes and subordinate groups" (p.83). Hegemony is not static. The dominant groups must always be reaffirming and renegotiating power due to challenges from subordinate groups. Sport is male dominated and male hegemony can be clearly seen here. Many aspects of sport have become ingrained into our commonsense assumptions. For example, the male domination of sport is supposed to be proof that men are naturally superior to women. What needs to be noted is that success in sport is based on male standards such as strength, speed and power.

Male domination of sport can be seen in many ways. At present, at the college level, there are more sports organized for men than for women. Men also dominate in the administration, organization and coaching of sport. In Quebec CEGEPS, fewer than 15% of athletic departments are headed by women. At the Federation Quebecoise du Sport Etudiant, which is the overseeing body for University, CEGEP and high school sports, there are no women at the administrative level. Also, as Theberge & Cronk (1986) have noted, the media coverage of sports is also male dominated. Most sports reporters and journalists are male and most of the sports reported on are male sports. When female sports and female athletes are covered, their actions are often trivialized and denigrated. For example, reports on female athletes generally refer to their physical appearance and to their marital and family status.

The question has often been posed as to why women would want to be involved in the male preserve of sport. Hall (1990) sees the sports world as holding many non feminist values such as an overemphasis on competition and the seeming encouragement of aggression and violence. There may be a few

answers to this. At its most basic level, sports participation can be both physically and personally empowering for women. At its broadest level, women's participation can challenge male dominance in sport and perhaps ultimately in other areas of society as well. "A strong female presence undermines the assumed masculinity of athletic skill and disrupts the notion that sports "belong" to men" (Cahn, 1994; p.261).

There are a number of feminist theories as to how change can be brought about. The works of Bryson (1990), Miner (1993), Birrell and Theberge (1994), Hargreaves (1994) and Hall (1996) pose various theories. I plan to build upon these existing theories and add suggestions as to how resistance and transformation can occur in practical ways at the College level. I will discuss my experiences as a feminist working for change within a male dominated system. I will also discuss the experiences and suggestions of a number of female athletes who are playing, or who have played intercollegiate sports at the college where I work. I believe that it is women like myself, and the athletes, who can bring about change. Based upon these interviews, I will present a college level course on sports and women which will focus on resistance and transformation. I strongly feel that we need to have more than academic theory; we need to develop sports feminism, which should critique, correct and transform sports. Hargreaves (1994) uses the term sports feminists to describe "men and women who want discrimination in sport on account of gender to be eradicated" (p.26). According to Hargreaves, "sports feminism is not a unified movement or idea, nor can its different forms easily be characterized as cultural, liberal, orthodox Marxist, radical, or socialist" (p.26). She is the only theorist that I have come across who uses this term and I feel that it aptly describes the work that I am trying to do.

Before presenting my suggestions for change, I will first, in Chapter two, look at the history of women's sports, and the myriad of theories from the 1960's onward which attempted to discover the impact of sports upon women, both physically and psychologically. This is important to do because as Hall (1996) notes

We cannot fully explain the role of sport in the construction and persistence of unequal social relations today unless we understand the specific forms of these relations in the past and how they evolved over time (p. 39).

I also briefly describe the impact of liberal, radical and socialist feminism on sports. In chapter three, I look at the present situation of women in sports through an analysis of how women in sports are represented in the media and of how feminist cultural studies are beginning to focus some attention on sports. As well, I review some examples of resistance and transformation in sport, different strategies and sites for challenge, and the role of the education system. This leads to an analysis of the present situation of college sports in Quebec in Chapter four, which focuses on the number of male versus female administrators and coaches and the number of male versus female sports. A presentation and discussion of the findings of an exploratory case study done with female athletes at a Quebec CEGEP is then presented. This was a small study which only involved 12 students and as such, the findings are not necessarily representative of all CEGEP students. In Chapter five, I suggest one method of transforming sport; by developing a course building upon critical and feminist pedagogy.

Constraints and limitations

Although I look at many different areas of women and sports, I only

propose changes at the CEGEP level. Can I really hope to create any kind of change in the education system and in the sports world at large coming from such a small portion of society? As Hall (1996) notes, "Sport itself has been stubbornly resistant to feminism and it remains a highly conservative institution" (p.79). I may not have much of an impact on a grand scale but I believe that small changes such as simply making people more aware of how inequitable the present CEGEP sports system is, and how it is reflective of sports in general in our society, then we can look towards making change.

One of the main problems in the CEGEP system, as in all education systems throughout Quebec, is funding. With all the budget cuts occurring sometimes the first thing that happens is that student activities are reduced. There are a few CEGEPS that have been able to maintain, and even increase their sports program offerings, but on the whole most have had to cut. It may be difficult to convince CEGEPS that they need to put more time, effort, money and in some cases, more thought into women's sports, when they feel that they have a hard enough time maintaining the sports that they do have. While I realize that many schools are facing serious cuts, I am convinced that change can and needs to occur, and that the CEGEP system is a good starting point. I not only want to make men more aware of the importance of sports for women, but many women need to realize this as well. As Nelson (1994) points out:

Women often ignore women's sports, not taking seriously their daughter's or even their own athletic passions, not noticing the link between physical strength and personal power or between female team bonding and female political clout (p.8).

I feel that this statement comes very close to explaining why I feel that sports are important for women. By increasing women's involvement in sport at all levels,

meaning participation, coaching and administration, then this can help to “alter the balance of power between the sexes” (Nelson, p.31).

CHAPTER TWO
WOMEN IN SPORTS: A THEORETICAL BASE

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WOMEN IN SPORTS: A THEORETICAL BASE

Before presenting an analysis of women in sports today, it is important to look at the history of women's sports. This history provides the basis for our understanding of sports as it presently exists. By looking back 100 years, we can clearly see how men have dominated and continue to dominate sports. Throughout the history of women's sports we can see themes of continuity, change and the empowerment of women (Hargreaves, 1994). There are many examples of how women's entry into sport have challenged hegemonic ideology, but there has always been resistance to these challenges. As Hargreaves suggests, "The process of change in women's sports has never been straightforward but associated with unevenness and struggle, challenge and resistance" (p.116). Through a historical analysis we can begin to understand and discover how to change the structural forces that have and continue to discriminate against women's full and equitable participation in sports.

There was little theory involved in the study of women's involvement in sport before the 1960's. From the 1960's until the 1980's, many theories were developed ranging from role conflict to the 'masculinizing' effects of sports. Most of these theories no longer exist. However, they have had an impact since there are a number of ideologies underlying these theories about women in sport which continue to permeate our society. My intent is to briefly discuss these various theories, not to provide a detailed analysis.

A history of women in sports

Lenskyj (1986) did a very thorough analysis of women's experience in sport from the late nineteenth century through until the 1980's. Lenskyj states that it is important to understand women's history in sport so we can see the ways in which sport has been and continues to be used to exert control over women. According to Lenskyj, the medical profession played a dominant role in deciding which sporting activities were safe for women at the turn of the century. At this time, medical doctors dictated that women's bodies were only suited for mild activities since their primary purpose was to save themselves for childbirth. Interestingly enough, domestic work was one of the activities that was considered to be suitable. Vitalist theories were popular in the late nineteenth century. These theories purported that the body only held a certain amount of energy and therefore should be preserved and only used for important activities.

"Doctors felt that women had a moral duty to preserve their vital energy for childbearing and to cultivate personality traits suited to the wife and mother role. Sport wasted vital force, strained female bodies and fostered traits unbecoming to true womanhood" (Lenskyj, 1986; p.18).

As Lenskyj states, women were considered to be frail, and it was expected that if they were to expend their energy in any sort of strenuous activities, then they would be compromising their reproductive system. Vertinsky (1994) found that the medical profession was most concerned with adolescent females. As it was believed that a great amount of energy was used in physical development, and since girls developed faster than boys, then they were using up their energy more quickly. Vertinsky states that the onset of menstruation was considered to be the time when young girls had to reduce their physical

activities. Also, because some doctors accepted the vitalist theories, Lenskyj (1986) discovered that another widely held belief was that physical activity could cause uterine displacement which they felt was the cause of sterility. Lenskyj notes that the doctors did not feel that heavy physical labor, which was often a part of domestic work at the time, would cause any uterine problems.

Lenskyj found that these beliefs were slow to change even though more women were becoming involved in sports and that the health benefits were beginning to be recognized. It would seem that some women were choosing to disregard the advice of the medical profession. Lenskyj discovered a number of research reports from Germany and Britain which stated that participating in sports had little or no effect on a woman's menstruation or that it could lead to difficulties in giving birth.

Attitudes began to change somewhat by the time of the First World War. As more women began to enter the work force, Lenskyj believes that this caused some changes in the social relations between men and women. From the early 1920's to the mid 1930's, more women than ever before were participating in sports. According to Keyes (1989), the suffrage movement, "which raised women's interest in their rights, education and health" (p. 235) may have helped to increase participation. This era has been dubbed "The Golden Age of sports activity for Canadian Women" (Cochrane et al., 1977; p.35). According to Lenskyj (1986) the inroads that women were making into the world of sports were posing a challenge to the male domination of sports. Cochrane et al. also note that "The types of sports played were diverse, and there was, if anything, more tolerance of a rough, aggressive body-contact style of play than there is today" (p. 35). Some of the more popular sports included basketball, tennis, track and field, marathon swimming and speed skating. The

female athletes of this time also attracted a fair bit of media coverage both in the newspapers and on the radio. Cochrane et al. report that there were some radio stations that provided live coverage of women's basketball games. This certainly seems to be in contrast with media coverage today.

It is interesting to note that the sports that women were participating in at this time were run almost exclusively by women. Cochrane et al. (1977) feel that this may be due to the fact that there were very few 'open doors' for them in the world of male sports, so, "If they wanted to play, they had to start their own clubs, leagues and federations" (p. 39). Some of these organizations advocated separate programs in order to create a different philosophy from that of men's sports. Lenskyj (1986) notes that that these women "represented, in part, an attempt to avoid the competitiveness, commercialization and elitism seen to be inseparable from the male competitive model" (1986; p.69). Hall and Richardson (1982) believe that these women accepted the belief of that time that competitive sports were harmful to women and, since they could never be as good as men, why bother (p. 35). They advocated cooperative type games rather than competitive. These actions are similar to what some radical feminists³ are advocating for today.

Women's opportunities for participating in sports were increasing in a number of areas such as high schools and universities, as well as in Olympic competition. It was a long hard road to gaining acceptance for women into the Olympics especially when the beliefs of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics were well known. His feeling was that "women's sport was against the "Laws of Nature" and therefore reserved the modern games for men" (Keyes, 1989; p.234). De Coubertin also stated that "The Olympics

³ see page 21 for an explanation of radical feminism.

represented the solemn periodic manifestation of male sports based on internationalism, on loyalty as a means, on arts as a background and on the applause of women as a recompense" (Cochrane et al., 1977; p. 41).

Hargreaves (1994) tells us that it was a Frenchwoman named Alice Milliatt who in 1917 founded a women's sports organization, and then through it made the demand to allow women into the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to allow swimming and tennis, but would not allow any track and field. According to Hargreaves, a group called the Federation Sportive Feminine International was created in 1921. They organized the Women's World Games which took place every four years from 1922 to 1936. This certainly helped to put pressure on the IOC who finally opened up more sports events for women. Hargreaves notes that women's events were increased the year after de Coubertin retired as president of the IOC.

Canada's women athletes first participated in the Olympic Games in the winter of 1924 and their first summer games were in 1928 in Amsterdam where the women's track and field team won two gold, one silver and one bronze medal. It is interesting to note that while these Olympics were going on, a number of Canadian doctors were at a conference where they were discussing the future for women in the Olympics based upon whether sports were suitable for women and whether women were suitable for sports.

Sadly, the "Golden Age" did not last. Although the attitudes towards women in sport were fairly liberal in the 1920's, a return to conservative values occurred in the 1930's. Cochrane et al. (1977) explain that this was likely due to the Depression and the feeling that "bad times can lead to a resurgence of conservative ideas" (p.49). According to Keyes (1989) and Cochrane et al. (1977) there was pressure on women to give up their jobs in the work force and

to return to their roles as housewives and mothers.

There were a number of other factors which led to the decrease of participation and of interest in women's sports. Men's professional sports were becoming more popular and were being heavily promoted. As Cochrane et al state, it was felt that they were more "commercially viable" than women's sports (p. 51). The public and the media turned their attention from women's sports to men's. As a consequence, many of the women run sports organizations disbanded.

It was during the 1930's that debates began to arise about the suitability of sports for women and the damage it could do to their 'femininity'. Cochrane et al. (1977) cite the visit of a Dr. Williams who was invited by the Quebec Physical Education Society to give a paper on women and sport. "Williams stated that women are biologically unfit for athletics and proceeded to draw special attention to the dangers of child bearing for female athletes" (p.42). According to Lenskyj (1986) being a good athlete was equated either with being 'too masculine' or with being a lesbian. Cochrane et al. (1977) and Lenskyj (1986) both cite articles written at the time by male journalists who tried to counter these beliefs. They describe female athletes who they felt were certainly still very feminine as they were very 'ladylike' during their sporting activities and they were all very interested in clothes, and the latest hairstyles.

The female athletes of the 1930s and 1940s escaped public criticism for their unconventional preoccupation with sport only when they paid the prerequisite attention to the feminine image. Success in sport was assumed to be incompatible with femininity or heterosexuality. In a society where conformity to the heterosexual norm was rewarded with visible power and privilege, the barriers to sportswomen were formidable (Lenskyj, 1986; p. 83).

According to Cochrane et al. (1977) it was during this time that sports

began to be categorized as to their suitability for female athletes. Golf, tennis, diving and figure skating were seen as feminine and thus acceptable for women to participate in. Sports such as track and field, ice hockey, marathon swimming and baseball were seen as masculine and thus not acceptable for women. As Hall and Richardson (1982) state, as long as women participated in the 'right' sports then they were not criticized or ridiculed as being 'too masculine'.

The 1950's saw the U.S.S.R. participating in the Olympics for the first time. Their women athletes were extremely successful and as such were seen as being definitely 'unfeminine'. American journalists were very unflattering in their portrayal of these athletes and cast aspersions on their sexuality. They were seen as not being real women because they didn't fit in with the Western stereotype of what a woman should look like. This is certainly one of the rationales behind the implementation of the sex test.

According to Lenskyj (1986) participation in women's events in the Olympics was contingent upon the possession of a medical certificate from the athlete's country. By the late 60's, female athletes were required to submit to a chromosomal test in order to prove that they were women. The premise behind these tests was to aim to keep the competition 'fair' in that it would be only women competing against women. Lenskyj sees it another way in that "there is the inherent suggestion that athletic achievement is not a characteristic of "real women", therefore the sexual identity of successful female athletes is automatically suspect" (p.87).

Theories and research

According to Hall (1981) there was little theoretical research done on women and sports previous to the mid 60's. The increase in research, Hall

asserts, can likely be linked to the increased numbers of female educators entering graduate programs. Theberge and Birrell (1994) state that "with few exceptions the exclusion of women from sport and the ideology of female frailty existed without formal recognition until the mid 1960's (p. 323). E. Metheny (as cited in Gill, 1994; p.270) was one of the first researchers who looked at gender stereotypes in sport. Gill notes that Metheny's analysis, which was done in 1965, would appear to still be relevant in the 1990's. Metheny looked at sports that were and were not acceptable for women. The different categories were listed as being either not appropriate, may be appropriate and wholly appropriate. What follows are some of Metheny's principles. It is interesting to note that she included the social classes in her analysis.

It is *not appropriate* for women to engage in contests in which: the resistance of the *opponent* is overcome by bodily contact, and the resistance of a *heavy object* is overcome by direct application of bodily force.

It *may be appropriate* for women identified in the lower levels of socioeconomic status to engage in contests which: the resistance of an *object of moderate weight* is overcome by direct application of force.

It is *wholly appropriate* for women identified with the more favored levels of socioeconomic status to engage in contests in which: the resistance of a *light object* is overcome with a *light implement*. (Gill, 1994; p. 271).

The theory of role conflict

Theberge and Birrell (1994) state that the 1970's was when researchers began to seriously "analyze the condition of women in sport" (p.324). The most popular research of that time addressed the issue of role conflict. Hall (1981) stated that role conflict meant that female athletes supposedly felt a conflict between their role as a woman and their role as an athlete and, to some researchers this was why more women than men abandon competitive sport at

an earlier age (p. 13). The general feeling was that role conflict must be very stressful for the female athlete, especially for those competing in 'masculine' sports. According to Lenskyj (1986) researchers at the time were more interested in measuring self perception and discovering the attitudes of their peers rather than looking at issues that concerned women athletes more; that is, equal access to programs, facilities and funding (p.96).

Theberge and Birrell (1994) cite another popular theory from the 1970's known as research on the apologetic. Researchers felt that some female athletes were able to deal with role conflict by emphasizing their feminine side, meaning that they wore makeup and jewelry and talked about their boyfriends (p.324).

Theory of sport masculinizing female athletes

Another prevalent research topic from the 1970's was the attempt to discover whether sports had a 'masculinizing' effect on females. This type of research, according to Hall (1981) tended to use three scales on its questionnaires. These scales were labeled masculinity, femininity and masculinity-femininity or androgynous. The researchers identified a number of personality traits such as aggressive, shy, and competitive and placed these under one of the three scales. Hall states that the traits, or sex stereotypes as she prefers to label them, were chosen based on the choices of American college students who felt them to be characteristic of their perceptions of the ideal man or women (p.30).

Researchers made use of a number of different instruments in their studies. According to Hall, the most common ones were the Helmreich and Spence Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), and the Bem Sex-Role

Inventory. These instruments were used on female athletes and non-athletes. The results showed that sport did not masculinize the female athlete but it stated that the female athlete held both female and male traits. Hall questions what the research really means. Are the researchers saying that sport 'androgynizes' the female athlete? "In sum, we could say that the female athlete is no longer masculine and unhappy; today, she is androgynous and contented. It seems that we have merely replaced one stereotype for another" (p. 22).

Hall argued against this type of research because she felt that it was "perpetuating rather than correcting the stereotypes associated with female athleticism" (p.36). Fortunately, this type of research is no longer popular, although it did continue into the 1980's. Theberge and Birrell (1994) were critical of this research because they felt that it only offered psychological explanations rather than social ones. The assumption was that women were the problem as they just didn't fit into sport. "These approaches do not question the organization of sport, nor do they see sport as an institution that is produced through human agency and thus subject to social change" (p. 325).

Theory of biologism

Much of the research up to this point has shown that the ideology of women's biological inferiority was very much in existence. This ideology, according to Guthrie and Castelnovo (1994), has been used as a rationale to restrict women from full participation in sports. They cite the following examples of some of these ideologies: "Women's bodies are weaker and more vulnerable to injury. Their bodies are not suited for physical contact and those who participate in such sports are not "real" women" (p.308).

Much of the work of Hargreaves (1994) has been to counter the belief that

the differences between men and women are due to biology and not to cultural influences. The ideology of biologism "which explains social and cultural differences between men and women according to scientific criteria" (p.146) helps to condone sexual stereotyping. The belief that men are more aggressive and competitive than women is an example of biologism and is one of the ideologies that Hargreaves challenges. "Differences between the sexes can be explained as a result of social and cultural experiences - part of a process which starts at birth" (p.147). As Lenskyj (1986) states, it has certainly been to the benefit of men to stress biological differences and to minimize or ignore the similarities between the sexes.

Socialization theory

Theberge and Birrell (1994) point to the late 1970's as the time when the social and cultural conditions behind women's experiences in sport were beginning to be acknowledged. There were two popular research topics at the time. One which focused on socialization into sport and the second which was socialization through sport. Hargreaves (1994) states that the concept of socialization is used to explain how men and women acquire their gender identities.

It is argued that the family is the primary agency of socialization - a place where, from infancy, boys and girls internalize particular ways of behaving which correspond to social expectations for their sex and influence their future involvement in and attitudes to sport (Hargreaves, 1994; p.147).

Socialization into sport, according to Theberge (1985), was an attempt to discover what influence a person's significant others had upon learned sports behaviour. Significant others could include family members, teachers, peers

and community members (coaches). Theberge was extremely critical of this type of research in that she felt there was an assumption that one became socialized into sport by simply taking on a role rather than by creating one. Significant others were seen as having equal influence upon a person. The main failure of this research, as Theberge states, is that it "often fails to uncover the political and social factors that define and constrain women's sporting practice" (p.199).

Theberge is also critical of the research on socialization through sport. The aim of this research was to ascertain how participation in sports leads to the development of certain characteristics and the adoption of nonsport roles. Theberge assumes that this research was an attempt to discover, among other things, whether sport helps to build 'character'. This type of research failed to provide any real evidence of sports participation causing any socialization effects (p.199).

Sport is *not* critical to socialization in the sense that participation in sport is necessary or sufficient for the learning of gendered social roles by individual men and women. It is important, however, as one among many mutually reinforcing forms of cultural production that gives meaning to and reinforces gender inequality and male domination (Theberge, 1985; p. 200).

Theberge and Birrell (1994) state that much of this research on socialization into and through sport was mostly focused on boys and men, although some researchers did look at girls and women.

Feminist theory

Theberge and Birrell (1994) found that research during this time reflected an awareness of the politics of gender in sport and the desire to develop a new

approach towards analyzing women's experiences in sport. Theberge and Birrell credit Boutilier and SanGiovanni with creating the dominant assumptions of this new approach "which provided the first feminist and sociological analysis of the relations between women, sport and other social institutions" (p.325-326). The following observations and assumptions of Boutilier and SanGiovanni marked the beginning of the use of feminist theory in research on women and sport.

- Sport is a patriarchal institution⁴
- Sexist ideology pervades sport⁵
- If women change, men and sport don't have to
- There is a liberal bias in the study of women and sport⁶
- Sport sociology is dominated by sexist research⁷
- Women are not men (Theberge and Birrell, 1994; p.326).

Theberge and Birrell state that much of the research during this period was grounded in assumptions of liberal and radical feminism.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism, according to Costa and Guthrie (1994), is the major feminist paradigm in the United States. It is grounded in the belief that the root of women's oppression is caused by the fact that men and women have different rights, responsibilities and opportunities. The assumption is that cultural influences have prevented women from reaching their full potential and what is needed is equal opportunities for both. Liberal feminists seek to obtain these opportunities through social policy.

Liberal sports feminism seeks to redress inequalities in sport and to

⁴ See page 22.

⁵ See Chapter three, Media Representations.

⁶ See page 22, Liberal Feminism.

⁷ See Chapter two, pp. 15-20.

provide girls and women with the same resources and opportunities that boys and men have. Hargreaves (1994) and Hall (1996) are both critical of liberal feminism because equality means a quantitative rather than a qualitative change, and also because equal opportunity ignores the male nature of sport which emphasizes competition and aggression. Hall also notes that liberal feminism assumes that all women are the same and ignores the aspects of class, race and sexual preference. Hargreaves does admit that some of their strategies have been successful and that "they may pave the way for more radical changes in the future" (p.29).

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism, which was a movement that began in the late 60's, holds the belief, according to Costa and Guthrie (1994) "that all forms of oppression are rooted in women's oppression" (p.242). Patriarchy is viewed as the primary form of domination.

What oppresses women is not what oppresses men but is rather a special form of life called patriarchy through which men appropriate all superior social roles and keeps women in subordinate and exploited positions. Only the elimination of patriarchy and the destruction of male control will liberate women" (Elliott and Mandell, 1995; p.14).

Radical feminists state that men's domination of women is the most basic form of oppression and as such they place women's subordination at the center of their analysis. This is quite different from liberal feminists who, as Costa and Guthrie (1994) state, work from within a patriarchal model and place legal, educational and economic reform at the center of their analysis. One similarity to liberal feminism is the assumption that all women's experiences are the same. In other words, all women are equally oppressed by patriarchy.

Within radical feminism there are a number of different beliefs and values, one being the concept of separatism. This holds that separating from men and creating 'women-only' spaces is one way to challenge patriarchy. As Hall (1996) states "radical feminists have worked towards establishing women only clubs and leagues that are free to modify the rules and organize their play along explicitly feminist principles" (p.91). Hargreaves (1994) is critical of this theory as it implies that it is only women who can bring about changes that benefit women. How can we expect social transformation to occur if it is only the women who are working for change?

Since men are the primary agents maintaining and supporting sexism and sexist oppression, they can only be successfully eradicated if men are compelled to assume responsibility for transforming their consciousness and the consciousness of society as a whole (bell hooks, as cited in Hargreaves, 1994; p.33).

Costa and Guthrie (1994) discuss another radical feminist belief which holds that patriarchal ideology defines women in terms of their bodies. They are sex objects, and they are mothers. When women attempt to challenge this ideology, their efforts are often devalued. Costa and Guthrie cite as an example the long held myth that successful female athletes are not 'real' women or are thought to be lesbians.

According to Hall (1996) radical feminists have focused some of their energy on issues such as sexual harassment and male violence against women, issues often ignored by liberal feminists. They have shown society how these issues are linked to women's oppression.

Elliot and Mandell (1995) are also critical of some aspects of radical feminism. They claim that "radical feminists fall into the trap of essentialism, the conviction that men are men and women are women and that there is no way to

change either's nature. Women are trapped inside their bodies and biology becomes their destiny" (p. 17). If this is so, then as Elliot and Mandell claim, they are simply helping to promote the stereotypes that they are supposedly attempting to change.

Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism was developed in the 1970's as an attempt to take the best of radical feminism and Marxist theory. Marxist feminists feel that women's oppression will only end when the social class system is abolished. As Costa and Guthrie (1994) state, Marxists see class, and not gender as being their main concern. Socialist feminism sees both class and sexual oppression as their concerns and seek to abolish both. Their goal is to reconstruct society.

Costa and Guthrie feel that "sport is a perplexing realm for socialist feminists to conceptualize" (p.247). Sport is both hierarchical and male dominated and in order to change this a new type of sport would have to be developed. Costa and Guthrie speculate as to what this new sport would be like. If funding, training and facilities were divided equally amongst everyone, then elite sport competition would likely cease to exist. Also, socialist feminists would likely recommend the establishment of 'women-only' clubs, much like some radical feminists. From the research, it would seem as though socialist feminists have not yet turned their attention to sport.

Of the three types of feminism, it would appear that thus far, it is liberal feminists who are responsible for much of the changes in women's sport, although, as Costa and Guthrie point out, they have only reformed the system, not transformed it. However, it is important to look at the changes that liberal feminists made in the late 1970's through into the 1980's in the U.S.A and in

Canada.

Attempts to generate change

The late 1970's and early 1980's was a time of change regarding research into women and sport. Theberge and Birrell (1994) believe that some of this change was due to the effects of Title IX which came into effect in the U.S.A. in 1972. This provision, which was part of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, "prohibited sex discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funds" (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994; p.101). Although Title IX was not directed specifically at school sport programs, this is where it had the most effect. Title IX was enacted by the U.S. government due to pressure from liberal feminist who wanted an end to sex discrimination. Although the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom prohibits discrimination based on sex it does not seem to have affected sports at educational institutions here as much as it has in the U.S.A. In 1989 Madame Justice Wilson of the Supreme Court of Canada defined discrimination as:

a distinction, whether intentional or not ... which has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations or disadvantage on such individuals or groups not imposed upon others, or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other members of society (Corbet, R. & Finaly, H, 1994; p.6).

Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1994) recognize that while there were some positive effects of Title IX, there were some negative ones as well. On the positive side, there was growth in women's sport programs, sports and use of facilities were expanded, participation levels and finances increased. On the negative side, Title IX did nothing towards changing the structure of sport.

Women's alienation from sport, their indifference to it, and their reluctance to enter it stem in large measure from the

fact that, as it has existed historically, what sport celebrated, what sport offered, what sport demanded, what sport rewarded do not reflect much of women's experience of the world (Boutilier and SanGiovanni. p.107).

Lenskyj (1986) noted that there was a loophole in Title IX which stated that those sports considered to be contact sports were allowed to remain men only. This meant that institutions were not required to provide boxing or wrestling programs for women. According to Lenskyj, this reflects the 'cultural taboo' against women fighting which she finds regrettable as women are provided with few opportunities to learn how to fight and therefore defend themselves against assault (p. 115).

Hall (1996) explains why the changes in Canadian sport have been mostly 'liberal' actions. Much of the attention thus far has been on efforts to obtain equal⁸ access for girls and women with regards to sport opportunities. This is likely due to the fact that since amateur sport is generally government funded there is little encouragement for radical critiques (p.89). Liberal activists have instead lobbied governments through various means to adopt policies to eliminate discrimination in sport. One example of this, is the publication "Fair Ball: Towards Sex Equality in Sport" which was published by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In this book, the authors discuss ways of removing the institutional and legal barriers which prevent women's equal access to sport. It is interesting to note that although the authors don't consider themselves to be liberal feminists, (they label it reformist), most of their suggestions are liberal in nature.

In their book, Hall and Richardson (1982) examine a number of cases of sex discrimination and how they were dealt with under Canadian human rights

⁸ Liberal feminists now use the term "equity". See page 46.

legislation. Most of the cases involved young girls wishing to play on all boys teams. These cases came from many different provinces and as such, the results were not the same. Some girls were allowed to play while some were not. Hall and Richardson made the suggestion that the government body that funds provincial sports organizations should invoke the Human Rights Act against any state funded group that practiced sex discrimination. Section 19 of the Human Rights Act states that:

The Governor - in Council may make regulations respecting the terms and conditions to be included in or applicable to any contract, license or grant made or granted by Her Majesty in right of Canada providing for

- (a) the prohibition of discriminatory practices described in sections 5 to 13 and
- (b) the resolution ... of the complaints of discriminatory practices contrary to such terms and conditions (as cited in Hall and Richardson, 1982; p.27).

Although Hall and Richardson admit that legal reforms alone do not guarantee equality, it is one place to start.

As part of their research, Hall and Richardson tried to discover whether equality existed for Canadian women in sport. They looked at a number of areas such as participation levels (recreation and competitive) and leadership (coaches, executives and administrators). Although they felt that there had been progress as they discovered increased levels of participation among girls and women since the early 70's, they did feel that women were under-represented in leadership positions. The increased participation is likely due to the work of liberal feminists attempts to remove barriers to sex equality.

Hall and Richardson suggest a combination of liberal (reform) and radical strategies in the quest for equality.

It is necessary at times to advocate reform and assimilation and at other times to press for radically alternative structures,

because perhaps then the reformists and radicals will continue talking to and working with each other. It is vitally important, if significant change is to be brought about, to address each problem from both perspectives (p.102).

Hall (1996) feels that gender equity programs have not been as successful as hoped for because while many sports organizations have made increases in the number of women in their programs, the structure remains the same. "...women's experience, behaviour, personality or values in sport are seen as deficient, and women are asked, time and time again to change and fit into male-defined, male dominated systems" (p.79).

CONCLUSION

There have certainly been significant changes for women in sport since the late 1890's. However, there are still many more problems to be addressed. Sport has always been, and continues to be, dominated by men. Liberal feminist efforts have brought about equality in some aspects, but have not really challenged male control. As Lenskyj (1986) states "woman's place in sport does not differ significantly from her place in the family, the school, the workplace or the political system, for all of these institutions play a part in shaping sport" (p. 144).

This does not mean that change cannot occur in sport. The potential exists as it does in all other institutions. This chapter has looked at the history of women in sports from the late 1890's until the late 1980's. In the late nineteenth century, it was the medical profession which dictated which sports were appropriate for women. This influence was seen up until the time when women began to enter the work force. Working outside the home caused women to become more independent and they began to choose for themselves

which sports were appropriate for them. Women made a number of inroads into the male dominated institution of sport through the 1920's and early 1930's. Unfortunately, these changes didn't last and the 1930's and 1940's saw a return to the debates about the physical and psychological effects of sport on women. It was felt that certain sports could cause women to experience role conflict while others could make them become more masculine. These theories soon changed when feminists, specifically liberal and radical feminists, turned their attention to women and sports. The changes thus far have been well documented but much remains to be done as women are still dominated by men in the world of sports. Men outnumber women at the administrative and the coaching level and the media present male and female athletes in different ways. Change can occur on a number of different levels but there needs to be a way to make more women aware of how oppressive the present nature of sports is. Awareness can bring about change. There also is a need to bring the different feminist perspectives together so that both theory and action can occur.

The following chapter addresses the present situation for women and sports in light of the relevant literature and recent research findings.

CHAPTER THREE
THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR WOMEN IN SPORTS

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THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR WOMEN IN SPORTS

This chapter looks at the present situation of women in sports. Included are discussions on: media representations of women in sport; the latest research and theories on gender issues; feminism, cultural studies and sports; resistance and transformation; strategies and sites for challenge, and the role of the education system in generating change.

According to Cahn (1994) there were two main concerns of those who supported women in sports back in the early generations: how to involve more women in physical activity and how to ensure that women held leadership positions. These are still concerns today. Although more women than ever before are participating in sports, women are still at the bottom of the hierarchy when it comes to organizing and controlling sport. As Cahn states, sport is still associated with masculinity and skill. "The associations between masculinity and skill remain especially intense at elite levels of sport where the meaning of excellence remains tightly entwined with concepts of masculine skill and male physiology" (p.261).

The work of feminists in the 1990's continue to challenge male hegemony and ideology although some realize that those in the academic world must begin to work more closely with those who are out in the field. There is the need for praxis, meaning theory that leads to action (Hall, 1996).

Praxis acknowledges that what goes on in academe, at least as far as feminism is concerned, should be directed at producing the kind of useful knowledge wanted and needed by those outside academe who are working for social change. The issue then is how to connect theory and research to the real world (Hall, p. 78).

Media representations

As noted previously, much of the earlier research on women in sport focused on biologism, sport as a socializing agent, and role conflict. What they all seem to hold in common is the notion that sports are for men and there must be something wrong with the women who get involved. I had assumed that we had moved away from this type of research but, as Hall (1996) has discovered, it still exists in some areas. There is still the attempt, at least on the part of some researchers, to try and prove that sport does not masculinize female athletes. These published articles that she lists⁹, and calls "highly simplistic" (p.20) all come to the same conclusion: "...that female athletes possess socially desirable characteristics/behaviors and that sport participation does not detract from their femininity" (p.20). It is extremely frustrating to see that this type of research still occurs as it only promotes the ideology that sport is for males. As Hargreaves (1994) explains, "Biological explanations, still prevalent and popular, are used to legitimate the different treatment of males and females and to justify male domination" (p.148). Perhaps I should not be surprised as this is the way the media presents sport. Sport is presented as a male preserve because men are 'naturally' physically superior to women.

Birrell and Theberge (1994) found a number of common themes when women athletes are publicized by the media. There is much more media coverage on male athletes while female athletic endeavors are trivialized or marginalized. Also, female athletes are presented as heterosexual and/or are seen as being 'unnatural' women (p.347).

Robinson (1997), who is a female sports journalist, feels that the only time the media pays attention to female athletes is during the Olympic games.

⁹ See Hall, 1996, p.20.

When they are over, the media goes back to ignoring women. Robinson claims that during her journalistic career she experienced many complaints when "...over ten percent of my articles were about women. People accused me of ignoring men, of being a "man-hater", and of not really understanding sport" (p.7). Unfortunately, the media is primarily concerned with male professional sports and "...female athletes have to be the best in the world to rate media attention" (p.144). She makes an amusing observation about why newspapers have sports sections.

The sports section exists, I would maintain, because it is one sure bet place where MEN ALWAYS WIN. Even if it's not your team that won last night, teams of men won something (pp.9-10).

Daddario (1994) looked at media representations of female athletes at the 1992 winter Olympics. In these games there were 159 all male events and 86 all female events. Although Daddario commends the media for showing women competing in "masculine" events such as the luge and biathlon, thereby challenging the ideology of women being frail, she critiques them for failing "...to challenge the sexist ideology that pervades the institution of sport" (p.276). The media tends to marginalize female athletes' accomplishments in a number of ways. Even though women are making more advancements into previously 'male-only' sports, they are still described by male defined criteria such as their appearance, family relationships, and by occasionally being depicted as preadolescents (p.286).

Robertson (1997) did a similar study during the 1996 summer Olympics. She had hoped that the media coverage would focus more on the female athletes' accomplishments and less on their appearance. At these Olympics, women made up 3800 of the approximately 10,000 athletes who were

participating. Of the 307 Canadian athletes, 154 were female. Robertson was impressed with the amount of coverage the media gave female athletes and with the way the athletes were presented.

It has been a major goal to have women athletes, when they did make it into the media, described as strong, powerful, driven, dedicated, to have their exploits and commitment respected and Canada's reporters, columnists, anchors and colour commentators have generally responded (Robertson, 1997; p.3).

She notes that once the Olympics were over, women's sports once again disappeared from media coverage. Those in the media business feel that the information in the sport pages are there because it's what the readers want. As she explains, since women make up 52% of the population, why not expose the readers to something other than male professional sports.

Messner (1994) feels that the media can no longer marginalize the female athlete because female athletes have attained "a certain level of legitimacy" (p. 74). The media, responding to calls for 'equal opportunity', will, at times, cover women's sports. Messner feels that even though there is less trivialization of the accomplishments of the female athlete, they are still judged by male standards when participating in traditionally male sports. If they are unable to live up to the male standards than this further fuels the "ideological hegemony of male superiority" (p.75). As Messner explains:

...when a movement's values become entrenched in a large enough proportion of the population, the media maintains its veneer of objectivity and fairness by incorporating a watered-down version of the values of the oppositional group. In so doing, the ideological hegemony of the dominant group shifts but is essentially maintained (p.74).

The ideology of men's 'natural' ability will continue as long as the attributes needed to be successful in sport continue to be male defined. Speed

and strength are important while flexibility and endurance are less so.

Where are we now?

Hall (1996) states that there are three levels of analysis that are presently used in research on gender issues in sport. The first is called categoric research and it tends to use biological factors or socialization to explain sex differences in participation, and performance levels in sport. It does not look at social structures or power relations. The second is called distributive research, which examines how resources are distributed and focuses on the inequalities that are uncovered. Liberal feminists use this type of research to point out the gender inequities in certain sporting practices. The third type of research is called relational analyses which is grounded in "the assumption that sporting practices are historically produced, socially constructed and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of powerful groups in society" (p.11).

As mentioned previously, we have, for the most part, moved away from theories on role conflict and socialization. According to Hall, we are now in a new theoretical era. What is needed is theory that is "rooted in practice" (p.31) and an easily understood theoretical discourse. If it is not accessible to all, than only other theorists will read it and not those who are actively trying to change sport from the 'fields'.

So why do we need theory? There is not one type of feminism which is completely applicable to studying gender relations in sports. Elliot and Mandell (1995) sum it up succinctly.

We have seen feminist theories provide explanations for a wide range of particular issues including relating the ideology of sexism to the social institutions in which it is produced, describing the process and content of gender socialization, explaining the relationship of "nature" to

“nurture”...We have also seen that feminist theories remain partial, imperfect, and unfinished. Feminist theory has been enriched and expanded through the clash of different perspectives. Rather than rejecting some theories for others, the feminist movement needs to draw on the strength of all theories (p.27).

Hall (1996) argues that what may be needed is to apply feminist cultural studies to sport. This is the combination of feminism and cultural studies. The growing trend is that the significance of sport in Western culture can only be fully understood through a thorough analysis of culture. “Sport, like other cultural forms and practices that become institutionalized, is profoundly affected by (and in turn affects) existing structures of power and inequality in those societies” (p.32).

Feminism, cultural studies and sports

The intent of cultural studies is basically to interpret how culture works and what it means. The different aspects of culture are analyzed and critiqued. What is interesting is that cultural studies reconceptualize gender relations going beyond traditional theories of socialization (Theberge and Birrell, 1994).

In this perspective, it is more appropriate to look for the sources of young girl's behavior and attitudes toward sport not only in the discrete set of circumstances in the family and school environment but also in the diffuse patterns of gender representations and ideologies of gender available throughout our culture (Theberge and Birrell, p.326).

Cultural studies also focuses on the power relations in society, specifically how the relations of dominance are maintained through ideology and hegemony. Another aspect is the belief that practice, or action, is important and that academics can cause social change (Hall, 1996).

According to Hall, cultural studies and cultural theory are very popular in

Britain and the U.S. but are not as common in Canada. From the perspective of sport however, there has been much more impact in Britain than in the U.S. or Canada. Hall also notes that there has not been much influence yet from feminism upon cultural studies although they do share some goals, one of which is an interest in, and a desire to alter, power imbalances and inequality (p.35). Hall is somewhat leery of feminist cultural studies as far as sport is concerned since her feeling is that these types of studies would likely take place in women's studies programs, an area that has traditionally not "embraced sport and leisure" (p.36).

She offers a number of examples of feminist cultural studies, namely in the areas of aerobics and bodybuilding. What is important in these studies is the focus on "female sporting bodies" (p.50). As Hall points out, feminism has always been concerned with the female body but not necessarily with the female sporting body.

There has always been debate within feminism as far as the female body is concerned. On one side, the argument is for "sexual equality regardless of biological differences" (Hall, p.50). Sexual equality, Hall explains, means that the only way women can be equal to men is to overcome "the specificity of the reproductive (woman's) body...through scientific intervention if necessary" (p. 50). This can be seen in certain areas of the sports world where the ingestion of certain drugs, which can postpone puberty or control menstruation, occurs in order to improve performance (Hall). On the other side of the debate are those who state that there is a sexual difference and it should be retained, not tampered with by science. The problem with both these theories is that the woman's body is seen as the "other" or as being naturally inferior to men. Hall suggests that a new view should be taken, one that emphasizes the body as

being a cultural product.

To do this, many feminists have embraced the work of Michel Foucault, a theorist who “places the body and sexuality at the center of social analysis” (Guthrie and Castelnuovo, 1994; p. 314). Foucault believes that bodies are constructed through scientific discourses such as medicine, biology and psychiatry which teach us how to use our bodies. He is also interested in the effect of historical power struggles and how they work to socially construct the body. He saw power as not just belonging to the state or to dominant classes but rather “power circulates through a network of individuals; it is omnipresent; it is in everyone” (Rail and Harvey, 1995; p. 166). Foucault’s earlier work referred to people as being docile bodies who were under the control of the dominant powers and yielded to it, seemingly without any resistance. In his later work, he began to recognize that people do not willingly submit to power, they do offer resistance.

Some feminists have adopted Foucault’s theories and have applied it to their work. As Hall (1996) explains, some have used his theory on docile bodies to explain dieting, exercise and eating disorders among women. These occur because the dominant powers in our culture expect women to be obedient and thin, so they submit to this power without any resistance. This theory sees power as being so oppressive, that women have no choice but to submit. Other feminists have incorporated his later theories into their work by realizing and expounding on the theory that people do offer resistance to power. According to Hall, some feminists theorize that women’s power lies within their bodies and sports are the way to express it.

The main problem with adopting Foucault’s work is that it was gender-blind, meaning that men and women had the same experiences with power.

Hall cites the work of Deveaux who suggests that a feminist analysis of power needs to be developed. This analysis would recognize that women's bodies are not just socially constructed but also consist of how they respond to, and analyze, cultural demands. It must also focus on how women experience oppression, and as well, to look at ways to free and empower women (p.56). This type of analysis could help to expand on the work of feminist cultural studies as it means not just researching and theorizing but also talking to women who participate in different sporting activities to find out what it means to them and why they do it.

As an example of this, Hall looks at research that has been done on aerobics, an activity that has become very popular in the last ten to fifteen years. Theberge and Birrell (1994) are alarmed by this activity and see aerobics classes as simply being a place that emphasizes style and appearance. They see it as the "commodification and sexualization of women's physical activity" (p.332). They certainly do not see anything positive about it for women. Hargreaves (1994) certainly agrees with them.

Aerobics has been successfully packaged to persuade women, specifically, to participate in order to lose weight and improve their sex appeal, rather than for reasons of fitness and enjoyment or for competition (p.160).

Other researchers have realized that there are two aspects to aerobics. One which says that women participate because they are conforming to society's image of the ideal body. This is based upon the results of cultural analyses which neglect to take into consideration women's experiences and impressions. The other aspect, which is based upon interviews with participants, is that these women seem to be empowered by this physical activity. "Evidently, women are neither merely objects of the invisible

oppressive power, as Foucauldian power might suggest, nor subjects, free from any control, to make their own meanings in society" (Markula, as cited in Hall, 1996; p.57). Markula, who did extensive research on aerobic participants, discovered that yes, these women were working hard to obtain the ideal body, yet they also stated that they experienced increased self-esteem and self-confidence. It is important that cultural analyses do more than simply observe.

Another fitness area that has grown in popularity among women is bodybuilding. Hall finds that women's bodybuilding has been defined in two ways; it may be seen as a form of resistance against the societal ideal body type or it may be seen as complying with that image. It would appear to be resistance as a well muscled woman does not fit with society's image of femininity. However, as Balsamo (1994) notes, when a woman enters an area thought to be the domain of men, they are not judged in the same way, but are still seen as the other.

In fact, judges are instructed to look for certain faults in women that are not usually seen in men: stretch marks, surgical scars and cellulite; they are also directed to observe whether female competitors walk and move gracefully, which seemingly is not a concern with male competitors (p. 346).

Balsamo does not see bodybuilding as being resistance, instead, it reaffirms "the power relations of a dominant social order" (p.350).

MacNeill (1994) looked at both aerobics and bodybuilding in an attempt to discover whether these activities were examples of resistance or were "counter hegemonic" (p.281). Looked at historically, these activities challenge the ideology that serious physical activity can be dangerous for women and show that there are increased opportunities for women in sports. At the same time, these activities stress "a preoccupation with beauty, glamour and sex

appeal,...and reproduce patterns that subjugate women" (p.281). In bodybuilding, judges are looking for the ideal body shape. Aerobics are seen as a woman's activity, and therefore not as important as those that men participate in. MacNeill concludes that these activities do not challenge hegemony, rather they show how "patriarchy serves as a major structural determinant of these cultural forms" (p.286).

Both MacNeill and Balsamo have done cultural analyses but have neglected to discover the meanings that the participants attach to these activities. Miller and Penz (as quoted in Hall, 1996; p.62) state that "power struggles over sites in the sociocultural landscape always involve struggles over *meaning*". We have certainly seen that researchers, participants, and of course men and women in general, attach different meanings to sports participation. I would prefer to believe, perhaps naively, that women's sport participation in general, is resistance and that transformation can occur. There will always be challenges and resistance from the dominant groups who control sports because power is not relinquished easily. I agree with Theberge (1985) when she states that

The potential for sport to act as an agent of women's liberation rather than their oppression, stems mainly from the opportunity that women's sporting activity affords them to experience their bodies as strong and powerful and free from male domination. Women's sporting practice can challenge gender inequality by challenging sexual stereotypes and patriarchal control of women's bodies. (pp.201-202).

Sport is an important site for women to use to challenge male hegemony and therefore to cause changes not only in this area but in other areas of society.

Resistance and Transformation

If we can consider that sport serves as a site where gender relations of dominance and subordination are reproduced¹⁰, then it can also serve as a site for resistance and transformation. (Birrell and Theberge, 1994). Resistance, according to Weiler (1988) "is an important concept in looking at the lives of girls and women in schools, because it highlights their ability as human agents to make meaning and to act in social situations as well as to be acted upon" (p.48). Resistance is also an important concept in sport. Women's involvement in sport has a long history despite hegemonic ideology.

Resistance can be defined as the refusal of subordinate groups to submit fully to the power of dominant groups and transformation is a "change in the structure of relations of power and the ideologies that hold those structures in place" (Birrell and Theberge, 1994; p.363). Resistant acts occur when a group becomes consciously aware of its relationship to the power structure and then attempts to change the relationship. An act can be considered to be transformative if a change occurs in the dominant power structure. Theory and research into women's experiences in sport should lead to resistance and transformation or praxis. "Praxis is social action undertaken by politically conscious agents. Thus praxis is practical political work because it is focused on the transformation of power relations" (Birrell and Theberge, 1994; p.362).

To cause change in the structure of power is complicated. This is why there has been much criticism directed towards the actions of liberal feminists in sport and their work so far in challenging gender inequity. The doors have

¹⁰ I use reproduce to refer to theories of reproduction which state that "social structures inevitably ensure that the dominant culture, class and power relations are reproduced and that there is a structural causality in the way the whole society works" (Hargreaves, 1994; p.19) According to Althusser (as cited in Hargreaves) "the ideologies that characterize modern sports, such as competitiveness, chauvinism, nationalism and sexism, function to reproduce existing patterns of domination(p.18)

been reluctantly opened to women, but as there has been no change in the power structure women are expected to change in order to fit into this system.

It is important to define what constitutes a resistant act to make certain that these acts can lead to transformation. Resistant acts should cause change for a group, not for an individual and these acts need to be "conscious, collective, political and public" (Birrell and Theberge, p. 363). Consciousness is becoming aware of the oppression of the dominant power; collective means working with others in your group; political means analyzing and working out strategies to change the power structure and public means ensuring that the acts are seen. As Birrell and Theberge explain, these acts "must enter the consciousness of dominant groups so that it works as active ideological work" (p.363).

It is often difficult to make acts overtly public as there is always the risk of retaliation. The reality is that those with the power do not give it up easily. "The self protection mechanisms within the patriarchy specifically punish those who threaten its structure and cultural imperatives" (Staurowsky, 1990; p.170). However, it is possible that small covert acts of resistance can combine and cause change in the power structure.

Why should women wish to transform sport? Sport is an ideal site for changing gender relations as this is an area where male domination and the ideology of male superiority can be clearly seen. As Birrell and Theberge (1994) explain, in order for gender relations to be transformed it will likely occur on an ideological level and this is the level that sport works on (p.365).

Participation in sport can lead to physical and personal empowerment for women and can help women to reclaim their bodies. Feeling empowered can lead to acts of resistance. The possibilities exist, according to Birrell and Theberge, for feminist intervention to use sport in order to develop "alternate

visions of gender relations" (p. 366). In sport, men clearly hold the power, because they are seen as being naturally physically superior to women. This ideology has proven to be hard to challenge but if it could be shaken, then we are well on our way to transforming sport.

Men certainly do not hold complete control over sport as is evidenced by women's presence there. Throughout history there are numerous examples of women's forays into sport and of men's resistance to that presence. At times, women have had to enact legal challenges in order to play 'men's' sports: Some were successful, some were not. One of the most famous cases in Canadian history was that of 12 year old Justine Blainey (Hall, 1996). In 1985 she was accepted onto a boy's hockey team in Toronto. The Ontario Hockey Association barred her from playing. She sued the Association and won the right to play. Another example which Birrell and Theberge (1994) note, is the entry of women into rugby, a long held male preserve. "Women can penetrate even the "malest" of male preserves. Their intrusion into the rugby subculture deconstructs that space and those practices as quintessential male practices" (p.371).

It is not often that we can see concrete examples in sport where resistance has led to transformation. Birrell and Theberge state there is much theoretical debate around how to recognize transformation. As presented previously, these debates have occurred in studies on aerobics and women's bodybuilding. This begs the question that as women do we freely choose our sporting activities or are we simply products of our culture?

We always take action within cultural constraints; our actions are always understood by ourselves and others within the meanings that dominant discourses of sex, gender, sexuality, class, race, etc., make available for us. We are in that sense always culturally contained, but we are not

completely imprisoned (Birrell and Theberge; p. 372).

It would seem as though we do have some free choice but it is within cultural constraints. This is certainly a debatable theory. If I was to believe that everything I do and every choice I make was based upon cultural constraints, then how could I ever hope to create change? I firmly believe that knowledge is power, and that the more women are aware of how they are oppressed, then there will be more willingness to work for change. I have to believe that cultural constraints can be overcome and that gender relations can be transformed.

Strategies and sites for challenge

Lois Bryson (1990) offers a number of suggestions on ways to challenge male hegemony in sport. Although there are feminists who question why women want to become involved in sports based on its oppressive nature, Bryson feels that "Sport is far too important a social institution to abandon to those who currently benefit disproportionately from it" (p.180). Bryson advocates radical change, but feels that liberal solutions can also be effective in the short term. Both are needed as social change does not happen overnight.

Bryson suggests three sites for challenge: "The specific site of sport itself, the points at which sport intersects with other solutions and the personal level" (p.182). Her first suggestion, which concerns the site of sport, is that we need to change the definitions of what success in sport means. Being successful means having the male attributes of strength and power, and of being aggressive and competitive. An example of this is the motto of the Olympics which is Faster, Higher, Stronger. Bryson feels that rhythm and grace should also be seen as important, and that competition should be de-emphasized. The latter should prove to be difficult considering the popularity of male professional

sports.

Bryson suggest a liberal approach when looking at the sites where sports intersects with other institutions. Anti-discrimination legislation can be used to ensure equal access to clubs and facilities and to help with challenges to unfair rules. Women need to gain more decision making power over such things as how monies are dispersed and how facility times are allocated. She also feels that such action could bring about structural changes.

Bryson is not supportive of separatist strategies as she does not believe that they have contributed to any sort of meaningful change. She does admit that certain activities, such as women's and gay games, do increase awareness among its members, and as such could lead to "consciousness raising and political action" (p. 183). Separatist strategies can only challenge hegemony "if large enough numbers can be won over to the alternatives to significantly alter the support that dominant sport receives" (p. 183).

Hargreaves (1994) sees some aspects of separatist strategies as being positive since women-only organizations enable women to make decisions regarding funding and resources, without having to negotiate with men (p.207). In some cases, it is the only place where women can feel safe to practice their favorite sporting activities. It is easy to feel intimidated by the presence of men. According to Hargreaves, "viewed in this way, separatism confers power" (p.207).

Separatist strategies can have a negative effect as they contribute to the notion of difference. It contributes to male hegemony since it 'proves' that women cannot compete with men in sports. "Rather than strengthening women's position, it can be argued that separatism excludes women from power, status, money and interaction in the 'real' world of sports" (Hargreaves;

p.208).

Hargreaves maintains that women need to be at all management levels in mixed sporting organizations in order to cause change in sporting policy and practice. But, as mentioned previously, it is not enough to simply put women into decision making positions. Their input and ideas need to be seen as being just as important as men's.

Gender relations in sports are relations of power which are hard to shift because they have strong connections with a whole range of other social practices - in particular, those in the family, the school, the media and the state - and they permeate the structure and culture of sports organizations themselves. But they are not inviolable. Gender relations in sports are part of a constant process of negotiation, struggle and change (Hargreaves; p. 208).

There is certainly no real agreement on which strategies are the most effective. As Hargreaves states, women are not all the same, and they experience the oppressive nature of sports in different ways. I certainly view the world of sports and my ideas for change from a position of privilege. I want to challenge and change the oppressive nature of sport but much of my perceptions come from being part of the dominant group of feminists. As Dewar (1993) explains, "Academic feminism has largely reflected the interests and experiences of white, middle class, anglophone, heterosexual, thin, able-bodied and Christian raised women" (p. 212). Dewar is critical of those who debate theories in the literature but do nothing to actively change sports.

Although there are many theorists who advocate change, there appear to be few who are actively involved in the process and who can actually offer ideas. Miner (1993) is one who has developed an approach to change that she calls "the four 'R's': realize, redefine, restructure, and reinforce" (p. 47). Those involved in sports, at whatever level, need to *realize* "that power is controlled

and distributed according to beliefs about gender roles” (p. 47). We need to challenge the ideology behind gender roles and come to see sport as a human experience not simply a male one.

Miner feels that society needs to *redefine* and value those traits seen as 'feminine'. Sport needs to be redefined so that traits which are usually labeled masculine (ie. strength) and feminine (grace) are all seen as being necessary in sports. Society needs to *restructure* sports and remove all the barriers that keep women subordinate. Women have the right to be given the same resources as men. Furthermore, there must efforts to *reinforce* women to become involved in leadership positions. Miner advocates the work of some women's sports associations who are trying to form 'good old girls networks'. These networks can help women get into leadership positions and, just as importantly, to help them when they get there. She encourages women to get involved with women's sport associations as “groups, through the power of numbers, can influence significant change” (p.48).

There is one such association in Canada called the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS). This association, which was founded in 1981, originally saw itself as a feminist organization. It's first mission statement was “CAAWS seeks 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” (as cited in Hall, 1996; p.97) Hall notes that they no longer use the word feminist, perhaps because of a sense that society views it as a 'bad' word. Now their mission statement states “To ensure that girls and women in sport and physical activity have access to a complete range of opportunities and choice and have equity as participants and leaders” (Action, 1996 ; p. 2).

As well as having published a number of issue papers and handbooks that cover such topics as gender equity and harassment in sport, CAAWS also puts out a quarterly publication called Action. This magazine features athletes, coaches and organizations who are furthering the cause for gender equity as well as looking at issues as varied as sports nutrition, eating disorders and media coverage of female athletes.

Hall feels that much of their work is liberal in nature as they advocate removing barriers to equitable access for women without attempting to change the structure of sport. As a government funded association, they would likely experience funding problems should their work appear to be too radical.

The role of the education system

Hall (1996) argues that education has a role to play in showing students "the potential for human "agency" - those individual practices and actions that can transform social systems" (p.104). She also states that students need to learn how to both recognize and analyze "the structures and processes of the social systems that both enable and constrain them" (p.104). They need to learn how social change occurs. She suggests that students learn how to do praxis and this can be done through adding a practical component to academic courses. Her suggestions include "an internship with a women's sport advocacy group or a gay and lesbian sport league, or assisting with a local "media watch" to monitor the coverage and portrayal of women's sport" (p.104). Hall also suggests the following.

First, all of us - students, educators, sportswomen, administrators, and volunteers - must not get rattled because the label "feminism" has yet again become a "dirty" word. We are in a period of significant backlash against feminism fueled by the growing strength of the "new right" with its

moral panic over permissiveness, loss of individual freedoms, and "collapse" of family values (p. 103).

I think all of her suggestions are very practical and that they would help students in learning more about women's oppression and in discovering ways to bring about change.

Conclusion

Although change has occurred in the world of sports, there is still much work that remains to be done. The media continues to show us that sport is a male preserve by either ignoring or trivializing female athletes. Feminist cultural studies have shown that sports is an important site in which to challenge male hegemony provided that we focus on meaning. That is, it is important to discover the meaning that women attach to their sporting activities. Through this we can discover the importance of sport to women's lives.

There have been many examples cited of how women have attempted to resist men's domination in sports. The transformation is certainly not complete although we have seen that women's presence in sports, particularly traditionally male dominated ones, are certainly helping to upset the power imbalance. The ideology of male superiority in sports based on biological differences still exists and needs to be challenged. Simply being present in sports however, is not enough. Although the number of women participating in sports may be increasing, men predominate in the coaching and administrative level. The collegial sports system in Quebec is one example of this. Not only are there more male administrators and coaches than female, there are more sports organized for male students than for female students.

The education system certainly has an important role to play in changing sport. In the area of college sports, there is much that can be done. I certainly

have a desire for my research to lead to change and one approach to this is to listen to the lived experiences of female college level athletes and to try and understand the meaning they attach to sports.

The following chapter focuses on two areas: the present situation for women in the Quebec collegial sports system; and an exploratory study on the experiences and opinions of female athletes participating in sports in a Quebec College.

CHAPTER FOUR
AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

CHAPTER FOUR

AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

When a comparison is made to professional sports, which are almost completely male dominated, then CEGEP sports would appear at first glance to be almost equitable as there are many more opportunities for women to participate. However, CEGEP sports are also male dominated at all levels. What follows is a presentation of statistics from all Quebec CEGEPS and colleges which participate in intercollegiate sports organized through the Federation Quebecoise du Sport Etudiant (FQSE). While there are almost as many sports offered for women as there are for men, there are many more men than women coaching and administering these sports.

As one of the few women working in this field, I have tried to make changes but have had little success. I decided to try and find out if the research and literature on women and sports holds with the students at my college. What follows is an exploratory study of female student athletes and some of their experiences and opinions on sports. Although this is a small study, the findings are important because it gives me first hand knowledge of how my female student athletes experience sport and what their suggestions are for change. My interest was in discovering what ideologies they may hold about women in sports, their opinions about the media's representations, and if their sports participation could be seen as involving resistance and transformation. As previously stated, these are the important concepts.

Quebec intercollegiate statistics

I have compiled the following statistics¹¹ for all the Quebec CEGEPS and colleges¹² that participate in intercollegiate sports under the FQSE for the year 1997-1998: name of CEGEP/college, sex of sports administrator (the person directly responsible for the sports program), the number of both male and female sports and the sex of the coaches, and the number of mixed sports and the sex of the coaches. The mixed sports are of an individual nature such as alpine skiing and swimming where the team members compete in sex segregated categories. The statistics may not be 100% accurate as they were taken from a number of different documents and changes may have occurred since they were printed such as a change in administrator or in the number of sports offered at a particular school. They do reflect the situation of the CEGEPS/colleges as they stood in May 1997 as this is when the FQSE received the information.

These statistics show us a number of areas of male domination in the intercollegiate system. First, of the 59 CEGEPS/colleges listed, 51 of them have a man in charge of the sports department while only 8 have women. Also, within the 59, there are 161 male-only sports as compared to 146 female-only sports. If we look at a breakdown of the number of male vs female sports at each school we find that 22 offer more male than female sports, 16 offer more female than male sports and 21 offer the same number of each. Of the schools whose sports are run by female administrators, two offer more male than female sports, three offer more female than male sports and three offer the same number of each. My personal goal, when I began to work at my college,

¹¹ See Appendix 2.

¹² Private colleges, although they follow the Government guidelines for CEGEPS, are referred to as colleges, not CEGEPS.

was to offer the same number of male and female sports. This is now a reality. When I began working at the college in 1989 there were three sports offered; men's and women's rugby and alpine skiing. I wanted to increase the number of sports offered as long as I was always able to add two at a time, one for women and one for men. Presently we have nine intercollegiate teams; women's and men's rugby, soccer, volleyball and basketball and alpine skiing. Unfortunately, not all the schools feel that it is important to offer the same number of women's and men's sports and I would like to see some government legislation in Quebec which would be similar to that of Title IX in the United States.¹³ This legislation would state that all educational institutions would allocate the same amount of funding and resources for its female sports as it does for its male sports. This would certainly help to address some of the present inequities in college sports. This type of legislation would not likely change the basic structure of sport which means that it would not necessarily encourage more women to get involved in the coaching and administration side. It is easy enough to offer more sports for women but how do we encourage women's involvement at all levels? Not only are there many more male than female administrators, but there are far fewer female coaches than male coaches. Of the 161 male sports, 159 are coached by men and 2 by women. Of the 146 female sports, 112 of them are coached by men and 34 by women. In looking at the 81 mixed sports, 73 are coached by men and 8 by women. We need to encourage more women to get involved in coaching, not only to provide our women athletes with positive role models but also to challenge the stereotype that men make better coaches.

The underrepresentation of women in coaching and leadership positions speaks to the strength of the connection

¹³ As discussed on p. 24.

between sport and gender. There is an underlying assumption that links sports expertise with masculinity and leadership with male superiority (Staurowsky, 1990; p.163).

At present, I have two female coaches at my school, one who coaches the women's volleyball team and one who coaches the women's rugby team. When I have advertised for coaches I have had very few women applying. There are no official programs that I am aware of in Quebec which encourage women to get involved in coaching. There was a National Coaching School for Women which began in 1987 and operated in a different province each year but as of 1995 it is no longer operating due to lack of funds. (Brenning & McDonald, 1995). This is unfortunate because at the collegial level in Quebec the issue of improving the situation for women in sports is certainly not a priority. At my school, I try as much as possible to encourage the female students to get involved in coaching and refereeing. One of my goals in doing this would be the possibility of being able to offer them employment in the future.

It is not likely that the situation in the Quebec collegial system is going to change anytime soon. The main preoccupation of late is with the massive cuts that have been imposed on the education system by the Quebec Government. For the most part it is the Student Services areas that have taken the brunt of the cuts and this is generally the area that looks after intercollegiate sports. Many schools have had to cut both employees and sports and are scrambling to make do with what they have left. While there are a few schools that feel that it's important to have gender equity in sports, there are many more that are more concerned with simply trying to survive.

It is very difficult being a feminist working in a male dominated system and trying to struggle against patriarchal hegemony. While I have been able to make a number of changes within my own school, I have had no impact upon the

larger system. Some of the other female administrators I have spoken with express the same frustration. While they feel they have a certain amount of control within their own college as far as making changes are concerned, they often feel powerless when dealing within the larger system. The few times I have tried to make suggestions for change, I have been voted down. One example of this occurred just recently at a meeting where we were organizing the 1997-1998 basketball schedule for both the women and the men. There were approximately 25 administrators present. During the meeting, it had to be decided how many games the women's and the men's teams would play during the season. After some discussion, a vote was taken and it was decided that the men would play 17 games. When the discussion turned to the women, there was a choice to be made. The women could either play 12 or 17 games. Before the vote was taken, I was surprised to discover that most schools were leaning towards voting for 12 games. For some reason, it was felt that the women were not capable of playing the same number of games as the men. When it came time to vote, the majority voted for 12 games. I was surprised at this and tried to discover why some of the schools had voted for fewer games. The administrators that I spoke to said that they just felt that 17 games were too much for the women although the men would have no problem playing that number. To them, it was just common sense. Of course men can play more games than women. I do not know what kind of reaction they got from their women's teams, but my women's basketball team were very surprised at the results of the vote. They assured me that they were very capable of playing 17 games. There have been other similar situations which have led me to believe that the transformation of intercollegiate sport will be difficult to realize.

The exploratory Intercollegiate study

A national sports organization called the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA) decided that they needed to initiate some changes in their structure after conducting a program review of their 1987 season where they discovered that "86% of athletes competing in six national championships were men, and that 83% of the country's college coaches were men" (Angus Reid, 1993; p.i). The CCAA wanted to discover how they could encourage higher female participation in College sports and also, how they could make the system more equitable. They decided to hire the Angus Reid Group to do a study for them. In the survey, entitled "Women in Sport: National Awareness and Attitude Study", high school female athletes and non-athletes as well as college coaches and administrators were interviewed. The participants were asked questions ranging from what motivated them to get involved in sports to what they thought needed to be done in order to increase female participation. I was particularly interested in discovering the responses of the athletes as well as the non-athletes as to why they felt women participated less in college sports than men did and what could be done to change this. Some of the highlights of the study concerning this were as follows; women's teams get less funding, there are more opportunities for men to participate than women, women are offered fewer sports than men, women's sports get much less press coverage than men's sports, and the public feel that women's sports are inferior to men's (p.ii). As to their ideas on how to improve this situation, the feeling was that they wanted good coaches at the high school level who were committed to women's sports and they wanted more career opportunities for women coaches. Also, they felt that more media exposure for women's college sports was important.

I felt that the results of the study were important but that it gave me little in

the way of concrete suggestions on what changes I could be making at my college. As well, due to the small numbers of interviews, Angus Reid stated that "the results are largely qualitative in nature and should be considered as hypotheses to be tested rather than as definitive conclusions" (p.2). I decided to do my own study with a number of athletes at my college. I used a few of the questions from the Angus Reid study, as well as some of my own. I decided to do small group interviews instead of a survey in the hope of eliciting even more ideas from the athletes. My hope was that my questions would elicit more discussion from a group than a survey or individual interviews would.

Chosen subjects

I did not advertise for volunteers but instead approached a number of female students who were intercollegiate players at the college and asked them if they would be interested in taking part in the study. The students all came from a small private college located in Montreal which has a population of approximately 1650 students. The interviews consisted of 12 athletes of which two played basketball, two played volleyball, two played soccer, two played rugby, one who played both soccer and basketball, one who was on the rowing team, and two former students who had played on the men's soccer team in 1996. There was a women's soccer team at the college at that time but it had not yet been given intercollegiate status. These two students decided to try out and were chosen for the men's team.

Procedure

I informed the students that I would be videotaping the interviews but assured them that the video would remain confidential and that I would not refer

to them by name when writing up the results of the study. I also asked that whatever was said by other students during the interviews should be kept confidential in the hope that they would all feel free to speak. They were told that the interview would probably last for an hour and a half and that they would be done in groups of five. The two former soccer players were attending school in the U.S. so their interviews were done separately. I explained to each athlete that the interviews were to be part of my thesis and that I was interested in discovering their experiences in sport, and whether they had any opinions on gender equity in sport. I gave each athlete a written list of the types of questions I planned to use in the interviews and asked them to read it through before the interview took place. I also explained what I meant by the term gender equity using the following definition from Larkin and Baxter (1995).

Gender equity is defined as the principle and practice of fair allocation of resources, programs and decision-making to both women and men, and includes the redressing of identified imbalances in the benefits available (p.43).

I tried to conduct each interview session in the same manner; that is, by discussing questions in the same order and by, as much as possible, acting as a moderator during the group discussions and not as a teacher, or as a judge. They were all certainly aware of my feelings on the subject which may have colored their responses although I feel that, for the most part, their answers reflected their honest feelings.

What follows is the list of questions that was given to each athlete.

1. What sports do you play?
2. Who or what encouraged you to get involved in sports?
3. What do you enjoy about sports?
4. Do you have any role models in sports?
5. Do men have more opportunities to play sports than women?
6. Are sports at the college gender equitable?

7. Do you think sports are male-dominated? If yes, in what way?
8. Will opportunities in sport ever be equitable for women and men? What needs to be changed? How can it be done?
9. Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?

Results and Discussion

1. What sports do you play?

All but one of the athletes are involved in other sports outside of the college. These range from individual sports such as swimming and skating to other team sports such as softball and street hockey. One of the athletes has recently become involved in boxing. I have noticed that more and more women are getting involved in contact sports and rugby is one sport that has increased in popularity. At present there are four women's rugby teams in the college system although I expect that this will grow as more high schools are beginning to get involved in rugby. In the past, the majority of the female rugby players at my college had never played the sport before. This year, close to half the team had played at either their high school or with a club team. I agree with Hargreaves (1994) when she says the following about women who play traditionally male sports such as rugby and boxing. "These women are actively redefining concepts of women's sports. . . They appear to be confident with their sporting identities and with the radical images of femininity which they project" (p.274).

2. Who or what encouraged you to get involved in sports?

Of the 12 athletes, five stated that both parents encouraged them to get involved in sports, four said that it was their fathers, three said that friends got them involved, and one of these three started playing sports, basketball in

particular, because her friends said that it would make her taller. It is interesting to note that of the four who said that it was their fathers that encouraged them, two stated that their mothers were very much against them playing sports. One said that her mother wants her to be a more traditional woman and is always trying to keep her in the kitchen. Another athlete said that her mother tells her that team sports are making her too muscular and too masculine. With this group it would appear that family influence is very important. When I questioned the two whose mothers did not support their sports activities as to how this made them feel they both said that sports were important to them and they would continue to play them no matter what their mothers said.

3. What do you enjoy about sports?

The athletes had a number of different responses to this question but most agreed that they enjoyed the social aspect of the sport. Four of the athletes said playing sports made them feel strong and good about themselves. Three of the athletes stated that through team sports you learned how to get along with different people. Two of the athletes felt that it helped to relieve stress and one felt that being involved in sports helped to make her more organized. For the most part, the athletes felt that sport and physical activity were an important part of their lives.

I had hoped to get some more revealing answers from the athletes on this question. I wanted to discover the meanings they attached to their sports but, for the most part, they answered this question in general terms. Since the majority of these athletes have played sports since an early age, they may just feel that it is a part of their lives and do not give much thought as to what it means to them. It could also be that I did not formulate the question in a way that would have elicited more thought provoking responses, or that not enough

time was spent discussing it.

4. Do you have any role models in sports?

Only five athletes stated that they had role models. One talked about a player from the Cuban women's volleyball team, who was smaller than the other players on her team but was extremely talented. Another said that she was really motivated by the dedication of the Olympic rowers. She was especially impressed by the fact that they all got up so early in the morning to train. Of the two rugby players, one cited two male rugby players, one from England and one from New Zealand, as her role models. The other rugby player admired the women that she had played on a team with the previous summer. This was her first time playing on a team outside of school and she felt that many of her teammates were talented, supportive and helpful. The fifth athlete said that Donovan Bailey was her role model since he proved that you do not have to have been doing a certain sport all your life in order to be good at it. She said that he only started training for running when he was 25.

I find it disappointing that these students are not really aware of how many female athletes there are. The students are bombarded with male sports by the media and are afforded little chance to read about or see, female athletes. Most were surprised when I informed them that there were two magazines on the market that focused entirely on women and sports and that MS magazine also had some articles on female athletes.

5. Do men have more opportunities to play sports than women?

All of the athletes felt that men had more opportunities. Although most had been participating in sports since they were young children, they felt that men had more sports to choose from. It seemed that these athletes did not really consider this to be an issue for them. Two mentioned that they had wanted to

play hockey on boys teams when they were younger but that their parents would not let them. Another mentioned that she and her sister had wanted to play baseball on a boys team but were told by the city where they lived that they could only register for softball.

While men do have more opportunities than women when it comes to a choice of sports, the choices for women are increasing especially in the traditional male sports of rugby and hockey.

6. Are sports at the college gender equitable?

In general, the athletes felt that sports were gender equitable since there were the same number of sports for men as for women and that each team had the same number of hours for practices. They also assumed that each female team received the same amount of funding as the male team. I told them that this was true. I do realize that they may not have answered this question honestly since they know that I'm in charge of the sports program.

7. Do you think sports are male dominated? If yes, in what way?

This question elicited a great deal of discussion about professional sports and they all agreed that they were certainly male dominated. Two of the athletes mentioned that the media made it appear as if only men played sports. When I asked them what their opinions were about sports at other colleges, they assumed that they were male dominated but they did not know to what extent. I showed them the college statistics comparing female to male ratios for coaches and administrators. While they did not seem to be surprised to discover that there were more male than female intercollegiate sports they were shocked to discover how few women were administrators and coaches. They had assumed that more women held these positions.

8. Will opportunities in sport ever be equitable for women and men?

What needs to be changed? How can it be done?

While none of the athletes felt that professional sports would ever be gender equitable, some felt that the situation was improving especially with the addition of some professional sports for women starting up in the U.S. This question led one of the groups into a long discussion about the role of the media. I will include some of their comments here using a letter to identify each athlete.

L. It's the media's fault. They don't cover women's sports. Other sports don't exist outside of men's sports.

G. The media shows us what people want to see.

E. How do they know what people want unless they show other kinds of sports? They should show women's sports.

L. They sometimes show obscure men's sports in the paper, so why not women's sports?

E. The News and Chronicle¹⁴ covers a lot of women's sports, but you never hear of any other media covering women's sports like the women's World Cup in soccer, they always cover the men's sports though.

M. I liked watching the WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) but there wasn't much publicity about it and it wasn't on enough.

L. Look at this rugby magazine! It's 300 pages long, there's one article on women's rugby and the title of it is written in pink!

Two of the athletes stated that they preferred watching men's sports (basketball and volleyball) because they were more exciting than the women's sports. That brought out the following comment.

R. We need to change the public's mindset that men's and women's sports are not the same, we have to accept each on their own level. Why do we only care about the world's fastest man? Who's the world's fastest woman? We never hear about her.

The athletes did not have a lot of comments about what can be done to

¹⁴ This is a West Island newspaper.

change this although one felt that it was important for female athletes to coach so that they could be a role model and would encourage more girls to get involved in sport. If more girls got involved, then this would show boys that women can be capable athletes. She also said the following:

I think that women are making advances in the work place. They're making more money and they're more involved in decision making. They aren't going to spend their money on watching men's sports, I think that they're going to support women's sports.

One of the athletes felt that women are used to getting less and that society has higher expectations for men in sports. She felt that women did not speak out enough about inequalities. That brought out the following comments.

M. That's like in high school. Why do men have to do more push ups than women?

G. I think that men are getting more recognition in figure skating. Suriya Bonnaly can do back flips but she's discouraged from doing it. The men are allowed to do it.

K. Men are basically stronger than women, it feels weird when I'm stronger than a guy. The best male athlete will always be better than the best female athlete, it's a fact of life.

R. Guys get humiliated when they are beaten in sports by a girl.

N. The guys cheat in badminton class so they won't lose to a girl.

Through the discussions that evolved around this question, I could see some of the athletes becoming a little angry. They were beginning to realize how women were being treated in the sports world. Although they did not feel that they had personally been discriminated against, they were becoming more aware of the inequities of sports. However, they were not really sure what they personally could do to change it.

9. Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?

I asked this question because I had the impression that this age group did not like to use this term when referring to themselves and I was interested in discovering why. The first athlete that I posed this question to seemed nervous and said that she first wanted me to define what I meant by feminist. I said that it did not matter what my definition of feminist was, I wanted to know what their definition was, and whether they considered themselves to be feminists.

D. A feminist is someone who is trying to get more for women, to try and get what men have.

R. Feminism means working for equality, having men and women at the same level.

N. Feminists are women who want more than men. I'm not a feminist, I think they're too radical.

E. Feminists are too extreme, they don't want men to open doors for them.

G.. I think we need to find a new word because feminists have gone too far and feminism is seen as a bad thing. Men are feeling threatened and they want to keep control.

E. Men don't want to share their power, they want to keep it all.

G. Feminism has gone off in too many directions. We need to fight for important things, not like the right to go topless¹⁵. We have to be quieter in our demands so as not to threaten men.

Of the 12 athletes, only three felt that they were feminists. Most felt that the term was not one that they would use to describe themselves. Of the three, two discussed their use of the term "butch". One of the athletes said that she was afraid that if she got too good in her sport people would think that she was "butch". She did not want to be labeled this way, but she also hated the fact that she thinks that way. Another athlete admitted that she sometimes uses that term to describe other female athletes. She knew that it was not appropriate, but

¹⁵ She is referring to a recent court case in Ontario where women won the right to be topless in public.

she could not help thinking that way.

This was one of the most frustrating aspects of the interviews for me. It was difficult to listen to them denying that they were feminists although I felt that many of their opinions showed that they were feminists. I also really dislike the term "butch". This term is usually used to describe a woman who is good at sports but does not fit our society's definition of what a woman is supposed to look like. I wanted to challenge their beliefs but that was not my intention in this interview. My intention was to discover their thoughts and feelings, not impose my opinions on them.

When the interviews were over, I thanked the athletes for their time and told them to please feel free to come and talk to me anytime if there was something that they had wanted to say in the interview but did not feel that they could. Since the interviews a few have come to see me to talk about a number of different topics ranging from their sports experiences to something they saw on t.v. or read in the paper that related to women in sports. For some of these athletes, the interviews have made them a little more conscious of the male domination of sports and they may be starting to question this. "For women actively involved in sport asking "why" is the first step towards developing a feminist consciousness" (Hall & Richardson, 1982; p. 100).

Limitations of this study

These students make up approximately 10% of the female intercollegiate athletes at the college and as such, they are likely a representative group. However, I cannot claim that these athletes are representative of athletes at other colleges. This school is a private college with relatively high academic standards so the students are not necessarily representative of all Quebec

college students. My main interest was to discover whether I was meeting the needs of the female athletes at the college, if they had any suggestions on how to make sport more gender equitable and to perhaps determine the meaning that they attach to their favorite sports. I did not interview non-athletes which would have given me more insight into the barriers to participation. This would be of interest for further research but I felt it was beyond the scope of this study. Another possible limitation is that these students did not volunteer to be participants in this study, they were chosen.

I found these interviews to be very enlightening as I was given the opportunity to listen to 12 young women tell me about their thoughts and experiences of sports. I am left with the impression that they would like to be involved in upsetting the power imbalances in sport but are not sure how to do it. I believe that a college level course on women and sport which would focus on resistance and transformation in sport could lead some students to be involved in the process. I realize that it is somewhat naive to think that one course can lead to the transformation of sport. However, if students, both male and female, can consciously become more aware of the male domination of sport, then they may want to work towards change.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the situation with intercollegiate sports in the college system is quite similar to that of sports in general in that men dominate at all levels. There are more sports offered for men and women play a minor role in coaching and administrating these sports. While I may have been able to create some changes at my college towards creating gender equity, I feel that I have had no impact upon the larger collegial sports system.

These interviews were interesting in that they reflect the findings of some of the research studies discussed in the previous chapter: the students seem to be well aware of how the media presents female athletes in a less than positive light; some were pressured by their family to participate in more 'traditionally feminine' sports (eg. figure skating instead of hockey); they feel that men have more opportunities in sport than women do; while they may feel that sports are male dominated, they are not sure what can be done to change it. I certainly felt that some of the sports these students were participating in, such as rugby and boxing, were examples of resistance and transformation. They did not necessarily see it that way since they are probably unaware of the struggles that women have gone through in the past in order that women could be given more opportunities to participate. I think it would be interesting to replicate these interviews at other colleges in Quebec, both public and private, and to compare the findings. I would also suggest that non-athletes be interviewed in order to discover what they perceive as being barriers to participation.

While I may desire a complete transformation of the entire sports system, I think that one place to start is with a college course on Sports Feminism where students can learn about the history of women in sports, how women have resisted male domination in sports, what transformations have occurred and what is still left to be done. I realize that simply educating a group of people about how some groups in society are subordinated by certain aspects of society does not ensure that change will occur. However, increased consciousness can lead to empowerment and as Weiler (1988) observes, "The empowerment of students means encouraging them to explore and analyze the forces acting upon their lives" (p. 152). In order for change to occur, women and men must be active agents in the process.

In the following chapter, I am proposing a plan of action drawing on critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. I want to work towards developing a program for change.

CHAPTER FIVE
FINAL CONCLUSIONS: A PLAN FOR ACTION

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FINAL CONCLUSIONS: A PLAN FOR ACTION

Can sports really be transformed? It has proven to be highly resistant to change, yet we have seen many examples where women's presence in sports, especially those traditionally known as 'men's' sports, have created changes. Throughout the history of women and sports there have been numerous examples of how women have been struggling to gain power and control of their own experiences. Their struggles in the sports world have certainly been no different than their struggles in other areas of society yet we still have a long way to go. As a feminist, I am frustrated not only by the many examples of how women are the subordinate group in sports, but also at the seeming indifference to this I have encountered and how many people accept it as 'normal'. Academic theorists have certainly added much to the body of knowledge and women working in the field have created changes to the extent that more and more women are participating in sports, yet there have been little in the way of changes to the basic structure of sports, it remains male dominated. How do we create change? We are in need of praxis, the theorists and those in the field need to work together. While I have seen, and been part of change at my college, I do not feel that I have had any impact upon the larger collegial system. Through my interviews with students at my college, I sense that they see that there is a problem but are either unwilling, or do not know what they can do to change it. A college level course which focuses on women, men and sports and sports feminism can begin a process of change.

In this chapter I present my rationale for the importance of this course¹⁶ and its possible implications. This course is offered for both male and female

¹⁶ See appendix 1 for course syllabus.

students as I believe that both sexes have to be involved if change is to occur. I employ a critical feminist pedagogy in this course because I believe that a feminist curriculum can be transforming. Critical feminist pedagogy brings critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy together. "Critical pedagogy analyzes education as a process through which dominant social and economic groups impose values and beliefs that legitimate their own power and position of control". (Brookfield, S.D., 1995; p. 208). In feminist pedagogy, women are placed at the center of the analysis, and, as Lather (1984) observes, this can show us "the possibilities for fundamental social change that open up when we put women at the center of our transformative aspirations." (p.52).

Critical Pedagogy

As Weiler (1991) tells us, Paulo Freire "Is the most influential theorist of critical or liberatory education. His theories have profoundly influenced literacy programs throughout the world and what has come to be called critical pedagogy in the United States" (p. 450). The focus of Freire's work was to transform society and for the liberation of the oppressed and for humanization to occur. Humanization means that "new relationships among human beings must be created" (Weiler, p. 452). It does not mean that the oppressed should desire to become the oppressors of their oppressors but rather to create a new relationship between the two so that both can work to end oppression. For Freire, it was important that the oppressed come to a conscious understanding of their oppression and that this would lead to a desire to end that oppression. This was his concept of conscientization. According to Freire, people are subjects and not objects of history, and as such, their experiences give them knowledge of the world. This knowledge leads them to recognize their oppression which leads them to action or an attempt to transform society. The teacher plays an important role in leading the students to conscientization. Weiler is critical of a number of points within Freire's pedagogy. She finds the teacher/student relationship to be problematic in that there is

the assumption that the teacher is "on the same side" as the oppressed, and that as teachers and students engage together in a dialogue about the world, they will uncover the same reality, the same oppression, and the same liberation (p. 454).

Freire feels that the relationship between teachers and students is a democratic one and in this, as Weiler explains, he fails to acknowledge the power held by the teacher. Freire also fails to recognize that among teachers and students

and among students, there are a great many different experiences. As Weiler explains, these different experiences can lead to different readings of the world, and different understandings and experiences of oppression.

Gore (1993) criticizes critical pedagogy for its use of a language that is not easily understood. Because of this, critical pedagogy's theories may be seen as being "not emancipatory but rather separatist in its inaccessibility to people who are not familiar with that language" (p. 109). She also critiques the writings of Giroux and McLaren, two proponents of critical pedagogy, for their failure to offer concrete suggestions or strategies that teachers might employ in the classroom. Feminist pedagogy attempts to speak to these issues and to address the shortcomings of critical pedagogy.

Feminist pedagogy

Feminist pedagogy shares many of the same goals as critical pedagogy; the importance of consciousness raising¹⁷ in helping to recognize oppression, and to envision, and work actively towards, ending it. It is important for students to feel that they have power, and can use that power to create change. However, where critical pedagogy focuses on class as being the only form of oppression, feminist pedagogy "begins with the premise that men and women are unequal and have differential access to power structures." (Ng, 1995; p.131). Feminist pedagogy places women at the center and challenges the notion that man's experiences are human experiences. As Hulsebosch and Koerner (1994) explain, we need to value "women's lives, experiences and perspectives" and this will lead to challenges against "our take-for-granted way of seeing the "natural" world" (p.51). Gore (1993) states that feminist pedagogy

¹⁷ Freire uses the term conscientization.

holds two major objectives. The first is to counter patriarchy which has served to keep women in a subordinate position and the second is to transform the education system and to make feminist policies and practices part of the curriculum (p.75).

Where Freire saw experiences as being universal, "feminist theorists have increasingly emphasized the importance of recognizing difference as a central category of feminist pedagogy" (Weiler, 1991; p. 459). As mentioned previously, all women do not experience oppression in the same way. This poses a challenge to the feminist teacher who wants to recognize and acknowledge the experiences of all her students. Recognizing this difference does not necessarily lead to "a common knowledge and solidarity based on sameness, but to the tensions of an articulation of difference" (Weiler; p. 469). There will be tensions, but these can potentially lead to common goals rather than a focus on differences (Weiler; p.470). Feminist pedagogy also addresses the belief in critical pedagogy that the classroom is a democratic place and recognizes that the teacher does have authority and power over the student. As Ng (1995) explains

In spite of our theoretical commitment to a pedagogy of empowerment, as human beings we, too, have internalized the power relations that predominate in our society. In our everyday activities, the people to whom we defer and over whom we exercise our power and authority are all constitutive and reflective of the patriarchal and racist ordering of the society of which we are part (pp. 144-145).

The feminist teacher needs to recognize that she does have power and needs to learn to use it in a positive way in order to empower students. As Weiler (1991) notes, it can be liberating for the feminist teacher to recognize and accept her own authority, and it is important for students, who learn early on in

our society to accept male authority, to see, and accept, female authority.

The potential pitfalls of both critical and feminist pedagogy have been well documented by a number of theorists who have attempted to put both these types of pedagogy into practice. Gore (1993) has been critical of the claim that feminist pedagogy is transformative. She feels that it has only been used by Women's Studies and, as such, "it 'empowers' only those women (and a few men) who have enough openness to, or sympathy with, feminist concerns to elect to take Women's Studies classes" (p. 86). While I recognize that this may be the case, I would hope that my course would attract students, both male and female who are not necessarily sympathetic to feminism. Where would the challenge be in 'preaching to the converted'? I do see aspects of both critical and feminist pedagogy as being useful but certainly not easy to implement in the classroom. I agree with Giroux and Simon (1992) when they explain what they feel is required in an education.

teaching and learning must be linked to the goals of educating students: to understand why things are the way they are and how they got to be that way; to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar; to take risks and struggle with ongoing relations of power from within a life-affirming moral culture; and to envisage a world which is "not yet" in order to enhance the conditions for improving the grounds upon which life is lived (p. 221)

If I have any hope of my course leading to change it is essential that it follows a critical feminist pedagogy. This is certainly not an easy task, and Lewis (1992) has pointed out some of its potential shortcomings. She wrote a very informative article detailing some of her experiences as a feminist University teacher.

Clearly there are times when women immediately embrace the intentions of feminist teaching because it helps them make a different sense of their experience. But just as often,

students struggle with these new understandings as they explore the space between the public and theoretical agenda of the course and the privacy of their everyday lives, where complex negotiations across gender often take their most salient form (p.172).

I believe that not only are the female students who participated in my study afraid of the term feminist, they also do not really feel that it is necessary any more. Since they do not feel that they have been discriminated against they do not really feel that there is a problem. For the most part, they have always been able to play the sports that they want to, and for some of them, they prefer watching men's sports anyway. For a few of them however, the interview was revealing. They began to question some of their beliefs. I think that some students would certainly benefit from taking this course in that they may become actively involved in the transformation of sport.

Employing a critical feminist pedagogy in a class of men and women essentially ensures conflict. As there were only women in the room during the interviews, I am sure that the students felt more at ease expressing themselves. For the most part, the students were quite supportive of each others ideas. This dynamic changes however when there are men in the room. Lewis found that there were times in her classroom when the women objected to what she was saying because they felt that it was not fair to the men in the room. As she explains, this is an aspect of our society that we need to be aware of, "the relations between the women and men in the classroom remains a site that supports only practices that construct women's social acceptability as caretakers of men" (p.175). I have certainly seen this happen in the classroom and elsewhere and I know that I have probably done the same thing when I was a student. Lewis blames this on our patriarchal society which basically holds

that “women have had no choice but to care about the feelings of men. Women know that historically not caring has cost us our lives: intellectually, socially, psychologically, and physically” (p.175). As a feminist teacher, I have to expect that this is going to happen. When discussing issues of how men dominate women in sport, there will certainly be occasions when male students will feel defensive and will take it personally. There are certainly groups of men, such as some minority groups and gay men who have experienced discrimination in sport, yet, for the most part, sports is a male domain and we need to make it a human domain. Making it a human domain means that men are going to have to give up some of the power they wield over sports. I agree with bell hooks (as cited in Lewis) when she says: “Women have a deep longing to share feminist consciousness with the men in their lives (the “good guys”) and together work at transforming their relationships” (p.184).

Hulsebosch and Koerner (1994) describe their vision of feminist pedagogy at work.

The feminist classroom is a place where dialogue is more important than lecture, learning in cooperation with others is typical, and where the qualities of empathy, risk-taking, nurturing and conviction are elicited and affirmed along with the more typical values of challenge, rational thinking, and theory building (p. 55).

Critical thinking

At my workplace, all the faculty are being encouraged to teach critical thinking to the students. This is certainly a challenge, as most teachers did not learn this themselves in University, myself included. There have been numerous books written on the subject yet they often present theories and offer few, if any, concrete suggestions. Grasha (1996), looks at the work of Perry and

Belenky, two researchers who believe that there are three patterns of thinking. According to Grasha, many classroom practices encourage certain modes of thinking which actually discourage critical thinking. For example, the first pattern of thinking is the dualism/received knowledge. This is where students learn that things are either right or wrong, or black or white. There are no grey areas and the teacher is always right. Grasha states that teachers who rely too much on true-false tests and multiple choice exams do not create an environment where students are encouraged to ask questions (p.217). This sounds like much of my educational experience. The second mode of thinking is the multiplism/subjective knowledge. This is where students are shown that there are often different viewpoints held on issues that they learn in the classroom. Although they are shown different viewpoints, they do not often learn ways of discerning which one is better than the others (p.219). The third mode of thinking is the relativism/procedural knowledge. This is the "recognition that points of view differ in quality and that good ones are supported by evidence and other criteria" (Grasha, p.218). Based upon my experience, this third mode is the least used by students and certainly the most difficult to teach. Grasha suggests that teachers need to provide more opportunities in the classroom for students to become critical thinkers. Some of his suggestions include asking the students to write position papers and to hold debates. This certainly cannot be accomplished in just one course, but if more teachers are working towards developing this kind of thinking, then this can encourage students to not only employ critical thinking in the classroom but to use it to reflect on their lives.

Thus, what is needed to teach a course on sports feminism is: a focus on consciousness raising for both students and the teacher; to spend less time

lecturing and more time on dialogue, and encourage all students to participate; to study the experiences of women in sports, in history and in the present time; to focus discuss and challenge commonly held beliefs about women and sports; to recognize and accept women's different experiences of oppression in sport; to encourage students to work towards the transformation of sport by getting involved with activities or groups outside of the classroom; and to focus on developing critical thinking skills.

Conclusion

While critical feminist pedagogy may not yet be in common use, I feel very strongly that it can be effective. While there may be some drawbacks and pitfalls, I think that it is an effective tool towards creating change. There are no guaranteed effects as awareness does not always mean that action will take place. I am encouraged by Weiler (1988) who states

I think it is vital that feminist and other progressive teachers remember the power that social forces exert on themselves and on their students and that they recognize the limits of what is possible to accomplish in a classroom. But by recognizing the limits of what is possible, teachers (and all of us) should recognize the value and importance of *doing* what is possible (p.153).

There are a number of ways to make sports more gender equitable but what it takes are people who are committed enough to the cause to want to create change. The course I have proposed will certainly increase some people's awareness of the oppressive nature of sports, but this certainly does not ensure that they can, or will want to do anything about it. One of the most important and potentially effective aspect of the course is encouraging the students to get involved with a group that is actively working to transform sport.

It is important because they will be able to see how change can and does occur.

It is by encouraging students, not to mention ourselves, to participate in struggles outside of the classroom that we indeed empower students to take control over their lives and change the world, not by eloquent rhetorics that do not stand the test of practice (Ng, 1995. p. 150).

I am committed to the cause, and I consider myself to be a sports feminist. I am aware that throughout this paper, I have been speaking of women as though they were a homogeneous group. This is likely due to the fact that I am usually working with a group of students that likely come from middle and upper middle class backgrounds. While they may all come from similar class backgrounds, they do represent a large number of ethnic groups. It is important for me to remember that "women from different backgrounds do not experience patriarchal culture in identical ways, and they have different opportunities and expectations about sports" (Hargreaves, 1994. p.28).

So what does the future hold? It is an Olympic year and once again, I am seeing more newspaper and television reports on women athletes. The buzz this year is on the Canadian women's hockey team. Is there a chance for a professional league in the future? Perhaps. I have to hope that change can occur because if sports can become gender equitable then the rest of society will follow suit.

Is one course going to make a difference? I would like to think that it would certainly change some peoples' beliefs about women in sport, and would perhaps encourage some to become involved in the transformation of sport. There has been a strong backlash in society against feminism, and young women today seem to reject the term and feel that it is not necessary. While we may have "come a long way baby", we still have a ways to go.

Where else can we make changes? There definitely needs to be improvements in teacher education. Critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy need to be brought out from the fringes and accepted into mainstream curriculum. On an individual level, we have to learn to not be afraid to speak out against sexism. We should write letters to the media when they marginalize female athletes. The sports world is one of the last bastions of male domination and it is in desperate need of transformation.

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Appendix 1

Women, Men and Sports

The following is a course syllabus intended for the CEGEP population.

In this course, we will analyze the position of women in sports today. Before such an analysis can take place, we need to look at the history of women and sports. This history can help us to understand sport as it presently exist. The world of sports is male dominated and although women have made many inroads, there is much work still to be done. How can we make sports more gender equitable? Why should women be given more opportunities? Why are people afraid of the word "feminism"? Can sports feminists help to change sports? In this course we will discuss these types of questions and critically examine the role that sports plays in our everyday lives, and how it has been oppressive to certain groups, especially to women. I use the term sports feminists to describe "men and women who want discrimination in sport on account of gender to be eradicated" (Hargreaves, 1994; p. 26).

Course Content

The course will cover the following:

1. A history of women in sports which will focus on the role the medical establishment played in women's sport participation.
2. Early theories on women and sports emphasizing theories that point to how sports were either physically or psychologically damaging to women.
3. Liberal, Radical and Social feminists and their impact upon women and sports. We will look at the ways that these different groups have been working for gender equity in sports.
4. The role of the media. We will look at ways that the media has contributed to the ideology that sports are for men because of their "natural" ability, and how

they present female and male athletes in different ways.

5. Resistance and transformation. We will critically examine the ways that women have resisted the male domination of sports, and how they have attempted to transform it. There is a practical component to this section. Students, working individually or in groups need to seek out and research groups that are actively working to transform sport. Students can either volunteer to spend some time with the group and/or can interview its participants.

Appendix 2
 QUEBEC CEGEPS AND COLLEGES SPORTS STATISTICS

COLLEGES	ANIMATORS	MALE		FEMALE		MIXED	
		SPORTS	COACHES	SPORTS	COACHES	SPORTS	COACHES
1 ABITIBI	M	3	3M	2	2M	1	1M
2 AHUNTSIC	M	2	2M	1	1M	2	1M 1F
3 ALMA	M	3	3M	3	3M	3	3M
4 AMIANTE	M	1	1M	1	1M	3	3M
5 ANDRE GRASSET	F	2	2M	1	1M	1	1M
6 ANDRE LAURENDEAU	M	2	2M	3	3M	0	0
7 ASSOMPTION	M	2	2M	3	3M	1	1M
8 BAIE COMEAU	M	2	2M	2	2M	0	0
9 BEAUCE APPALACHES	M	2	2M	3	2M 1F	0	0
10 BOIS DE BOULOGNE	M	4	4M	3	2M 1F	5	5M
11 CHAMPLAIN LENNOXVILLE	M	4	4M	2	2M	0	0
12 CHAMPLAIN ST-LAMBERT	M	5	5M	5	2M 3F	0	0
13 CHAMPLAIN ST-LAWRENCE	F	5	5M	4	1M 3F	0	0
14 CHIBOUGAMOU	M	0	0	1	1M	0	0
15 CHICOUTIMI	M	4	4M	2	2F	1	1M
16 DAWSON	M	5	4M 1F	5	5M	1	1M
17 DRUMMONDVILLE	M	2	2M	3	2M 1F	2	2M
18 EDOUARD MONPETIT	F	5	5M	5	3M 2F	2	1M 1F
19 F.X. GARNEAU	F	3	3M	3	2M 1F	2	2M
20 FRANCAIS	M	2	2M	0	0	0	0
21 GRANBY	M	3	3M	2	2M	0	0
22 HERITAGE	M	1	1M	1	1F	0	0
23 JEAN-DE-BREBEUF	F	2	2M	4	4M	2	2M

M = MALE
 F = FEMALE

Appendix 2
 QUEBEC CEGEPS AND COLLEGES SPORTS STATISTICS

	COLLEGES	ANIMATORS	MALE		FEMALE		MIXED	
			SPORTS	COACHES	SPORTS	COACHES	SPORTS	COACHES
24	JOHN ABBOTT	M	6	6M	6	4M 2F	3	2M 1F
25	JOLIETTE	M	3	3M	3	3M	0	0
26	JONQUIERE	M	6	6M	3	2M 1F	3	3M
27	LA POCATIERE	M	0	0	1	1M	2	2M
28	LAFLECHE	M	1	1M	1	1F	1	1M
29	LEVIS	M	4	4M	1	1M	0	0
30	LEVIS-LAUZON	M	5	5M	3	2M 1F	3	3M
31	LIMOILLOU	M	4	4M	4	3M 1F	3	1M 2F
32	LIONEL GROULX	M	3	3M	1	1M	0	0
33	MAISONNEUVE	M	3	3M	3	3M	1	1M
34	MARIANOPOLIS	F	4	4M	4	2M 2F	1	1M
35	MERICI		0	0	1	1M	0	0
36	MONTMORENCY	M	4	4M	3	3M	1	1M
37	NOTRE DAME DE FOY	M	3	3M	3	2M 1F	2	1M 1F
38	OUTAOUAIS	M	2	2M	1	1M	1	1M
39	RIMOUSKI	M	2	2M	2	1M 1F	1	1M
40	RIVIERE-DE-LOUP	M	1	1M	2	2M	2	2M
41	ROSEMONT	M	3	3M	3	3M	2	2M
42	SEPT-ILES	M	3	3M	1	1M	1	1M
43	PETTIT SEM. DE QUEBEC	M	2	2M	1	1M	1	1F
44	SEMINAIRE DE SHERBROOKE	M	2	2M	1	1M	0	0
45	SHAWINIGAN	M	1	1M	2	2M	2	2M
46	SHERBROOKE	M	3	3M	3	3M	1	1M

M = MALE
 F = FEMALE

Appendix 2
 QUEBEC CEGEPS AND COLLEGES SPORTS STATISTICS

	COLLEGES	ANIMATORS	MALE		FEMALE		MIXED	
			SPORTS	COACHES	SPORTS	COACHES	SPORTS	COACHES
47	SOREL TRACY	M	1	1M	1	1M	4	4M
48	ST FELICIEN	M	1	1M	3	2M 1F	1	1M
49	ST-HYACINTHE	M	2	2M	3	3M	3	3M
50	ST-JEAN SUR RICHELIEU	M	3	3M	1	1M	2	2M
51	ST-JEROME	M	2	2M	1	1F	2	2M
52	SAINT LAURENT	M	3	3M	4	3M 1F	2	2M
53	SAINTE FOY	F	3	2M 1F	4	2M 2F	3	3M
54	TROIS RIVIERES	M	5	5M	5	4M 1F	2	2M
55	VALLEYFIELD	M	3	3M	3	3M	1	1M
56	VANIER	M	5	5M	4	2M 2F	0	0
57	VICTORIAVILLE	M	2	2M	3	2M 1F	4	3M 1F
58	VIEUX-MONTREAL	M	2	2M	1	1M	0	0
59	MATAPEDIEN	M	0	0	1	1M	0	0
60								
61	TOTAL	51M 8F	161	159M 2F	146	112M 34F	81	73M 8F