



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

Preprint

This is the submitted version of a paper published in *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Gilenstam, K., Karp, S., Henriksson-Larsén, K. (2008)

Gender in ice hockey: women in a male territory

Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports, 18(2): 235-249

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0838.2007.00665.x>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-30311>

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: "Gender in Ice Hockey – Women in a Male Territory" which has been published in final form at Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports/ Volume 18, Issue 2 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0838.2007.00665.x>

Title page

Submission version of:

Gender in ice hockey - Women in a male territory

K. Gilenstam ¹

S. Karp ²

K. Henriksson-Larsén ¹

¹ Department of Surgical and Perioperative Sciences, Sports Medicine Unit, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden,

² Department of Education, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

Running title: Gender in Ice Hockey

Correspondence:	Kajsa Gilenstam MSc in PT Department of Surgical and Perioperative Sciences, Sports Medicine Unit, Umeå University SE-901 87 Umeå SWEDEN
Phone:	+46 (0)90 - 785 48 19
Fax:	+46 (0)90 - 13 56 92
e-mail:	kajsa.gilenstam@idrott.umu.se

Gender in ice hockey - Women in a male territory

K. Gilenstam ¹

S. Karp ²

K. Henriksson-Larsén ¹

¹ Department of Surgical and Perioperative Sciences, Sports Medicine Unit, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden,

² Department of Education, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

Abstract

This study investigates how female ice hockey players describe and explain their situation within as well as outside their sport. Information was obtained by semi-structured interviews with female ice hockey players. The results were analyzed in a gender perspective where the main starting point was the concepts of different levels of power relations in society developed by Harding and applied to sports by Kolnes (the symbolic, structural and individual level). The study shows that the players appeared to share the traditional views of men and women. They also described gender differences in terms of financial and structural conditions as well as differences in ice hockey history. Even though the players described structural inequalities, they were quite content with their situation and the differences in conditions were not considered when they explained the gender differences in ice hockey performance. On the individual level the players considered themselves different from other women and appeared to share the traditional views of femininity and masculinity.

It has been suggested that performance of a sport traditionally associated with the other sex might alter the traditional view of men and women, however our results give little support to that suggestion.

Key words: Social science, Qualitative study, Gender relations

Development of society and sport

Alongside the urbanisation and industrialisation, society changed. This happened in Sweden during the 1850-1920s, when the growing cities had better resources available in terms of people and money, and thus made sports possible (Olofsson, 1989 p.23). Soderstrom (1998) describes the societal changes in Sweden during this period. When the 24-hour-day was divided into working hours and rest, spare time was created, at least for men. The shift from agricultural to industrial work changed the family structure as well; from the extended family to the nuclear family. These changes also affected the view on men and women. The image of the perfect middle class woman became slender, frail and pale without any other purpose than giving birth to, and raising children. The reality for the working class woman involved industrial work as well as the function as the caring mother, yet socially and culturally, the views and ideas of the middle class dominated the ideal view on woman, also for the working class. With the men working outside the home, women often had the sole responsibility for the upbringing of the children. That boys were raised by their soft and feminine mothers could be counterbalanced by spending time with other boys and men in sports. Sports could thus help transform boys into men. Seen in this perspective, women in sports must have been a contradiction in terms. In spite of this, women were allowed into certain sports as early as the 1880s (Soderstrom, 1998). The women's movement, the new public health campaign and the fact that women gained the opportunity to pursue formal education and work, are considered to be the reasons for another change of the view on women, whereby a healthy and strong woman was the new ideal (Hargreaves, 1994 p.44-49; Soderstrom, 1998 p.170). The entrance of women into sports was carefully guided by the "knowledge" of medical science of that time. Strenuous exercise should be avoided, which limited the number of sports "suitable" for women (Soderstrom, 1998 p.169). By following the expertise, women did not challenge the cultural structure, and they could perform sports without risking their femininity (Hargreaves, 1994 p.30, 88). Over time, women have managed to increase the number of sports "allowed" for women. This has not been without difficulties, and gaining admission to those sports traditionally considered as "male sports" (such as sports involving physical contact and ball games) have proved to be difficult (Hargreaves, 1994 p.30; Scraton et al., 1999; Thing, 2001; Fasting, 2003; Theberge, 2003; Hjelm, 2004).

Sports in general are considered to be the bearer of the male norm; traditionally considered "male sports" are prioritized before "female sports", male athletes are prioritized before female athletes, and men's sports performance is considered better than women's (Pirinen, 2002 p.95). As long as sports continue to subscribe to a male norm, the sports arena will remain an unequal part of society in spite of all the efforts made in order to increase the power of women, because even if the performance would be just as good, women would still not be men (Redelius, 1999). Theberge (1997) has stated that competitive sport is an important arena for production and expression of gender, and when women were admitted, sports were "adjusted" to still convey women as fragile and weak (shorter races, altered rules). These alterations may be the reason why sports empower men, but contribute to the myth of female frailty (Theberge, 1997). However there are more recent researchers that argue that this view is about to change (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003).

In Sweden, as well as in other countries, the decision-making bodies in sports mainly consist of men, and this means men have control over both men's and women's sports (Hargreaves, 1994; Olofsson, 1996; Redelius, 1999). Even though Sweden is considered a country with a rather developed sense for gender equality, the sports arena is still unequal. Equality in sports

is not reached until male athletes are content to compete under the same material conditions as their female colleagues (Olofsson, 1996). Gender in sports in Sweden have been studied from different theoretical points of view (Olofsson, 1989, 1996; Soderstrom, 1998; Koivula, 1999; Redelius, 1999; Fagrell, 2000; Larsson, 2001; Hjelm, 2004), whereas women's ice hockey still remains a fairly new research area.

Ice hockey

Women's ice hockey is considered a "new" sport, but the first recorded game between two women's teams was in Ottawa, Canada in 1891 (Theberge, 2000). When comparing women's and men's ice hockey in Sweden (men's ice hockey in brackets) ice hockey can be described as follows: The first official game recorded by the Swedish Ice Hockey Association was registered in 1969 (1921) and the first national championship 1987 (1922). According to the homepage there are 3 398 female players (62 341), and 21 (1 825) referees in Sweden in 2006 (Svenska ishockeyförbundet).

The board of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association consists of a number of men and one woman and it decides the structure of Swedish ice hockey; the organisation of the play, rules, education of coaches and referees and the distribution of money. Men's ice hockey in Sweden has professional or semi-professional top divisions; the nation-wide Elite series (Elitserien) at the top, and the northern and southern Premier League (Allsvenskan) beneath. Below these, the teams play in regional series, organized in different divisions. In addition, there are inter-company leagues in the cities. In contrast, women's hockey in Sweden has no nation-wide top division, and the teams play in different regions, divided by geographical location rather than skill. This is usually explained to be caused by financial factors. Furthermore, there is no professional or semi-professional ice hockey for women, and the team's finances are similar to those of younger male players, with few sponsors, no entrance fees at games, few spectators except the next of kin, and little media interest. As is the case in other sports, ice hockey has been "adjusted" to fit the female sex, with rules that limit (but not eliminate) body contact and full face protection that must be used. In Sweden, male ice hockey players are allowed body checking from 12 years of age, and full face protection is mandatory until the player is 20 years old.

Women's ice hockey in North America has been studied from a gender perspective. Pelak (2002) has examined the sexist structures in an American university in the development of a women's team. Theberge (1997 p.70) describes that ice hockey is considered a "flag carrier" for masculinity in North America, as it is a popular sport that contains many traits connected with masculinity -- such as explosive strength, aggressiveness and body contact. By performing in a "male" sport, images of ideal masculinity are produced. Theberge has thoroughly described the life in a women's ice hockey team and analysed the gendered structures in Canadian ice hockey, with a special interest in the role of physicality in the gendering processes of women's ice hockey (Theberge, 1997; 2000; 2003). In Canada, women's ice hockey has been promoted as superior to the men's game, with more speed and finesse and less violence, but the female players' opinions vary. Some of them think that women's ice hockey is better without body checking while others regard body checking as "part of the game", and aggressiveness as a tool to use in play. Theberge has argued that by changing the rules of women's ice hockey, the challenge to masculine hegemony¹ was limited. I.e.; as aggressive body contact, a trademark of masculinity, would not be used in the

¹ For a more detailed description of the concept, see "Sporting females", Hargreaves J, 1994 p.21-24

female version of the game, male ice hockey would not risk losing its trademark as a sport for real men (Theberge, 1997).

As women's ice hockey still is a small sport in Europe, gender in ice hockey also remains a fairly new research area in Europe. One way of expanding the research field is to investigate gender in other "male" sports. The development of women's soccer has been investigated in Sweden (Hjelm, 2004), Norway (Fasting, 2003) as well as in other European countries (Scraton et al., 1999). In Germany and Norway women's handball has been studied (Lippe, 1994). However, as sports are organized in different ways in different countries, the results may vary, as shown by the work of Scraton, Fasting, Phister and Bunuel (Scraton et al., 1999). Women's ice hockey in Europe has been included in two previous gender studies; four female ice hockey players were included in a study of aggressive emotions in women's ball games in Denmark (Thing, 2001), and women's ice hockey was included in an analysis of gender in sports in Sweden (Redelius, 1999).

Theoretical considerations

In the analysis of the data it is possible to focus on different areas. In this study the focus concerns gendered power relations in ice hockey. In order to understand the complex gender relations in society Harding (1986) has divided society into three different levels; the symbolic, the structural and the individual level. These levels have been adjusted to research in sport by Kolnes (1994) and her interpretation of the different levels were used in this study. A short description of these levels is presented:

The symbolic level: (or the cultural perspective, according to Kolnes). The symbolic level represents the set of images and qualities that we associate with a certain object, group of people etc

The structural level: (or the structural perspective, according to Kolnes) profiles how power and social structures affect the distribution of resources and privileges for both sexes.

The individual level: (or the individual perspective according to Kolnes) explores how socialisation and personal experiences affect how men and women form their identity.

The different levels should not be considered as separate entities, as they constantly interact with each other. However, they are useful in the analysis and understanding of the structures in society and in sports. The different levels applied to our view of culture and biology can be seen in fig. 1.

Aims

This article is part of the project "Ice Hockey from a Physiological and a Gender Perspective". The general purpose of this article was to investigate how female ice hockey players describe and explain their situation within their sport as well as outside sport, in a gender perspective.

Specific aims:

- How do female ice hockey players describe the material and structural conditions in their sport?
- What differences do they describe when they compare their material and structural conditions with their male counterparts, and how are they explained?
- What do female ice hockey players consider to be feminine and masculine behaviour in

sports?

- How do female ice hockey players describe themselves in relation to what they consider feminine or masculine?
- What kind of strategies can be seen in their descriptions of how to be accepted in their sport?

Materials and methods

Informants.

The team selected for the study was from the highest division, and one of the best teams in the region². The team members were informed about the purpose and methods to be used in the investigation, that the participation in the study was on a voluntary basis where they could end their participation at any time, requiring no explanations. As one of the authors is a former member of the team, this required extra careful considerations before the start of the investigation. In order to avoid a presumably awkward situation for the players and to ascertain that the players did not feel compelled to participate, the interviews were conducted by someone not familiar with the team, but experienced in performing interviews.

The women selected for the interviews represent different aspects of the team. The players in this study were between 19 and 27 years old (median 24), and had different types of employment (4 students, 1 day-time work, 2 shift-work) and social situations. Playing experience ranged between 3 and 11 years (median 6) and the age when they started to play varied between 10 and 17 years (median 16). Results from a previous study, i.e. a questionnaire was used on male and female teams in the area (unpublished data), served as a starting point for the interview and was the basis for the selection of informants and themes in the current study, as these themes appear to be central in the understanding of the conditions and requirements that the women experience. The interviews followed an interview guide, with the key themes: “ice hockey history,” “social networks,” “life plans and priorities,” “me and my sport, ambitions and possibilities.” A general theme was to know more about their expectations and if they thought the situation could or should be in any other way, and if they thought the situation would be different if they belonged to the other sex.

The informants were interviewed individually, according to a semi-structured protocol, in a calm environment in an indoor garden, after the end of the season. Semi-structured interviews ensured that certain themes were covered, but at the same time there was flexibility in the structure of the interviews to discuss other interesting subjects as they emerged in the course of the interviews (Amis, 2005 p.108). At the end of each interview, the interviewer made a summary, and the informant was able to make corrections and add details, a factor which decreased the risk of misinterpretations made in the interview situation. After each interview, the interviewer and the author familiar with the ice hockey culture listened to the interview together and discussed it before the next interview was made. This was done in order to improve the quality of the interviews and did not alter the key themes.

Data analysis

The interviews was transcribed verbatim and then analyzed in a systematic way, inspired by methods previously described (Lantz, 1993 p.74-77; Karp, 2000 p.68-70). Thus inductive and deductive reasoning were used to interpret the data content. Miles and Huberman (1994)

² The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Medical Faculty, Umeå University, Sweden.

suggest that researchers in their analysis start with themes derived from relevant literature and add more themes and subthemes as the analysis goes on. Such an approach was considered fruitful for this study because it allows one to gain creative insight from the data without necessarily denying or reinventing concepts that have been useful previously (Denis et al., 2001). The approach has also been described by other methodologists i.e. (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Lofland and Lofland, 1995). In the process of understanding our data we have also followed recommendations for analyzing semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002; Smith and Osborn, 2003). To begin with we read the verbatim transcription to identify raw data quotations representative for the key themes discussed in the interview. These raw data quotes became the basic units for the analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Units with similar meaning were combined into lower order themes and were noted as characteristics of the interview. A written summary of the interview was also made and a copy was sent to the informant to ascertain that no factual errors had been made in the process. After this, the next interview was transcribed, analyzed and summarised. This procedure was repeated with every new interview and a compilation of similarities and differences was performed with each interview. This comparison made it vital to re-examine the previous transcripts again and again and made it possible to see new details in the interviews than had been noted before. Hence the lower order themes were further inspected to determine how they could be combined to more abstract higher order themes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss, 1987; Ely, 1991; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Overall the way Ely (1991) describes the process of analyzing qualitative data corresponds highly to how our work has been carried out.

In the interpretation of the results in this study, the person making the analysis has previous experience as a player in the team with a good knowledge of the people in their social context. We were aware that the researcher's pre-understanding always affects the analysis, as interpretations are impossible without them (Lantz, 1993 p.76; Nystrom and Dahlberg, 2001). Though if the pre-understanding is used correctly they may deepen the understanding and the analysis, but used incorrectly, we risk producing results that simply reflects our pre existing knowledge or opinions (Nystrom and Dahlberg, 2001). In order to limit these negative effects, the compilation of similarities and differences helped to keep the analysis in close contact with the data.

Eight individuals were selected for interviews. When seven interviews had been performed and analysed, a coherent pattern was forming and it was considered that sufficient material had been collected in order to enable a thorough analysis, yet the collected data was small enough to be able to obtain a deep knowledge of the interviews (Biddle et al., 2001).

In the results, facts about the individuals were changed and assumed names were used in order to maintain the individual's anonymity.

Results

In the following text the women's stories are described and analysed in a gender perspective. In order to understand the complex gender relations in society the data was analyzed in three different levels, as previously described (Harding, 1986; Kolnes, 1994).

Quotations of the informants are written in *italics*. When citation marks are used in the text, they are not quotations, but implicate words that are symbolically loaded, or important in the context. In order to make the quotations easier to read, they have been carefully modified

from the form of spoken language to the written form (Kvale, 1996 p.241). All the emphases in the quotations are made by the informants.

Descriptions of female and male athletes

The players in this study describe that women and men are supposed to be different from each other; do different things and behave differently. This is in agreement with previous research (Soderstrom, 1998; Scraton et al., 1999; Fagrell, 2000; Thing, 2001). Koivula (1999 p.129) describes how women are supposed to choose sports where a toned, slender body is necessary or where sport is a tool in order to shape and tone up the body. In contrast, men are supposed to engage in sports where physical power and endurance is important. In our study one of the players describes how women are supposed to be cute, or take care of something cute. The tone in her voice has traces of disdain; she does not seem to agree.

Girls are supposed to be preoccupied with horses or something cute or you are supposed to do aerobics, have long nails and be good looking. Erika

The general image of a female ice hockey player in society is described as a strongly built person, wearing baggy, unisex clothes; in other words, having a masculine appearance. Her behaviour is also described to have a masculine touch. Besides performing a male sport, she is also using snuff, a habit traditionally associated with men.

- - I suppose the image of a female ice hockey player is a girl with her cap the wrong way around, spitting snuff. Erika

A “female ice hockey player” is not the same as an “ice hockey player,” as the word “ice hockey player” usually produces images of strong, masculine and powerful men. Without the gender prefix, the ice hockey player is a man, and by this, the female player is constructed as something else, a deviation from the male norm in ice hockey and from the traditional image of a woman. Since the female ice hockey player is considered more masculine than other women, this image is often coupled with questions around sexual orientation. “*Do you have any lesbians on your team?*” is a question several of the players have been asked from people in their surroundings.

Otherwise the players describe women and men as different from each other, where men are better athletes than women. Male athletes are described almost like machines; ambitious and always doing their best at practice, having good training attendance and good at handling criticism. Female athletes are described in a rather negative way; as less ambitious and more emotional than male athletes, the norm.

You sort of think that guys are better physically, that they are made for hockey. It is as if they could play hockey the moment they were born. We were so bad the first year! You thought... are we really made for hockey? Elisabeth

Girls are not as eager to practise as boys. A boy always performs his best at practice - - Elisabeth

It is possible to push boys harder, you know. Girls give up if things get too tough ... practically. Lisa

It is difficult for girls to be criticized. We protest, get sad and might even quit because of that. Boys know what to take in and what to ignore. Elisabeth

The view of men as better athletes affects the conditions for both men and women, and the assessments of actions are often gender dependent. As men are "better" than women from the beginning, some players feel a need to prove that they are just as good as men and are motivated to perform their best when they practise together with boys or men. Almost all the players in this study use "male players" as a synonym of "better players," and to become a good player you need to play with boys.

I think it's easier to get motivated when practising together with boys, you sort of adopt their level of commitment. You become more like a competitive sort of individual; you have to prove that you are good, sort of. You want to prove that you are just as good as them. Maria

Conditions for women in ice hockey

In sports the material resources are important both to develop the sport and to attract athletes as well as spectators. Such material resources are ice time, monetary reimbursement of costs, loss of income that have occurred due to the participation in the sport, and support from their loved ones. The view of how women and men "are," affect the decision-making bodies and thus the above mentioned conditions. The view of how men and women "are," also make sports more "suitable" for men or women, and this affects the popularity and hence the number of performers. As ice hockey involves traits traditionally associated with masculinity, and mostly is performed by men, ice hockey is considered a male sport, and thus the ice hockey arena is seen as men's property. The players in this study are aware of the fact that the arena "belongs" to men, and that "real" ice hockey players are men, and the players adjust their expectations on the conditions for their sport in terms of finances and ice time. One of the newly started players describes her expectations:

I guess I knew girls were not as prioritized as boys [in the allocation of ice time] Linda

Lisa was involved in the creation of a woman's team and she describes their expectations on the allocation of ice time when the women's team started. Even before they started to play, they knew that women were not considered as important as men in the distribution of practice time or media attention. As the arena belongs to men, men are "letting women in."

We couldn't expect anything else, could we? It was amazing that they let us in at all, in the beginning. Lisa

Yet several years later, the ice time had not changed, but Lisa has an explanation for this:

When we were playing in the Bears, they distributed the practice hours among their teams... first to the men's team, the junior teams and so on.... They [the men's senior and junior teams] practise around six or seven o'clock every day, so there were only the late hours left for us, because the younger teams couldn't practise then. So we were left with just the late hours, you know. Lisa

We got all the latest practice hours, I think it was between 10.30 and 11.30 or something like that. They were definitely the last hours, before they switched off the light in the arena.
Erika

It is obvious that male ice hockey players are prioritized when practice times on ice are distributed to different teams, but this is accepted by the players and they do not object to the way things are. As it is still considered a new sport, perhaps things will get better. Players that have played in other cities describe situations when 12-year-old boys got practice time inside the arena while the women practiced on the outdoor rink, even at games, and that they were even forced to practise in neighbouring cities sometimes. In their current club the ice time has improved, perhaps due to the fact that there are only women's teams in the club. Seen in this perspective, their situation has improved, and the players are rather content with the situation – it is “*better than before*”.

Players with shift work describe that it is impossible to attend every practice since the club cannot compensate for loss of income, and that it is sometimes hard to go to practice or games as the people closest to them feel that their job and hobby take up too much time. It seems it is easier to be at games or practice if the partner has similar activities. The man waiting at home - not the woman - is experienced as a strange situation. As women's ice hockey cannot be anything other than a hobby in Sweden, it is hard to motivate why hockey has a high priority in life. It makes it hard to make demands on the surroundings in terms of support from family as well as from colleagues at work, media attention etc. The players do not expect much from their surroundings in terms of support; even the absence of hindrance to play, is considered support. The players often describe their support from their family in terms of “*they think it's nice that I'm doing something.*”

If he went away on games too, perhaps it would be different. Then I might not have felt that I had to stay at home- - If he went away on games, then I might as well do the same.
Erika

The players have an explanation to the unequal distribution of media attention between men's and women's sports. They consider it natural that men are the target group for media, as men generally are more interested in sports.

I think media focus on a certain target group. It is more of a guy-thing to be interested in sports, isn't it?
Linda

It seems that one reason for not questioning the inequalities in conditions is the fear of negative reactions. The way the players understand it, as men play the real version of the game, sports media have men as their target group. Women's ice hockey is of little interest. As Maria puts it, it might even be counter productive if women's ice hockey received more media attention, as it would intrude on the attention towards men's sports.

Actually I think it's on a fairly good level [the media coverage in the local paper]. Because...I think it could get too much also. If we were mentioned more often, I think some people could become a little... “Anti”.. That we would take up too much space, compared to the number of spectators at the games and so on...
Maria

Perhaps the risk of negative reactions is one of the reasons why the players usually use the traditional images of men and women in order to explain gender differences in motivation, training attendance and playing skill. However, when the subject is discussed more deeply, other explanations are offered.

Boys won't be allowed to play if they don't attend practice, generally. There aren't so many players in our team, you know, so the best ones get the playing-time anyway Lisa

- - I think it's possible for them [men with lower amount of motivation or skill] to play in another team then... or play in an inter-company team or so. Maria

Even though differences or unfairness in conditions are described, they are usually not used in order to explain a part of the differences in performance between men and women. It seems as if the players still use the traditional set of images of how men and women “are,” similar to everybody else. This also means that it is not needed to justify why male and female ice hockey players have different conditions, or to discuss factors that might at least partly explain why the quality of the play may differ. Of course there may be other factors affecting the differences in ice hockey performance than difference in conditions, but the different conditions should be taken into consideration in the analysis.

It appears that the players have somewhat accepted the general view of women's ice hockey. Even in their own eyes, their own sport and their own performance is devalued; boys are better than girls. A few of the players have experience as coaches for girls teams, and they disagree; if girls start to play at the same age as boys, they are just as good as boys. However, all the players agree that men are better ice hockey players than women. When the players critically analyse women's ice hockey and compare it with ideals from men's ice hockey (how the game should be played), they understand why women's ice hockey is not considered as good as the men's play, and why they cannot expect the same conditions as the men.

I don't really know what one can expect, I mean, anyone who watches a women's game and who has seen men's hockey before can see that there is not the same speed, toughness or action. It is not as fun to watch. Erika

Perhaps the players see it the other way around - if women's ice hockey improves, the players will earn better conditions. The players have adjusted their aims and goals to what is possible to achieve. Since there are no possibilities of becoming a professional ice hockey player they do not dream of becoming one.

I used to dream of becoming a hockey-star as a kid... But not when I got older, because it's impossible. Maria

I think it is unwise for guys not to go in for school at all; because so few can make a living on it (ice hockey), but it is more important for girls. Guys can live on hope... for a little while anyhow [Laughs]. Maria

Since, at least for them, ice hockey cannot be anything but a hobby, they prioritize education or work instead of ice hockey. Few of the players have any specified personal aims; they just play because “*It is fun*”, but at a hypothetical offer of a contract as a professional player, most of the players brighten up. It would be amazing to practice and play much more, “*to see how*

good I can get". Furthermore, no one mentions money or fame; it is the possibility to enhance their play that they consider.

Money should not be the reason why you play. You should do it because you think its fun, and if you can make a living on it as well, that's a bonus Erika

The female ice hockey player

The players describe the astonishment on people's faces when they say they play ice hockey, and the players seem to find it amusing, as well as it makes them proud – it is evident in their expressions and tone of voice. It is as if they change in the eyes of the observer; they gain positive qualities associated with men. The players describe only positive experiences from the other teams in the ice hockey arena, they feel that once the novelty of a women's team had faded, they were accepted as one of the home teams. As women's ice hockey is a minor sport, with little media coverage, few people know about the existence of local teams for women. Most players describe positive reactions from people; it is "*cool*" that they play hockey. It is unexpected, but in a positive way.

People react when you say that you play hockey and they think it's cool, no matter who you tell. Erika

It's quite fun to see how people react when he (her boyfriend) has told them that I play hockey, and when they see me they just say ... but You can't play hockey! Maria

The players seem to experience the positive reactions as compliments; they are performing an unexpected sport, and they feel they gain esteem. Another way of seeing it is that as they don't look like female ice hockey players (*with their cap the wrong way around, spitting snuff*) they look like women are supposed to, and their femininity is reinforced. Some of the players are more strongly built and they do not describe the same positive reactions; they only describe astonishment. It seems as if it is less positive to perform a male sport if the woman does not look feminine enough.

Challenge of gender

It appears that being a woman in a male territory is somewhat like walking a tightrope. The players challenge the gender order simply by performing the sport. From the previous text it seems as if the players have accepted the "difference paradigm." Men and women are described as two groups very different from each other. However, they don't consider themselves to fit into this description.

I think you have to be a certain kind of person if you want to play hockey. You cannot be afraid of getting hurt and it doesn't matter if you smell a little. In that respect you are tough. You have to be a little "guyish" [sic]. Erika

The players see themselves as different from other women, in a positive way. They do not want to be like ultra-feminine, unpractical women with long nails, high heels, and sensitive (to criticism). In their opinion, female ice hockey players represent a version of femininity that is more like men. A common way to avoid challenging the traditional view of women is to accept it to be true for others, but not for themselves. Sometimes they feel different even

from other female ice hockey players. First they describe how women “are,” and then how they differ from this description.

I don't think that a woman's team can have a coach who has been coaching men. The coach must listen more, and he can't be as dominating as a guy's coach and just stand there yelling. Personally, I would prefer a coach like that, a terrier or a killer, just to see how it is, because sometimes the coach can be a little too soft [in his approach in dealing with players]. Maria

When the players explain why they like to play, many describe that they like that it is a physical sport; they love to exert their physical power to the limit, as well as the physical contact in the game. The players describe the physical part of the game as refreshing, as if it feels good to be allowed to go beyond what is allowed in society. Is it possible to regard ice hockey as a free zone and the ice as a place where it is allowed for women to behave more freely?

Many people say that I am a different person on the ice... or that I am a rather reserved person off the ice - - But you kind of need it to... let off steam [laughs]. Maria

It's a tough sport. I'm hot-tempered, so I think it's nice to let off steam once in a while. You must do your utmost, it really is tough. You both give and take blows. I don't know, girls need it too, I suppose. Erika

The limitation of body checking is discussed by all the players. None of them knows for sure the reason for the altered rules for women, but they mostly assume it is due to the big variations in skill and age within and between teams. All of the players want to have body checking, as they consider it part of the game, but some of them are uncertain how this would work for young or inexperienced players, as there is only one league in which they currently play. What is certain is that body checking and physical play are considered important. Some of the players object to the fact that women are not allowed to body check. They think that gender is of no importance, since women and men play in separate leagues. The players view the limitation of body checking as an obstacle from being regarded as the real sport. They feel that they are real ice hockey players, even if they are not as good as men, they are made for ice hockey just as men, and they are not frail and weak women. They do not feel any need to adjust any rules or the physical training regimen simply because they are women. “*The same muscles are used*” and body checking should be allowed. They sometimes feel pampered by their male coach and want more physically demanding practices on ice. Very few make critical remarks on men's ice hockey, it is obvious the male version of ice hockey is considered the real version, and they want women's ice hockey to be developed in the same way. As the rules are not the same for women, it looks different. The limitation of body checking reinforces the differences and results in a devaluation of women's ice hockey.

Some guys think it's a bit absurd that we aren't allowed to body check. Maria

If we were allowed to body check, perhaps we would be regarded as a women's team and not as a junior team. Hanna

I don't think that the sex should decide whether body checking should be allowed or not. I think the age should decide. Hanna

All the players describe the importance of media attention in the development of women's ice hockey. If more people knew of the existence of local women's teams, it could increase the number of players. Some of the players are beginning to question the unequal treatment by media.

The men's team loses practically every game and they still get half a page in the paper every time. The priority is a bit strange, isn't it - - We get our usual five-by-five paragraph, or whatever it is. Lisa

They've got the same problem in Somethingville. They didn't write anything there in spite of the fact that the women's team played in the final in the national championship and the men had been eliminated long before, but generally speaking, the media do not give much space to women's sports. Lisa

They want media to distribute attention according to sports achievement, not to gender. Perhaps the traditional view of sports as men's territory is beginning to change? Even though these thoughts are not shouted from the roof tops but rather quietly considered, they might indicate new ways of thinking.

You should invest as much in girls as in boys, I mean with physical training and coaching and everything. You shouldn't pamper girls. I am well aware that female players will never have the same physique as men, because it's not possible. Even if we try to make everything in society equal, that will never happen, but you should get the chance to become as good as you can get. Erika

Perhaps the players are starting to question the unequal conditions in men's and women's sports as well? At first the players usually describe women and men as very different from each other, but later in the conversation these differences usually decrease or disappear. Here is an example where two different contexts in the conversation produce different descriptions made by the same woman.

Girls are not as eager to practise as boys. A boy always performs his best at practice, but in our team it varies. Sometimes it looks quite good and sometimes it sucks. I usually do my very best at practice. Elisabeth

The men's team back home played in the Premier league before and then they practised much, much more. Now that they play in division one, they don't practise as much. They are less motivated and they don't show up at the summer practice. Elisabeth

The conditions for men and women affect their behaviour, motivation and performance. This is usually not considered in the description made by the players. The results from the different levels, here described, are summarised in fig. 2.

Discussion

The sometimes contradicting statements made by the players are more easily understood when the different levels described by Harding (1986) and Kolnes (1994) are used.

Furthermore, these levels also make it possible to understand what the contradictions stand for and how the players position themselves in relation to gender, power and their view of biological differences between men and women.

Symbolic level

The symbolic level is what we usually consider as the natural way of how men and women are, and because of this, we are rarely aware of its existence (Kolnes, 1994). In this study the players describe the traditional view of women as inferior to men, both physiologically and in athletic performance. Men are considered more ambitious and focused on performance whereas women are described as more sensitive to criticism and more focused on their own appearance than on sports performance. The players describe women's ice hockey in a negative way; they are ashamed of the lower pace, and skill, "*it is not as fun to watch*". They use men's ice hockey as the norm, it is the "real" version of the sport, and the players want women's ice hockey to develop in the same way. This forms a dilemma for the players; as they devalue women, they also devalue themselves. The solution to this dilemma seems to be to consider oneself to be an exception to the rule. This phenomenon has been described previously when females enter into other male sports. The soccer players in Scraton's (1999) study did not want to be associated with anything feminine and this was explained by a necessity to be in opposition to femininity, in order to become accepted as footballers. Previous studies have also described how women devalue their own sex as well as their own capacity (Scraton et al., 1999; Fagrell, 2000 p.212; Larsson, 2001 p.52, 59) and how women consider themselves to be different from other female athletes (Larsson, 2001 p.52). The women in the current study describe their experiences of the behaviour of their male coaches who have treated them as frail and sensitive to criticism. It seems as if their coaches also have been influenced by the traditional view of women. However, as these women do not feel like other women, this is not how they want to be treated. They want to improve their play, and to be physically exhausted after practice.

Two versions of the view of female ice hockey players appear through the players' stories; the one others have, and their own. Others think of female ice hockey players as women with masculine behaviour and looks, while their own image is quite different. A female ice hockey player is just like any other woman, only a little bit better; she is not like "girlie girls", she is more down to earth; not afraid of pain, getting sweaty or exhausted. Sometimes this view concerns all female ice hockey players, and sometimes it is specific to themselves. It is a complex situation with seemingly contradicting statements, but it seems as if they feel like "real" ice hockey players, but at the same time they are still second class, as they are not as good as men. Here lies a dilemma: If they are too much like men in body composition, strength and skill, they will not be considered as "real" women, perhaps even lesbian, but if they are too much like "real" women, they will not be considered "real" hockey players. Fasting (2003) describes a similar experience from female soccer players in Norway, who in the same way have entered a man's playing field. They also reported that especially women that differ from the feminine stereotype risked to be labelled "lesbian". Is this the reason why the female ice hockey players in this study are satisfied when people are surprised that they play ice hockey? Is it a confirmation that they are feminine enough to still be considered "normal"? The players do not want to be like the symbolic image of a woman, because it is not compatible with their experiences in sports. They do not feel fragile or weak, they feel their bodies are made for playing ice hockey too. The players do not want to be pampered with, they want to be taken seriously and want to allow body checking in women's hockey again.

The way we use symbols and associate them with certain characteristics is hard to change at will, by constructing laws or by telling people what their opinions should be, but by seeing people act outside what is considered normal, the contents of the symbolic level become visible. In this process, the symbols, and what they represent may be susceptible to change. Even though the players are not actively trying to change what “a woman” represents on the symbolic level, their presence in a male sport may have an effect (Fasting, 2003). A possible example of this in this study is that the players with experience from coaching girls’ teams had a more nuanced view of boys and girls than the other players, and indicates that the symbolic is possible to change. Furthermore, the players describe an increase in interest from people around them after the bronze medal in the Olympics in 2002. Perhaps the view of the female ice hockey players has changed after the silver medal in the Olympics in 2006 (after these interviews were made), when the women’s national team was popular in the media. The gendered structure in sports have changed in other areas than ice hockey as well. For example; there are male stars in soccer known for their interest in fashion, a trait associated with femininity at the symbolic level, and, the male athletic body is more exposed in media than before. Furthermore, women are sometimes portrayed as competent and empowered athletes (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003). The symbolic images of man and woman are beginning to crack.

Structural level

The structural level describes the social structures where activities, sports and type of work are divided as suited for men or women (Kolnes, 1994 p.34).

In the cities, the ice time is allocated according to a hierarchical order, where the women’s team usually is last on the list. It is as if the ice hockey arena was a fortress of masculinity, where men at the gate decide whether to open the gate for women or not, as if women were intruders in a male territory, or guests, at best. Even though the players describe differences and unfairness, the structural differences are rarely used when comparisons are made of ice hockey performance, and the players seldom object to the unequal conditions. According to Ethelberg (1985), there are three possible strategies women can use in order to solve the fact of unequal distribution of power (and conditions) between men and women. Women have to choose between preserved self-esteem and perception of reality. The players thus need to use a strategy where inequalities are explained as relevant. Since men are better, hence they deserve more. Another possible strategy is not to accept inequality and demand better structural and material conditions, but this strategy means you are considered difficult, and thus produce negative emotions (Ethelberg, 1985). In Olofsson’s (1996) study of female top athletes in Sweden, the athletes did not object to unequal treatment by their sports organizations, as they were afraid of being considered whiners. Here lies a dilemma for the players; they want to be able to perform their sport under the same conditions as the men, but they do not express them. It is not worth it, as the players are aware of the fact that the arena “belongs” to the men. Since, 1) they don’t correspond to the symbolic view of “real” ice hockey players, 2) women’s ice hockey is not as developed as men’s ice hockey and 3) their ice hockey skill is not as good as men’s they adjust their expectations. It is a complex situation; by not demanding any change, their existence is accepted, but it also limits their possibilities and hampers the future development of the sport as it contributes to status quo.

If women take up too much space or make demands on a more gender equal organisation they might be threatening the current gender structure. Perhaps women will not be welcome in the ice hockey arenas if they demand too much? The players described positive reactions and

acceptance by the other teams in the arena, when they were given the latest ice times at night, and the conditions for the other teams were not affected. The question is if the positive reactions would have changed if the women's team had been prioritized as a senior men's team, as they would have "taken" times from other teams? Is the treatment of the women's team only gender dependent, or are there other hierarchies as well, such as old established teams versus new teams? How would a new men's team have been treated? It is hard to make comparisons between men's and women's ice hockey, as a lot of factors differ, such as number of players, structure of the play in divisions, number of spectators, media attention, financial situation etc. When differences are found it is hard to explain what the reasons for them are. As we have no beginners team in men's ice hockey to compare with, we have to describe the differences and analyze them in relation to research performed in other areas. An investigation mentioned by Hjelm (2004 p.242-243), describes a general reluctance within the Swedish sports movement towards newcomers, such as new sports, new teams as well as new groups of people performing sports, as they are seen as competition for practice time in community-owned sports facilities, media attention and athletes. In the light of this information, women in ice hockey have a double burden, they are a new group performing an established sport, even a sport considered to be the pride of the nation, and a sport considered suitable only for "real" men. Kolnes (1994 p.9) describes that elite sport, and especially sports media is considered an important supplier of traditional images of femininity and masculinity that helps to maintain the current gender structure. Women seem to be the losers if the competition for ice time is tough (Theberge, 2000 p.9). An example of the power structure in ice hockey in Sweden is presented by Redelius (1999) when she quoted some of the statements that Rickard Fagerlund, former head of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association made before the Olympics in Nagano in 1998. "They are a sad sight;" "the girls sing better than they play hockey;" and "the investment on the women's national team is wasted money." She asks why nobody reacted to his statements, or fired back, and how he could be allowed to still remain in charge (Redelius, 1999). This reveals how fragile the situation is for women in a male territory, where men dictate the terms for the "guests".

There are some major differences in the rules in women's ice hockey compared to men's, as intentional body checking is prohibited and full face protection is needed. These alterations compared to the male play may have several reasons, but the effect is a structural difference between men's and women's ice hockey, where men's hockey becomes "better" and "the real version" and women's hockey becomes "inferior" and "other" than the real version (fig. 3.), and it reinforces the gender differences of men's and women's hockey (Theberge, 1997; 2000) on the symbolic level.

Theberge describes how some feminists have warned against an uncritical adoption of the male model in contact sport and want to emphasize pleasure in motion and skill instead of force and domination. The female players in her studies are divided in their opinions of the limitation of body contact in women's ice hockey; some stated that the limitation of body contact enables the game to have more finesse, and some wanted to play "the real version" of the game (Theberge, 1997; 2000; 2003). All the players in the current study want to restore body contact in women's ice hockey. Thing (2001) tries to answer the question why females want to play a "male" game and her answer is that it is one way to be able to do things that are not considered feminine. This is in accordance with our results. The informants also express the joy of being able to "*let off steam*" on the ice, as "*girls need it too*" even though this is not normally considered to be a feminine trait. Their only concern is that body checking might increase the risk of injuries on younger or less skilled players, as the teams consist of players

in a wide range of age and skill. By limiting the physical part of the game, the characteristics of the game have changed.

The structural level describes the distribution of money, practice time on ice and the organization of leagues to play in, for example, and by this, the conditions on the structural level may affect the individual level. As ice hockey is considered a male sport, a lot of men and few women start to play the game and female coaches are rare. The organization in men's sport in general is more developed, and with more resources such as money, staff and players and the series are more developed. The players describe how the different series increase the possibilities to find a league and a team matching their own degree of motivation and skill and that this opportunity does not exist for female players in the same way. However, the situation can change. Fasting (2003) has described the structural development of women's soccer in Norway that started in the 1970s, and she explains that the reason for the positive development is found in the Norwegian Football Association, where both women and men have struggled towards better conditions for female players. She describes the importance of having women in the board rooms, and to strive for more than only an increase of female players, but for coaches, and referees as well (Fasting, 2003). It can be noted that the relative amount of female ice hockey players today are in accordance with the relative amount of female soccer players in 1971 in Sweden (Svenska ishockeyförbundet; Hjelm, 2004).

Individual level

The individual level is where femininity and masculinity are internalised when the individual and personal identities are formed in interaction with other individuals within a cultural system (Kolnes, 1994 p.38).

Even though the players are well aware of the fact that both the sport and the arena belong to men, it did not stop them from starting to play. It shows that the possibilities are bigger on the individual level than what is described on the symbolic level. The players accept the general view of women on the symbolic level as something that is true for others, but not for themselves. They feel a bit special, different from other women, more like men, but in a positive way. One may wonder if this becomes a part of their identity, and whether it is transferred to other situations as well? For a woman in a male sport, it is probably important to distance herself from the symbolic view of women in general, in order to justify her involvement in sport. Similar results are described in previous research (Scruton et al., 1999).

Most of the players describe amazement and positive reactions when they tell people they play hockey, they feel as if they gain in esteem. People do not expect them to play, they do not look like ice hockey players. Why do they take this as a compliment? Does this imply that they look like an "ordinary" woman, and don't correspond to the traditional view of a female ice hockey player? The players do not identify themselves with the symbolic description of female ice hockey players (*with their cap the wrong way around, spitting snuff*). Thus, they are contradictory in their description of themselves. They are, but are not, ordinary women. They want to justify themselves outside the arena as well as not differ too much from the general view of women.

Why is it that the players themselves sometimes do not consider all the female players to be different from the traditional view? As the level of motivation, experience and skill usually varies within a wide range in a female ice hockey team (due to the fact that there is only one division to play in, and few teams and players), perhaps the women feel a need to distance

themselves from the players who have recently started to play. If they do not differentiate themselves from the less skilled players there is a risk of reducing their worth as ice hockey players. This fear of not being considered serious athletes is also described by Larsson (2001). As the serious athlete is a trait that belongs to the symbolic view of men the female athletes felt a need to prove they were not practising sport only in order to socialize with friends.

Acting outside the gender area does not seem to change the players' view of women in general. This means that to be a female player in a male territory is empowering on the individual level, but not for women in general, as they consider themselves as exceptions to the rule. The same kind of results are described in soccer (Scruton et al., 1999) and track and field athletics (Larsson, 2001) and indicate that this is a common strategy. It seems as if it is important not to empower women in general and hence make women's sports as harmless as possible, in order to get admission to new sports. A similar approach was seen in the beginning of women's sports, when women followed the recommendations made by those in power (Hargreaves, 1994). One might wonder if the strategy has changed much since then, or if it is only the number of sports that have increased.

The players in the current study do not object to the unequal treatment, and do not actively try to change the traditional view of women, as the general view of women still is considered to be true for other women (sometimes even for other female ice hockey players), just not for themselves. By not considering themselves to fit the symbolic view of woman they feel special. Perhaps the women's conditions would improve if the female players united as a group of serious athletes different from the general view of women. The fact that women in sports are surprisingly unaware of their disempowered situation, and seldom unite as a group in these issues, is previously described (Blinde et al., 1994). That the players consider themselves different from other players may be the reason for not demanding better conditions on the structural level. The players are well aware of the fact that the positive reactions from people could change if they demand too much. As they only play as a hobby (as nothing else is possible), it would not be accepted if they demanded the same conditions as men have. The structural level forms obstacles for their development as players, but they are not made visible by the players, or perhaps, so obvious they are self-explanatory, and they are not questioned or discussed when the women compare performance across genders. It is not their ambition that restrains them, instead, it is their limited possibilities.

Conclusion

The players describe structural obstacles for their development as players, yet they are quite content. The players considered themselves different from other women as the traditional view of femininity and women was not compatible with their own opinion of themselves and they valued the use of traits traditionally associated with masculinity. It is possible that this is a strategy in order to handle the gender structure and at the same time maintain their own self esteem. By depreciating traits traditionally associated with femininity, and by applying them on women in general, and sometimes even on other female players, the challenge to male hegemony was avoided. By this, two things are achieved

- The gender structure is not questioned as the symbolic level is still correct, and this means that there is no reason to alter the conditions at the structural level
- Women's ice hockey is not a threat to men's ice hockey, and women may be treated more kindly.

This strategy might lead to an advantage in a short perspective, but in the long run it might repress the development of women's ice hockey. In order to improve the conditions for

female ice hockey players, as well as for other female athletes, the symbols and what they characterize on the symbolic level will have to change. Even though the players are not actively trying to change what “a woman” represents, their presence in a male sport has an effect and the view of women as frail and weak might change. The results of this study of the gender power relations in this women ice hockey team implicate that performing a male sport as a woman does not necessarily alter the views of women and men on the symbolic level. On the contrary, the players in this study appeared to share the traditional views.

Perspectives

In the world of ice hockey, women are considered intruders in a male arena. The same kind of situation, and its associated problems has been described previously in other “male” sports such as ice hockey in Canada (Pelak, 2002; Theberge, 2002), soccer in Europe (Scraton et al., 1999; Fasting, 2003; Hjelm, 2004) and ball games in Denmark (Thing, 2001). In the current study, this specific situation affected the players’ expectations and demands on themselves as well as on their surroundings in terms of financial and structural conditions.

The players in this study seemed to share the traditional views of men and women, but considered themselves to be different than other women. This is in accordance with previous research (Scraton et al., 1999; Larsson, 2001). If this is a common strategy for women in a male sport, this might reduce the challenge to the male norm in sports, even in such a male sport as ice hockey.

It is important to get a deeper understanding of power relations and strategies that are used in sports today and the effect of structural differences for men and women in order to know how to change the inequalities in sports.

Future research

As women’s ice hockey is a rather new research area, especially in gender studies, more studies are needed. The symbolic, structural and individual level that have been used in the present study, will also be used in the other parts of the project, to further investigate the structural and individual levels. In the current study, it was evident that the players had adjusted their aims and goals to what is possible to achieve. As there is no possibility of becoming a professional ice hockey player, they did not dream of becoming one, and prioritized education and work instead of ice hockey.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Lisbeth Wikström-Frisén for conducting the interviews, and Natalie Dies for linguistic support and others who have helped to improve the quality of the article. This study was supported by the Swedish National Centre for Research in Sports.

References:

- J. Amis. Interviewing for case study research. In: Andrews D. L., D. S. Mason and M. L. Silk. *Qualitative methods in sports studies*. Oxford, Berg. 2005: 210.
- S. J. H. Biddle, D. Markland, D. Gilbourne, N. L. D. Chatzisarantis and A. C. Sparkes. Research methods in sport and exercise psychology: quantitative and qualitative issues. *J Sports Sci* 2001: 19 (10): 777 - 809.
- E. M. Blinde, D. E. Taub and L. Han. Sport as a site for women's group and societal empowerment: Perspectives from the college athlete. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 1994: 11 (1): 51-59.
- R. C. Bogdan and S. K. Biklen. *Qualitative research for education: an introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1992.
- J.-L. Denis, L. Lamothe and A. Langley. The dynamics of collective leadership and strategic change in pluralistic organizations. *Acad. Manage. J.* 2001: 44 (4): 809-837.
- M. Ely. *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles in Circles*. New York, The Falmer Press, 1991.
- E. Ethelberg. Självkänsla kontra realitet - ett dilemma för psykologin och för kvinnorna. *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* 1985: (1): 4-15.
- B. Fagrell. De små konstruktörerna - flickor och pojkar om kvinnligt och manligt i relation till kropp, idrott, familj och arbete. *Institutionen för samhälle, kultur och lärande*. Stockholm, Lärarhögskolan Stockholm. 2000: 235.
- K. Fasting. Small country - big results: Women's football in Norway. *Soccer and society*. Special issue: Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation 2003: Volume 4 (2-3): 149 - 161.
- S. Harding. *The science question in feminism*. Ithaca, Cornell Univ. Press, 1986.
- J. Hargreaves. *Sporting females: critical issues in the history and the sociology of women's sports*. London, Routledge, 1994.
- L. Heywood and S. L. Dworkin. *Built to win. The female athlete as cultural icon*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- J. Hjelm. *Amasoner på planen. Svensk damfotboll 1965-1980*. Umeå, Sweden, Boréa bokförlag, 2004.
- S. Karp. Children, parents and sports. An interview study of upbringing as affected by soccer and golf. Department of Education. Umea, Umea University, Sweden. 2000: 299.
- N. Koivula. *Gender in sport*. Psychological Institution. Stockholm, Stockholm University. 1999.
- L.-J. Kolnes. Kvinner og toppidrett. Om kjønn, kropp, seksualitet og relasjoner i toppidretten. *Sociologi*. Oslo, Norges Idrettshøgskole. 1994: 267.
- S. Kvale. *InterViews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications, Inc, 1996.
- A. Lantz. *Den professionellt genomförda intervjun*. Lund, Sweden, Studentlitteratur, 1993.
- H. Larsson. *Iscensättningen av kön i idrott*. Institutionen för samhälle, kultur och lärande. Stockholm, Sweden, Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm. 2001: 289.
- Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Sage, 1985.
- G. Lippe. Handball, gender and sportification of body-cultures: 1900-40. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 1994: 29 (2): 211-234.
- J. Lofland and L. F. Lofland. *Analyzing social settings: a guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, California, Wadsworth, 1995.
- M. B. Miles and A. M. Huberman. *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thouand Oaks, Sage, 1994.
- M. Nystrom and K. Dahlberg. Pre-understanding and openness - a relationship without hope? *Scand J Caring Sci* 2001: 15 (4): 339-46.
- E. Olofsson. Do women have a sporting chance? Organized sport and women in Sweden in the 20th century. Faculty of Social Sciences. Umeå, Sweden, University of Umeå, Sweden. 1989: 263.
- E. Olofsson. *Guldmedalj på kvinnors vis. Arbetsrapporter*. Umeå, Pedagogiska institutionen, Umeå universitet. 1996: 30.
- M. Q. Patton. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. London, SAGE, 2002.
- C. F. Pelak. Women's collective identity formation in sports: a case study from Women's Ice Hockey. *Gender and Society* 2002: 16 (1): 93-114.
- R. Pirinen. Catching up with men? Finnish newspaper coverage of women's entry into traditionally male sports. In: Scraton S. and A. Flintoff. *Gender and Sport: A reader*. London, Routledge. 2002: 94-105.
- K. Redelius. Att vara landslagstjej och läcker eller bara sorglig att se. *Svensk idrottsforskning*. 1999 8: 19-23.
- G. W. Ryan and H. R. Bernard. *Data Management and Analysis Methods*. In: Denzin N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications. 2003: 259-309.

- S. Scraton, K. Fasting, G. Pfister and A. Bunuel. It's Still a Man's Game? The Experiences of Top-Level European Women Footballers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 1999: 34 (2): 99-111.
- J. A. Smith and M. Osborn. Interpretive phenomenological analysis. In: Smith J. A. *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*. London, SAGE. 2003.
- S. Soderstrom. Kvinnokroppen i läkarnas klor: Om kropps- och fritidskultur i ett könsperspektiv. In: Fagrell B. and P. Nilsson. *Talet om kroppen. En antologi om kropp, idrott och kön*. Stockholm, HLS förlag. 1998: 161-187.
- A. L. Strauss. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Svenska ishockeyförbundet. Retrieved 6 November, 2006, From <http://www.swehockey.se/files/{6FB1A096-75F9-4B87-99DD-BE21A0A69239}.pdf>.
- N. Theberge. It's part of the game. Physicality and the production of gender in women's hockey. *Gender and society* 1997: 11 (1): 69-87.
- N. Theberge. *Higher Goals - Women's ice hockey and the politics of gender*. New York, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2000.
- N. Theberge. Challenging the gendered space of sport: Women's ice hockey and the struggle for legitimacy. In: Scraton S. and A. Flintoff. *Gender and sport: A reader*. London, Routledge. 2002: 292-302.
- N. Theberge. No fear comes. Adolescent girls, ice hockey, and the embodiment of gender. *Youth and society* 2003: 34 (4): 497-516.
- L. F. Thing. The Female Warrior: Meanings of Play-Aggressive Emotions in Sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 2001: 36 (3): 275-288.

Fig. 1.

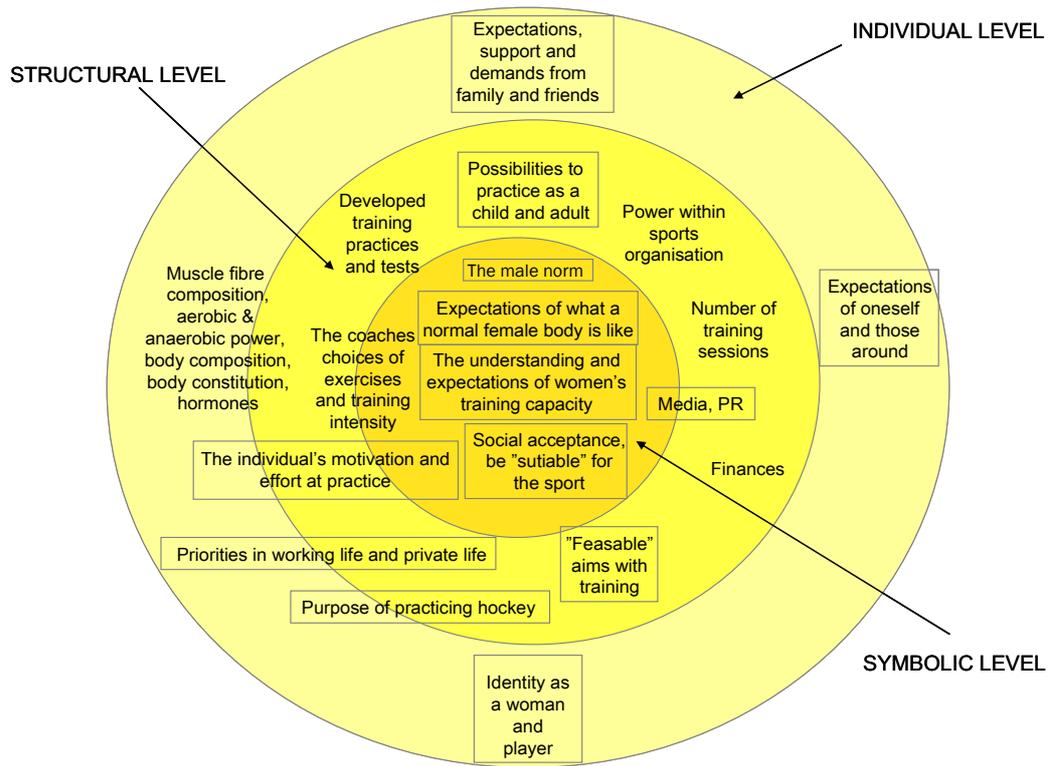


Fig. 1. The symbolic, the structural and the individual level applied to women's ice hockey
□= aspects involved in the current study

A model of senior ice hockey in Sweden

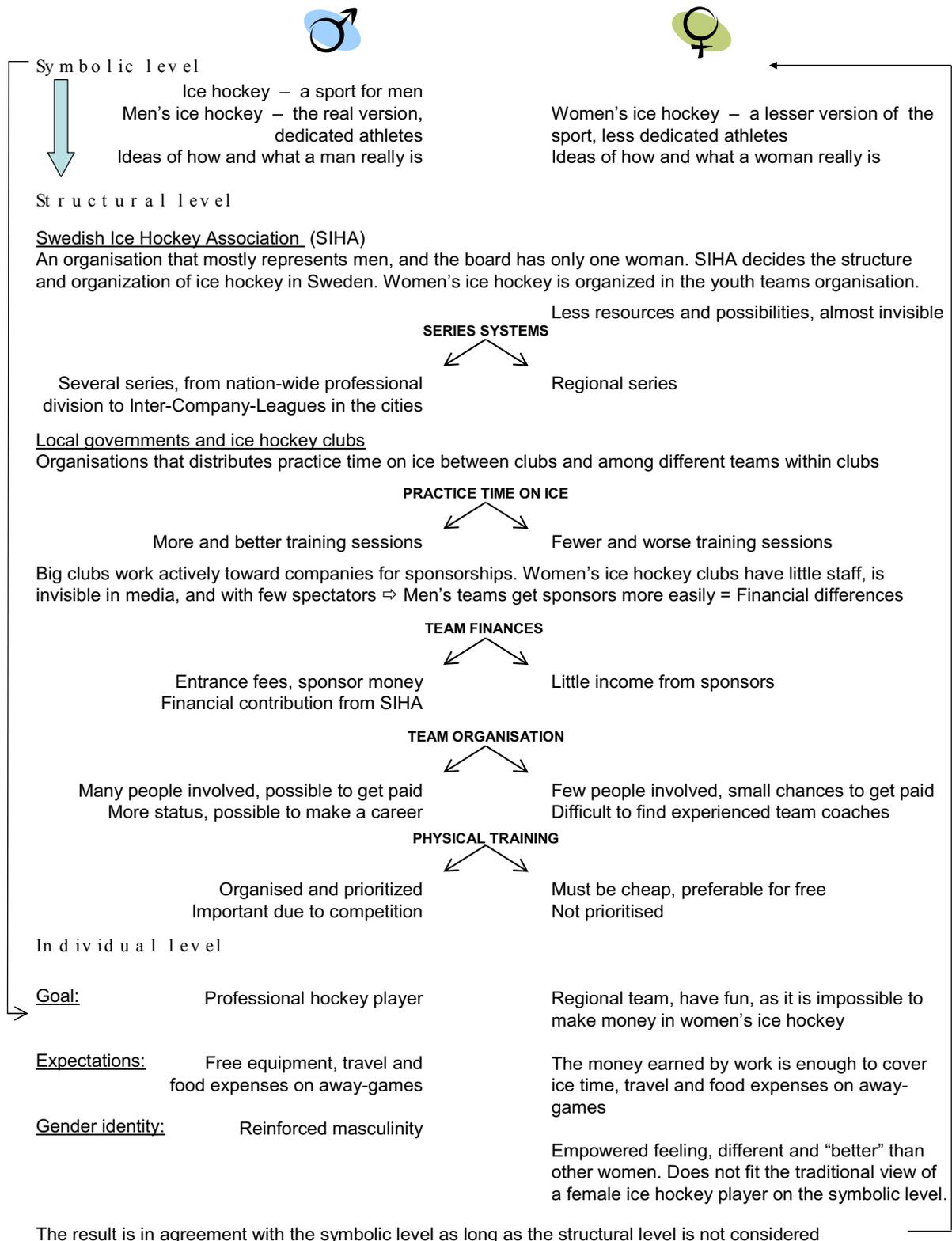


Fig. 2. A summary of the results and their distribution on the symbolic, structural and individual levels.

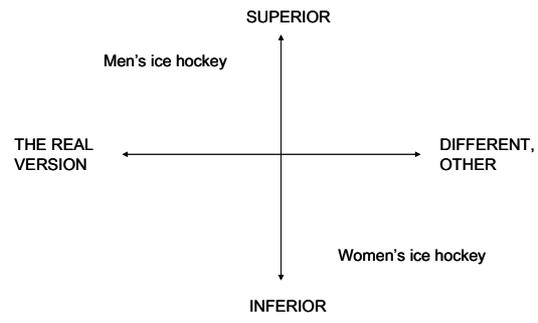


Fig. 3. The hierarchical organisation of women's and men's ice hockey