

Introduction: Constructing the Hockey Family

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The papers included in this proceedings volume emerged from a three-day conference “Constructing the Hockey Family: Home, Community, Bureaucracy and Marketplace” hosted by the Centre for the Study of Sport and Health (CSSH) at Saint Mary's University from July 12-14, 2012. The sixth in a series that began in Halifax in 2001 and 2004, the conference added to a decade of academic research involving the game of hockey that has produced an outpouring of important published books and articles. It is fair to say that these conferences represent a veritable renaissance in hockey scholarship. After the two Halifax conferences, the show took to the road, travelling initially to Bridgewater State University, then to the University of Victoria and most recently to the Brock University, Canisius College and the State University of New York at Buffalo. In returning to Halifax, the 2012 conference brought together over 100 scholars, writers, officials, organizers, coaches and members of the community, to discuss hockey in relation to family, community and nation, and to debate its contribution to social improvement, civic identity and pride, and national allegiance(s). The next conference will be hosted by Don Morrow at the University of Western Ontario in June 2014.

Hockey in Canada has been an enduring piece of the national cultural fabric. We invest considerable emotional, moral and financial support in the development of the game as a way to instruct our children in the values of teamwork, to create physically active families, to enhance

the self-esteem of individuals and communities, and to develop civic responsibility and national allegiance. A central element in the lives of many families across the nation, the hockey rink is a site where racial, ethnic and gender divisions can be negotiated and recent immigrants integrated into Canadian life. We are all aware of the active volunteers involved in the game from the “ground” -- or should we say -- the “ice” up. Hockey Moms and Dads spend valuable time with their sons and daughters and their teammates, and their efforts are essential to the construction of caring communities. Moreover, like education, religion, and the law, sports in general, and hockey in particular, operate as implements for building a caring and socially-responsible society, encouraging personal and community pride and national allegiance. Understood broadly, hockey is a cultural practice that allows us to imagine, identify and shape who we are and to pass on to our children what our citizenship implies.

Yet hockey’s social value is often contested. Some of its imperfections are obvious and troubling, including the costs associated with outfitting our sons and daughters with equipment and transporting them to games and tournaments. Overbearing parents, abusive coaches, attacks on officials, and violent post-game street activity, though not the norm, often raise doubts about the game’s influence on our children. In addition, debates swirl about the game with respect to its culture of violence, the issue of racism, gender inequalities, the place of body-checking in minor hockey, the prevalence of head trauma at all levels of the game, and the commonplace assumption that fighting “is part of the game.” Given that the game’s place in our lives is open to discussion and at times contentious, a number of questions still remain unanswered. How functional or dysfunctional is the hockey family? How effective has hockey been in bridging ethnic, racial and gender divisions? What values does the game communicate to children as we direct them toward responsible citizenship? Is the culture of hockey in need of reform? The

virtues and liabilities of hockey as it operates within families, communities, the hockey bureaucracy and the marketplace were vigorously debated during the conference and resonate in the papers included in this on-line collection.

In addition to these larger questions, the conference focussed on a second and more specific concern. Some years ago Sheldon Gillis, a graduate student in history at Saint Mary's, wrote an interesting M.A. thesis on early hockey in Nova Scotia. In one of his chapters Gillis focused on the development of the Nova Scotia Coloured Hockey League, a segregated and somewhat loosely structured association of teams that operated from 1896 to 1924 as a Canadian hockey equivalent, albeit on a much smaller scale, of the so-called Negro baseball leagues in the United States. The initial (2001) Putting it on Ice conference, its name borrowed from Gillis' thesis, gave considerable attention to Black hockey in Canada, and contributed in turn to the emerging interest in the Nova Scotia Colored Hockey League which has since found expression in the so-called Black Ice Project and its institutional manifestation in both the Society of North American Hockey Historians and Researchers (SONAHHR) and the Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame Society. There is no question that the Black Ice project has energized the African Nova Scotian community and encouraged a sense of pride and community involvement since the original Nova Scotia Colored Hockey League of the late 19th and early 20th century involved many of the ancestors of today's families. The work of SONAHHR and the Black Ice Hockey Sports Hall of Fame Society has helped to recover the important contribution African-Canadians and First Nations peoples have made to the game of hockey, but it has yet to gain widespread recognition in the larger community. Under the leadership of George Fosty, President of SONAHHR International, the documentary "Black Ice: Frozen Out" was produced and screened on ESPN a few years ago. Fosty's book, *Black Ice: The Lost History of the*

Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, 1895 – 1925, was published in 2004. The “Black Ice” documentary was one of the films shown at the 2012 conference as part of a panel discussion. In addition, Alan Aylward’s PBS documentary “Hockey: More than a Game” which premiered on WNED Buffalo in December, 2011 included a lengthy section dealing with hockey and race. The latter film was shown as part of the opening panel of the conference that included Andrew Holman, Julie Stevens and Colin Howell all of whom were interviewed for the film.

In our effort to highlight the way in which hockey can build bridges between communities, promote civic pride, and foster intercultural understanding, we were delighted to receive a grant of \$10,600 from Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s Inter-Action Multicultural Grants and Contributions program that allowed us to promote the history of black hockey in Nova Scotia. Consultant and sports writer Mr. Bob Dawson, a former university hockey player at Saint Mary’s who played on the first all-black line in university hockey along with Percy Paris and Daryl Maxwell, contacted participants, organized three panels on black hockey, and served as moderator of each of them. A number of African-Nova Scotians who played hockey at the university, junior, professional and international level had the chance to address the importance of the game in their own personal development. So too did a number of people whose descendants were involved in the Coloured Hockey League. Although we had hoped to have ten year professional hockey player Art Dorrington attend the conference and participate in the black hockey sessions, a number of issues relating to funding and ill health unfortunately intervened. One of professional hockey’s black pioneers, Mr. Dorrington was the first African-Canadian to sign a professional hockey contract, doing so with the New York Rangers organization in 1950, almost a decade before Willie O’Ree broke the NHL’s colour bar. Like many black hockey players, including O’Ree and Stan ‘Chook’ Maxwell, Dorrington also

played professional baseball for a brief time in the Boston Braves organization. Bob Dawson's overview of the panels and those who participated in them is included later in this collection. Other papers dealing with black hockey including Roger Hardaway's study of black hockey players in Europe are highlighted in the collection of abstracts on the www.hockeyconference.ca website.

The papers in this volume are divided into five sections: Hockey and the Community; Film, Literature and Hockey; Women and the Hockey Family; Hockey in the Formative Years; and Constructing Contemporary Hockey Life. Paul Bennett's essay "A Family Squabble: What's Behind the Quest for Genesis in the Canadian Hockey World" opens the collection and the section on hockey and community life. Bennett's thoughtful piece asks a simple question: what drives the quest for hockey's "birthplace" given the mounting evidence of the game's evolutionary development? His answer is that the debate itself, more a "family squabble" than an academic endeavour, demonstrates how much the game serves as a source of personal and community identity. For Bennett, the quest for hockey's point of origin is fruitless and unanswerable, but at the same time underscores the power of the game to drive community imaginations. Andy Holman and Stephen Hardy sharpen the blurry line between popular and scholarly hockey studies, especially as they relate to hockey towns. Amid the contemporary community boosterism that accompanies corporate celebrations of 'hockeyville', Holman and Hardy suggest that 'hockey towns' are not things, but historical processes rooted in demographic, economic and institutional developments that create local infrastructure and shared assumptions about civic culture and identity. Their analysis focuses on two communities, Sherbrooke, Quebec and Eveleth, Minnesota, and the way in which their historical transformation between 1918-1972 secured them as 'hockey towns'. This approach, replacing

corporate kitsch with historical analysis, leads us beyond simple boosterism. It is instructive in a lot of ways. The argument developed here could be applied to other sports and sporting communities, particularly baseball in towns such as Kentville, Nova Scotia, Tecumseh, Ontario or Langley, British Columbia.

The diverse manner in which hockey speaks to the way that communities imagine themselves are evident as well in Eileen Angelini's paper "The Enduring Image of Maurice Richard", Michael Kimaid's study of "Buffalo as Hockey Heaven" and Bob Dawson's report on hockey's importance to African-Nova Scotian communities from the 19th century to the present. Although the theme of hockey and community identity rests at the heart of each of these, the conditions they describe are remarkable in their differences: Angelini probes the extent to which Maurice Richard came to represent the aspirations of the Quebecois and broader Canadian community and how his career can serve as a useful pedagogical focus for university students enrolled in French language courses; Kimaid focuses upon hockey and the self-definition of a large urban community at the professional level; and Dawson addresses small, racially-segregated communities in outlying regions of Canada where hockey serves different interests and concerns. Kimaid analyzes the impact on Buffalo of the decision of Terry Pegula to purchase the Sabres in February 2012. Having made his fortune in the oil and gas industry and hydraulic fracturing, Pegula took a hands-on approach with the club, and many of the city's residents applied the imagery of a 'rust-belt revival' to its successes on the ice. Kimaid's study focuses largely on the imagery associated with the city itself, the challenges that confronted the city's image of "toughness" given the dynamics of big and small markets, where small towns seemed easily pushed around by those in big market locations. Dawson's contribution to the volume, which takes the form of a report on various panels on black hockey in Nova Scotia that took

place during the conference, is an important reiteration of the important role that hockey played in the life of African Nova Scotian communities, the contribution that African-Nova Scotians have made to the game's development and the challenges that players, parents, coaches and volunteers have faced as they involved themselves in the game.

The second group of essays looks at film, literature and hockey, yet the themes that emerge are similar to those already addressed. Despite the contemporary pre-eminence of urban-based and professionalized hockey, Fred Mason focuses on filmic representations of the game that 'theologize' -- and at times sentimentalize -- unorganized shinny games and pond hockey. He compares the approach taken in two films, one Canadian and one American, which despite significant similarities reveal interesting differences, and proceeds to deconstruct the narratives that are presented in each of them. The first of these films, David Batistella's "Shinny: the Hockey in All of Us" had one of its earliest screenings at the initial Putting it on Ice conference in 2001; the latter, Tommy Haines' film, "Pond Hockey", is an American production released in 2008. Both films mythologize the purity, simplicity and equality of hockey played recreationally on lakes and ponds and stand as critical counterpoints to organized hockey and the professional game. For Mason they provide interesting examples of how "meanings" of hockey are constructed in documentary films, as they are in literature. At the same time while "Shinny" is saturated with nationalist presumptions, "Pond Hockey" is largely devoid of this imagery. As Mason points out, the necessity of linking hockey in Canada to a broader discourse about the nation is an important indicator of the significance of the game "in a large country which shares few common reference points."

Jamie Dopp and Don Morrow address similar questions in their essays on the writings of Scott Young and Roy MacGregor. In his trilogy *Scrubs on Skates* (1952), *Boy on Defense*

(1953), and *A Boy at the Leaf's Camp* (1963) Scott Young contributed to and helped reinforce common understandings of hockey's cultural meanings for Canadians. The central elements of the country's hockey myth are rendered powerfully in these texts since juvenile fiction renders important "truths" unambiguously for didactic purposes and often avoids in turn more subtle and nuanced understandings. Dopp's essay addresses Young's idealization of the nuclear family, conflicted assumptions about hockey violence and manly play, hockey's role in the acculturation of recent immigrants, the way in which the game rewarded hard work and responsibility to one's teammates, and the postwar preoccupation with questions of Canadian identity that accompanied the shift from Canada's emphasis on its British heritage to an emerging multicultural community. Each of these questions swirl around the two main characters in the novels: native born Peter Gordon with likely Scottish Presbyterian roots and Bill Spunaska a recent immigrant from Poland who takes up the game with the eagerness of becoming a new citizen. Through hockey Spunsky becomes "truly Canadian", graduating to the National Hockey League and ultimately to a career in the diplomatic corps. Similar themes emerge in Roy MacGregor's "Screech Owl" novels, a series of almost two dozen books inspired by Young's *Scrubs on Skates*. Don Morrow offers up a post-modernist deconstruction of MacGregor's construction of the hockey familia/familiar, choosing PowerPoint over a more conventional essay to encapsulate the major themes and characteristics of this body of work. (It is worth noting as an aside that on-line proceedings are particularly suited to experimental approaches such as this.)

In the final essay of this section David McNeil guides us through the literature of hockey's "bad boys". This wide-ranging survey of hockey non-fiction literature raises a number of interesting issues involving those who push the boundaries of the acceptable both on and off the ice; goon-like enforcers, drug, alcohol and sexual abusers, hard-living playboys, corrupt

owners, coaches and agents. McNeil deftly navigates the ambiguous place of violence in a game that venerates physical toughness and excites audiences, yet often has a destructive impact on those who play it. Take for example the understanding of hockey enforcers such as Bob Probert or Derek Boogard both as ‘protectors’, shielding more skilled players from harm, and as victims of the game itself (and its owners) paying the price of concussive brain injuries or descending into drug and alcohol abuse. Victimization comes in many forms: sexual abuse as in the case of Theo Fleury, Mike Danton and Sheldon Kennedy, players who were affected by “bad- boy” owners and agents like Bruce McNall and Alan Eagleson, or by those in the media who exploited them for their own purposes. (Danton took part in the conference on one of its opening panels speaking openly about his incarceration and efforts to turn his life around.) In the end McNeil complicates melodramatic representations of the good and the bad, the virtuous and the evil, the respect or disrespect for “rightful” authority, and pushes us to examine more subtle understandings of a game that plays upon the elemental desire to “hit somebody”.

McNeil’s study alerts us to the issue of gender and the extent to which hockey fiction and non-fiction marginalizes the place of and contributions of women in the hockey family. The third section of the collection thus turns its attention to issues of sport and gender identities. Danielle DiCarlo begins the conversation by examining the female sporting body employing the insights of Foucault and others, and focusing on female athletes engaged in traditional male sports such as hockey. DiCarlo argues that although there have been well known cases of women playing on male hockey teams (e.g., Manon Rhéaume and Hayley Wickenheiser), it is unwise to neglect the countless other experiences of girls and women who have played on men’s teams without media recognition. Through qualitative interviews with such athletes, DiCarlo found a dichotomy between on and off-ice appearances and behaviours where aggressive, more

masculine behaviours were exhibited on the ice and more feminine appearances and behaviours were shown off the ice. DiCarlo suggests that future research should consider how these experiences of female hockey athletes are linked to societal power and how participating on male teams challenges these structures and authority.

Mila Su continues the discussion with a brief historical account and summary of the current state of women's intercollegiate club hockey. Su describes how although women's hockey has existed since the 1900s, intercollegiate women's hockey really only began in the 1960s further developing with the help of Title IX. The greatest progress made to the women's game in the United States was during the 1990s as evidenced by the NCAA naming women's hockey as an emerging sport. Su explains how women's club hockey can serve as a springboard for programs to develop into varsity programs as well as a means for female hockey athletes to stay involved in the game during college.

The following two essays focus on hockey families: Lynne Perras on hockey moms and Julie Stevens and Deborah McPhee's on parents of competitive hockey players. Perras examines the myths and realities of the 'Hockey Mom' and the influence a mother can exert over their sons' attitudes towards the sport of hockey. Much has been said anecdotally about hockey moms, whether through song, mainstream media or social media, and professional hockey players are quick to recognize the contribution of their parents to their success. Perras highlights the willingness of today's hockey moms to share their own experiences, through social media or in websites, blogs, and online forums. Information presented on these sites offers a variety of advice and describes the different roles a hockey mom plays throughout the hockey season. She also discusses results from a survey of hockey moms, which shows that although hockey moms still remain somewhat behind the scenes, they are more present via social media offering support

for other hockey moms. The minor hockey system would not flourish as it does without these mothers. In this sense, as “Stompin’ Tom” Connors once crooned, they are a “superior class”.

Julie Stevens and Deborah McPhee further the discussion of hockey families by examining the coping strategies used by mothers and fathers to manage the conflict that competitive hockey places upon their family and work obligations. Parents of competitive hockey players under the age of 16 can be under constant pressure to meet both their work and family obligations. On-ice practice, off-ice training, games and tournaments can take up a great amount of time during hockey season which itself can range from 7-12 months of the year. By way of interviews and focus groups involving such parents, Stevens and McPhee found that a supportive environment is key to coping with the conflict. Most notably, a supportive and flexible work environment helped reduce work-family conflicts, while a supportive community outside of the work environment was also an important consideration. While the participants in Stevens and McPhee’s study led complex and pressure- filled lives, they remained determined to meet their obligations and to “make it all happen”.

Cheryl MacDonald changes the direction slightly, examining the socialization process of Major Junior hockey players and the ways masculinity is manifested in the lives of these athletes. MacDonald’s rinkside research project addresses the stereotypical image of the Major Junior hockey player in Canada, portrayed by hockey apparel company Gongshow Gear -- and confirmed in part in the existing scholarly literature -- as hyper-masculine, misogynist, homophobic, and prone to the heavy consumption of alcohol. Her survey of players and coaches of a Major Junior club team indicates that while there is very little gender awareness among Major Junior hockey players, there is no definite consensus among players with respect to how manhood is experienced and understood. On the whole, the team displayed an “admirable code

of personhood...decidedly humanistic in nature”. At the same time some players suggested that the small group who adhered to hegemonic masculinity and to Gong Show Gear attitudes, was largely responsible for the negative public perception of Major Junior players.

The section on gender issues concludes with Heidi Weigand and Albert Mills’ content analysis of sport-related images found in management textbooks. Employing semiotic analysis and drawing upon the theory of “intersectionality” which addresses the multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination that some people face involving race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, religion, nationality, and age, the authors deconstruct the taken-for-granted assumptions imbedded in textbook illustrations. Drawing upon a range of images from various sports, including a number associated with hockey, they find that they compound the “neglect of race, gender, ethnicity and disabilities in the North American textbook”, privileging the able-bodied and reinforcing gender and racial stereotypes. Male images (e.g. of Gary Bettman and Bob Goodenough) tended to foreground problem solving and the exercise of power. Women on the other hand were more likely to be associated with the values of goal-setting and teamwork.

The final sections of this collection deal with the development of the game over time and its contemporary character. In his study of power relations that pitted officials of the Maritime Provinces Amateur Athletic Association (MPAAA) against the various club teams within the Nova Scotia Amateur Hockey League (NSAHL) at the beginning of the twentieth century, Mac Ross addresses the amateur ideal that held sway in turn-of-the-century sport and the challenges it faced amid a growing consumer-oriented culture and sporting professionalism. As Nova Scotian clubs contested the Starr Trophy, meant to be presented both as the NSAHL and Maritime championship cup, bitter debates about town versus “tourist” teams continued through the first decade of the century. In the end, Ross argues, the MPAAA exercised little control over club

teams as professionalism became accepted practice. While professional hockey developed, however, universities were one of the early bastions of the amateur ideal. In his essay, Lenard Kotylo outlines the contribution that universities have made to the game of hockey over the years. Kotylo describes the development over the past half century of college hockey as a feeder system for the NHL, a decided contrast to its early history where college hockey represented the pinnacle of hockey excellence.

If the tension between amateurism and professionalism is evident in both the Ross and Kotylo papers, the same blend of university hockey, amateur clubs and professional play characterized the early development of hockey in Great Britain and its hitherto neglected history in Australia. In his essay “The Skaters of Streatham and Sydney”, Daryl Leeworthy uncovers a rich history of hockey in unlikely places, including hockey rinks throughout the British Empire in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Leeworthy the interwar years witnessed the maintenance of amateurism in Australian hockey and a powerful trend towards professionalism in the United Kingdom. In Australia the game continued to draw on university students and schoolboy players as well as teachers and Canadian immigrants, while in Britain there was a frankly commercial orientation and a reliance on Canadian players who in the midst of the depression sought on-ice employment on professional clubs. Leeworthy’s essay describes a vibrant hockey culture in interwar Britain, with hockey rinks, broadcasting of matches, and international challenges, and a lively debate over violence and other characteristics associated with Canadian hockey. Leeworthy’s essay makes Britain’s successes in international play much more understandable and is an important contribution to the history of hockey beyond the borders of Canada and the United States.

Jay Scherer and Hart Cantelon further address the internationalization of hockey in their analysis of “the forgotten series” between the Soviet National team and the World Hockey Association’s (WHA) all-star team in 1974, just two years after the infamous 1972 Summit Series. Scherer and Cantelon contend that this series, although much less successful than the 1972 series, helped accelerate the globalization of the game of hockey. The WHA purposely attracted young skilful European players, signed NHL ineligible Canadian junior players and more rapidly incorporated the faster European style of the game. This series also helped Hockey Canada develop into today’s hockey governing body. In turn it demystified the unknown elements of the Soviets’ game and enhanced the growing recognition of the quality of European players such as Börje Salming who would eventually make their way to North America. Few Europeans, indeed, had a greater an impact on the NHL as Börje Salming. In his essay on Salming Tobias Stark examines the general globalization of the game, particularly the formation of the NHL’s transnational labour market, and argues that Salming’s NHL-career not only paved the way for other Swedish, Scandinavian and European players to play in the NHL but helped dispel the myth that Scandinavian players lacked the physical toughness to succeed in North America.

As noted earlier, the series of hockey conferences that began a decade ago have contributed in many ways to the broad public debate involving hockey’s social value. That the final paper in this collection addresses the “good, bad and ugly” elements of the game is particularly fitting. Larry Holt, Thomas Pelham, and Jason Holt begin with a discussion the life-long benefits, physical and emotional, that can be gained from participating in hockey, but concentrates more heavily on the negative characteristics of the sport especially as it effects younger players. The excessive number of competitive games and tournaments, the various

financial constraints upon participation, frequent on-ice violence, the risk of injury, and occasionally abusive coaching practices are high prices attached to hockey participation. The authors suggest as well that many coaches of young players reinforce some of these unfortunate elements and argue that major changes are required in the game to bring the negative and positive outcomes into more appropriate balance. Obviously there is much to reflect upon here as the scholarly study of the game continues into the future.

As conference organizers and editors of this proceedings volume we are encouraged by the growth of hockey scholarship over the past decade. The intention of this collection is to provide as broad a survey of this emerging field as we could. For that reason we made two decisions: first, we would be inclusive rather than exclusive in selecting essays for the volume, and second we would develop an on-line collection rather than following a more traditional route to publication. Our hope is that this will result in a larger audience and greater accessibility to work in progress. Readers of this collection will thus find two dozen papers employing a variety of approaches and differences in orientation from essay to essay. Many essays are extensively researched formal academic papers, others take the form of reports around issues. Some presentations are experimental, as in the case of Don Morrow's Power Point essay, others are brief think pieces without extensive citation. In the end we decided not to impose a standard mould for what you will find here. Instead it is more like a smorgasbord. Pick and choose indeed, but enjoy the feast nonetheless.