

Paddling Against the Current:
A History of Women's Competitive International Rowing Between 1954 and 2003

by

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Abstract

In 1954, the Fédération Internationale Sociétés d’Aviron (FISA) hosted the first Women’s European Rowing Championships in Maçon, France. Although FISA had never before formally recognized women’s competitive international rowing, oarswomen around the world had been active participants for years, competing not only in local and national regattas, but international as well. Despite the historical evidence that women could indeed race at an international level, FISA delegates, all of whom were men, saw fit to curtail women’s international participation by shortening the women’s racing distance to half of that required of the men and restricting the number and types of events in which women raced. While international oarswomen were limited, these constraints were not completely restrictive. Rather, the introduction of women’s races at the European championships created opportunities for oarswomen to display publicly their physical and athletic capabilities while challenging social and historical discourses regarding appropriate female appearance and athletic participation.

Since this inaugural event in 1954, female athletes, coaches, and administrators have sought to achieve gender equity in a sport typically associated with men and masculinity. Female rowing enthusiasts pressed to increase opportunities for all oarswomen by negotiating with male sporting administrators to have women’s competitive international rowing recognized on the same level as men’s rowing. By 2003, their combined efforts, aided by some supportive male coaches and rowing administrators, culminated in the admission of oarswomen to the European championships, the world championships, and the Olympic Games, the change of women’s racing distance from 1000 metres to 2000 metres, and the introduction of

lightweight women's events at the world championships and Olympic Games. This dissertation examines the complex negotiations that have taken place since 1954 and the context in which they occurred through the use of data collected from archival material and in-depth interviews with current and former female administrators, athletes, and coaches, to document and examine the history of women's competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003.

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List of Acronyms for Organisations

ARA	Amateur Rowing Association British National Rowing Association
BOA	British Olympic Association
CARA	Canadian Amateur Rowing Association (Canada) Renamed Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA)
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik German Democratic Republic
DFfR	Dansk Forening for Rosport Danish Rowing Federation
DHfK	Deutsche Hochschule für Körperkultur German College of Physical Culture, Leipzig
DM	Deutsche Mark German currency until the introduction of the Euro in 2002
DSB	Deutscher Sportbund German Sports Federation
DTSB	Deutsche Turn- und Sportbund German Gymnastic and Sports Federation
DRV	Deutscher Ruderverband German Rowing Federation
DRSV	East German rowing federation
FAS	Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch
FIC	Federazione Italiana Canottaggio Italian National Rowing Federation
FISA	Fédération Internationale Sociétés d’Aviron International Rowing Federation
FFSA	Fédération Française des Sociétés d’Aviron French National Rowing Federation
FIMS	Federazione Italiana Medici dello Sport Italian Federation of Sports Physicians

FRC	Federatia Romana de Canotaj Romanian National Rowing Federation
FRD	Bundesrepublik Deutschland Federal Republic of Germany
FSFI	Fédération Sportive Feminine Internationale International Women's Sport Federation
FSFS	Fédération Sociétés Feminine Sportive de France French Women's Sport Federation
GAISF	General Assembly of International Sports Federations
IAAF	International Association Athletics Federation formerly the International Amateur Athletic Federation
IFs	International (Sport) Federations
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NAAO	National Association of Amateur Oarsmen (The United States of America)
NCCP	National Coaching Certification Program (Canada)
NOC	National Olympic Committee
NWRA	National Women's Rowing Association (The United States of America)
OSC	Olympic Studies Centre
PGRC	Philadelphia Girls' Rowing Club
SDA	United Kingdom Sex Discrimination Act
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USRA	United States Rowing Association
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ? ????????? ? ????????????????? ? ????????? (CCCP)
WAA	Women's Athletic Association (Great Britain)

WAC	Committee on Women's Athletics (The United States of America)
WARA	Women's Amateur Rowing Association British Women's National Rowing Federation
WDNAAF	Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (The United States of America)
WRC	British Women's Rowing Committee

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to the early female rowing enthusiast who negotiated for a place for women at the local, national, and international levels. In the wake of their struggles, I, along with numerous other young women, have had the opportunity to participate in the sport of rowing. I thank you!

Chapter 1

Women's Competitive International Rowing

Introduction

Modern sport is an arena that is more than just games and contests. Sport is related to social control and relationships of power and as Canadian feminist sport historian Ann Hall has indicated:

The history of modern sport is a history of cultural struggle. Privileged groups in our society – seemingly by consent – are able to establish their own cultural practices as the most valued and legitimate, whereas subordinate groups (like women) have to fight to gain and maintain control over their own experience, and at the same time have their alternative practices and activities recognized as legitimate by the dominant culture.¹

Women's participation in the sport of rowing epitomises this statement. The power struggles that took place among male and female coaches, athletes, and administrators have played a significant role in the development of women's competitive international rowing. British Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) President Diana Ellis indicated that women have meticulously negotiated for the positions they hold now in the international rowing arena and when examining the history of women's competitive international rowing, "*you do have to look at gender*" and power.² Traditionally, socially elite men were the sole participants in the sport of rowing at private clubs and academic institutions prior to the turn of the twentieth century, while working class men rowed along the canals, rivers, and lakes throughout the world for their livelihood. As a result, middle and upper class men were able to define who was permitted to participate and on what terms. Early female rowing enthusiasts were not mere bystanders, and when men's rowing organisations excluded female rowers or deterred them from participating, oarswomen actively sought to govern and control their own rowing experiences. Female and

supportive male rowing enthusiasts worked in a number of ways through diverse channels and in a variety of contexts to convince colleagues and rowing administrators that women were capable of participating, coaching, and administrating in such a traditionally defined masculine sporting activity. In order to understand the complexities of how women's competitive international rowing came to be formally accepted and organised, we must analyse the knowledges and discourses associated with women's participation in rowing over the past fifty years; the constitution of the female competitive rower at important moments in the history of women's rowing; and the sacrifices, negotiations, and achievements of female rowers, administrators, and coaches in their pursuit of international recognition.

Early Beginnings of Women's Rowing

The origins of rowing as a sport are traceable to the ancient Greeks, Vikings, and Venetians. Rowing historian Christopher Dodd has argued that, "rowing as a modern sport developed in England in the eighteenth century, was consolidated there in the nineteenth century, and by the early years of the twentieth had taken root in many other countries spread over five continents."³ The British were the first to establish rules of racing and to determine who was eligible to participate in regattas by defining the differences between an amateur and the professional oarsman.⁴ The British Henley Rowing Stewards established the first classification of an amateur in the late 1870s and defined an amateur oarsman as, "one who is *not*, among other things, by trade or employment a mechanic, artisan or labourer."⁵ Amateur oarsmen participated in sport "for its own sake," while professionals participated for "some further purpose," including money and prizes.⁶

Implicit within the definition of an amateur athlete lay distinctions between the classes. An amateur athlete was one who participated for pleasure, play, and/or recreation, not for the pursuit of excellence or perfection. He did not train, nor did he accept monetary reward for his achievements in sport. While the British were the first to establish a definition of an amateur, their model was adopted quickly by other rowing organizations. The Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen's 1880 definition stated:

An amateur is one who has never assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood, who rows for pleasure and recreation only during his leisure hours, and does not abandon or neglect his usual business or occupation for the purpose of training for more than two weeks during the season.⁷

It was believed that some working class occupations developed an individual's physical abilities which would give him an advantage in sport, in this sense resembling training. Sport historians Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley have argued that, "not only was this perceived to be an unfair advantage, but the whole notion of members of the lower classes beating their higher-class countrymen was just not conceivable in that era; indeed, such an idea was repugnant to the elite."⁸

While the British were the first to establish rules and regulations for the sport of rowing, this bourgeois sport expanded rapidly across the Western World. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, men began to establish rowing clubs along the shores of local rivers and lakes throughout Europe, North America, and in parts of the Southern Hemisphere. In Barcelona, the first Spanish club was established in 1821, and in 1934, Prague, Hungary introduced its first club.⁹ In 1935, the first private rowing club was introduced in Sydney, Australia, and in 1936 several Englishmen founded the first German rowing club in Hamburg.¹⁰

As competitive rowing grew in popularity throughout the Western world, there was no uniformity with regards to rules, regulations, or development programs. In the United Kingdom and the United States competitive rowing was generally associated with private colleges and universities.¹¹ Elite private schools established men's rowing programs to help foster the development of their students and organised dual meets against rival schools as a way of encouraging healthy competition.¹² The first of these events was the Oxford-Cambridge Race in 1829,¹³ and in the United States, the Harvard-Yale Race in 1852.¹⁴ Here again we see the distinction between the classes as only middle and upper-class men were those who attended these prestigious institutions.

Throughout Europe and in the Southern Hemisphere, rowing became a popular social pastime; however, in both Europe and the Southern Hemisphere, clubs rather than universities were the champions of the sport. At the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, rowing in France was considered an ideal sport for disciplining young males and the socially elite sponsored the creation of clubs that exclusively supported racing.¹⁵ During the latter part of the nineteenth century, competitive racing dominated the rowing scene in Germany and Romania.¹⁶ It was this interest in competition throughout the world that generated the idea to establish an international sport governing body to regulate the international rules of racing for amateur oarsmen. The founding of the Fédération Internationale Sociétés d'Aviron (FISA) in 1892 led to the introduction and regulation of new international regattas for oarsmen, including the European championships and the Olympic Games. All FISA-regulated events were for oarsmen and women's races were absent from the international racing program.

While the majority of information available documents the history of elite, or amateur, men's participation in the sport of rowing, "it was in working boats that the earliest practitioners, both professional and amateur, first pulled an oar."¹⁷ Rowing historian Neil Wigglesworth has indicated that while copious amounts of private rowing club meeting minutes that stretch back to the end of the eighteenth century exist:

Documentary evidence of rowing as a trade or occupation is not so easily traced, however; besides, many historians of the sport have merely sought to record the progress of rowing as boat racing among crews from the public schools and Oxbridge colleges.¹⁸

This provides a clear indication of the importance placed on those who did not conform to the ideals of an amateur oarsman. Historians Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster have argued that working class competitive oarsmen did not simply adopt the "traditions of gentlemanly amateur rowing," rather "rowing was rescued as a popular pastime from the rigid and class-ridden rules and restrictions imposed on working men's sport by elite amateurism."¹⁹

The division and arguments regarding amateur and professional status for oarsmen was a contentious issue throughout much of the twentieth century. Yet there was one fact that both parties agreed upon, rowing was a sport for men.²⁰ It was the perceived brutality of the physical demands of rowing that labelled the sport a male domain. Ingrid Dieterle, a former FISA and Deutscher Ruderverband (DSV) official, indicated that rowing has always been considered a sport for men primarily "*because it's dominated by strength, size, and these are of course men's qualities.*"²¹ Rowing is a sport that requires great strength and endurance and is said to leave participants at the end of races "twisted in cramps, gasping for air, [and] vomiting."²² Traditionally, oarsmen were believed to revel in the pain they could endure while racing, making the sport an ideal

domain for the display of muscular masculinity. Victorian notions of female frailty deemed women unfit for such kinds of physical exertion, incapable of enduring the pain of harsh, vigorous sport. As well, the common perception of competitive activity as unfeminine deterred women from participating in sports such as rowing.²³ Unlike tennis, swimming, and figure skating, sports in which women were allowed to compete in even at the Olympic Games prior to the First World War, rowing was considered a distinctly masculine sport and as such, not appropriate for women's competitive participation.

Dieterle indicated that rowers:

*...have to be much ... stronger [than other athletes] and you have to be much ... [stronger], not only in your body, [but] in your willing (mentally). And I think these things are normally, in our society, are normally [considered] male qualities [rather] than female qualities"*²⁴

Lenskyj has suggested that "muscles, strength, strain, sweat and dirt were offensive and unfeminine," thus, if participation in competitive sport produced these offences, one question was raised: "were female athletes attractive to men?"²⁵ Furthermore, Cahn has noted that there was concern that not only could competitive sport masculinize female athletes and render them unattractive to men, but the female athlete might in fact begin to prefer women.²⁶ This concern over the defeminization of female athletes led some to try to "prove" that these young women retained their femininity:

These women were portrayed as having a consuming interest in the clothes, grooming and hairstyles that heterosexual attractiveness required. These women were not "shy or diffident," nor were they "rough or repellent"; rather, their behaviour was "sweet and ladylike."²⁷

Lenskyj has suggested it is heterosexist attitudes and practices that classify sports as feminine and masculine.²⁸ See added, "The rules of male-dominated sports systems have

long excluded women from certain sports and dictated the quality and degree of all female sporting involvement.”²⁹

Although many local, national, and international rowing administrators throughout the world disagreed with women’s involvement in rowing, particularly because of the perceived masculinization of oarswomen, women, of all classes, participated in the sport.³⁰ During the 1850s, Ann Glanville and her crew of fisherwomen from Saltash, England, competed in several public regattas and she became known as the “champion female rower of the world.”³¹ In 1886, an article appeared in *The Doidge’s Western Counties Illustrated Annual* praising Glanville’s accomplishments:

Thirty years ago the crew of Saltash women were one of the most important features, not only of local regattas, but of similar aquatic events in other parts of the country ... It was very rarely that Ann and her crew were beaten in a match, even by the opposite sex. They were never beaten by their own sex.³²

Glanville and her crew were not the first women to race in rowing shells. Historians have located references regarding women racing that date back to the fifteenth century.³³

Sport historian Allen Guttmann has noted that one of the most exciting annual events in Venice was the boat race for peasant women:

Understandably, the women’s regatta enjoyed special popularity. The participants were peasant women of the area – especially from Pellestrina – who had plenty of practice thanks to weekly boat trips to the market in Venice. ... It is probable that the spectators were more attracted by the charming country costumes than by the sports performance. At any rate, Antonio Gabellico reported of the first official women’s regatta in 1493, to celebrate the arrival of Beatrice d’Este, that the fifty competing peasant maids in their short linen skirts made a strong impression and that the spectacle, as unfamiliar as it was charming, greatly diminished the effects of the men’s regatta which followed.³⁴

Wigglesworth has also mentioned that a special race for fisherwomen was held at a fishermen’s boat race in Chester in 1733.³⁵

Arguably, these early races were accepted because the oarswomen were not 'ladies' and the events served as a mere sideshow to the men's regatta, providing the opportunity to entertain male spectators. Rowing, not unlike other sports, became socially exclusive. Only those women who could afford the time and expenses of the sport joined private rowing clubs. Not surprisingly, the growth and organization of women's rowing throughout most of the Western World was closely associated with the middle and upper-classes, women who held a college or university education. Private women's rowing clubs and sport governing bodies were largely set up and controlled by middle and upper-class women, and as such they were able to establish rules and regulations regarding who could and could not participate. The contentious issue of amateurism in men's sport reared its head in women's rowing, excluding many working class women from gaining access to elite rowing clubs and universities for women. For example, the earliest German women's rowing club based in Friedrichshagener drew membership from those in the middle class as membership fees were substantial for this era.³⁶ In 1900, the club charged twenty Deutsche Mark (DM) to join and a monthly subscription fee of two DM, this at a time when the average weekly wage was under twelve DM.³⁷

While working class women were aggressively racing in competitive boats, middle and upper-class 'ladies' leisurely paddled across the water. Although competitive rowing for women within the higher social echelons was not encouraged prior to the turn of the twentieth century, rowing was a popular leisure activity among socially elite women. As early as 1880, Lady Greville's *Gentlewomen's Book of Sports* emphasised that rowing could be an ideal social activity for women:

It is essential for every English girl to learn to row, and no one can say anything against a lady rowing – though of course, there are ‘some folks’ who would run down anything that a lady does in the way of athletic exercise, more for the sake of argument than anything else.³⁸

The acceptance of ‘ladies’ rowing did not mean the complete abandonment of stereotypes about gender and appropriate activities for girls and women. Rather, the girls whom Lady Greville encouraged to participate in rowing were in fact those who, for example were newly admitted to Oxford and Cambridge and used rowing as a form of socialization and development of the feminine physique. Clearly social class affected the way in which compulsory heterosexuality was applied to rowing. Hargreaves suggested that Greville believed in the implicit assumption that women’s and men’s characteristics and roles in society differ:

In her role as sportswoman, as in her role as wife and mother, a woman was expected to behave in an exemplary fashion and to display her feminine traits. In sports, as in the family, it was argued that the influence of a woman’s innate superior morality would, through her influence on others, improve the condition of the nation. Sports were thus idealized; they were claimed to be of great benefit to individual women and to contribute to the evolution of society.³⁹

Private women’s academic institutions in North America and Europe supported this assumption and introduced sporting activities, including rowing, to promote elegance and grace, as well as participation and socialisation, not only within the school, but also with neighbouring institutions. In 1875, Mount Holyoke and Wellesley both established recreational rowing programs for women on the grounds that it promoted grace and form of the female body.⁴⁰ Competition however, was strictly prohibited, and Wellesley’s rowing program only permitted their oarswomen to participate in intramural races for the first seventy-five years of their history.⁴¹ Yet these early beginnings allowed possibilities for an enjoyment of rowing among many women, thereby laying the foundation for

women in the future to aspire to become competitive oarswomen, coaches, and administrators. At Oxford and Cambridge rules were also put in place to minimize the potential disruption oarswomen could cause. Beginning in 1884 oarswomen from Somerville College, Oxford, were given permission to use the upper Cherwell of the Isis River where the men's crews practised, but only at times when the male students "were unlikely to be encountered."⁴² Further rules for Oxford oarswomen included having "a draw string in their skirt hems to that no ankle is exposed," and "If coaching by a gentleman is desired, leave must be obtained from their moral tutors and a gentleman cox must act as a chaperone."⁴³

Outside of academic institutions as well, women showed interest in participating in the sport that their fathers and brothers were enjoying at private men's rowing clubs and sought for opportunities to not only participate in recreational rowing, but competitive racing as well. Many of these clubs were disinclined to open their doors to the 'fairer sex,' ensuring that they remained sites for men to publicly display their masculinity. Those that did allow females to join fell afoul of national rowing regulations. In 1907, for example, the British Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) refused to acknowledge women's rowing competitions and those clubs who had permitted female membership were denied affiliation with their national sport governing body.⁴⁴ This penalty was too high for most men's rowing clubs, thus oarswomen were once again shut out. As a result, women created their own clubs and competitions in the sport they enjoyed, "*in Great Britain ... right through until the late 70s, early 80s, all our clubs were women only clubs.*"⁴⁵

In light of the ARA's refusal to regulate women's rowing in Great Britain, pioneering female rowing administrators Amy Gentry and Mrs. K. L. Summerton helped found the Women's Amateur Rowing Association (WARA) in 1923.⁴⁶ The founding of this organisation marked a significant chapter in women's rowing and the decision to use the term 'women' rather than 'ladies' signified a shift from recreational rowing, to competitive rowing.⁴⁷ Ladies participated in "style" rowing (See Chapter 4), while women raced across the water. By 1926 the Association's regatta was the highlight of women's competitive rowing in Great Britain.⁴⁸ Although the WARA used the term 'women' rather than 'ladies,' the association held similar beliefs regarding amateurism as the ARA. The newly founded women's national rowing federation banned all women who worked as labourers from gaining admittance to affiliated clubs and regattas.⁴⁹ Once again, the division between social classes limited who had access to sport.

In the United States, oarswomen outside of the private academic system also found that access to rowing equipment and facilities was limited. Ernestine Bayer, an athletic woman herself, would sit and watch her husband, Ernest Bayer, row along the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia because the rowing clubs along the infamous Boathouse Row barred women from their docks.⁵⁰ Frustrated, Bayer sought a place from which she and sixteen other female rowing enthusiasts could launch their boats. The women rented the Ardmore Skating Club along the river and organised one of the first rowing clubs on the East Coast for women run by women in 1938, the Philadelphia Girls' Rowing Club (PGRC).⁵¹ The women's rowing club was not widely accepted along the banks of the Schuylkill, and Bayer later commented to the *Syracuse Herald America* that when the club was first introduced, "Three-quarters of the men [who were members of clubs along

the Schuylkill], I'm sorry to say wouldn't speak to" her husband because he supported women's rowing.⁵² Bayer further added that when male rowers did speak with her husband, "they'd tell him girls had no right to be out on the river rowing."⁵³

Women's participation was not limited to the United Kingdom and the United States. Women in Australia, Germany, and Russia, also began to take control over their own rowing destinies when they found themselves unwelcome at the men's clubs. In Russia, active oarswomen attempted to gain recognition as "athlete rowers" and to compete at the country's open championships as early as 1886.⁵⁴ Here the nation's sporting by-laws stated that "women should choose a sport that complies with the norms of social behaviour and select only those sports that will leave no impact on their feminine features."⁵⁵ Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, competitive sport in Russia was discouraged by many physical education and medical experts, including Pyotr Franzevich Lesgaft. Lesgaft opposed competitive sports because they "encouraged selfishness and were educationally harmful in that they encouraged victory of the physically strong over the physically weak."⁵⁶ He advocated games that encouraged "group spirit, unselfishness, social awareness and respect among the sexes;" these were qualities essential to the development of future Russian mothers.⁵⁷ Similar to the beliefs held by countless other physicians throughout the world, Lesgaft's opinions were underpinned by the concern for the "national good as well as for the future of the human race."⁵⁸

The belief that all women were the key to the future of the nation was not limited to Europe. Cahn has noted that American Bernarr MacFadden, an innovator in women's physical education argued that "strong, vigorous, vital women are badly needed to build

up the race.”⁵⁹ He stated that healthy women were vital to “the future progress of the nation.”⁶⁰

While Russian oarswomen were unable to gain admittance into their national rowing federation prior to the turn of the twentieth century, female rowing enthusiasts established their own regattas. Similarly, in Australia, dedicated oarswomen from South Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland who found themselves cut off from competitive rowing came together to found the Australian Ladies’ Rowing Council in 1920, later renamed the Australian Women’s Rowing Council.⁶¹ Rowing historian Daryl Adair has argued that:

Unlike English women’s rowing, where universities were the foundation of female competition, most Australian women rowed in clubs. Therefore, a greater diversity of women could be involved in Australian rowing, as they were not explicitly excluded on the basis of class or education.⁶²

Despite Adair’s suggestion of the leavening of class, women’s rowing in Australia was still not widely accepted amongst oarsmen. A woman’s primary purpose was to be that of a wife and mother and her participation in rowing threatened her obligations. Rowing had the potential to develop unsightly muscles, was perceived to threaten the reproductive organs, and ultimately challenged the division between the sexes.

Yet, not all men and men’s national rowing federations were completely averse to including women under their mandate. A number of European federations, for example France and the Netherlands, were progressive in their attitudes regarding women’s competitive rowing having introduced women’s sections to their federation and regulated women’s racing early in the twentieth century.⁶³ Not surprisingly, these same federations were integral to the development of women’s competitive international rowing. By the end of the Second World War many European national rowing federations made the

decision, often with trepidation, to include women's rowing in their national competitive championships.⁶⁴ For example, the Danish national rowing federation acceded in 1941 and introduced women's racing at their national championships after years of negotiations with competitive oarswomen.⁶⁵ By 1960, women's national rowing championships were raced in Germany, France, Greece, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.⁶⁶

At the same time as women negotiated for admittance into national championships, female rowing enthusiasts also sought international racing opportunities through their negotiations with FISA delegates. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, FISA delegates had little interest in the introduction of women's events to the international racing program. The federation was originally established as an international sport governing body that governed and celebrated men's elite rowing and few delegates considered women capable of participating at the international level. However, there were some members who saw that women's competitive rowing at the local and national levels was growing and that FISA had the opportunity to have authority over women's international rowing if they brought women's races under their mandate. With the encouragement of male administrators at the local, national, and international levels, oarswomen ultimately gained admittance to FISA regulated international championships in 1954.

Oarswomen were assisted in their struggle to further develop women's rowing, such as introduce women's events at the world championships and Olympic Games, by those female leaders among them who demonstrated their abilities to become coaches and athletic administrators within their national rowing federations. The entrance of these

women into arenas of authority made a significant contribution to understandings of female rowing competency and the development of women's competitive international rowing events. These women lobbied and worked with or around male rowing administrators to gain oarswomen's acceptance on the international rowing scene. Not surprisingly this proved to be a difficult task for many because of the socially defined gender roles that saw women as subordinate, serving in support roles rather than leadership positions.

The Price of Acceptance

Although FISA's decision to introduce women's races at the European championships in 1954 opened the doors to a wider audience of female athletes and provided evidence that women were capable of competing in this traditionally defined masculine sport, this significant turning point also marked the introduction of new barriers for women. FISA's all-male delegation agreed that rowing could be seen as an activity for both men and women, but saw certain events as more suitable for women's participation.⁶⁷ The delegates agreed to establish international regulations for women's competitive rowing that took into account both "physiological and cultural considerations," limiting women's racing distance to 1000 metres (half the distance of the men's events), as well as the number and types of events available to them.⁶⁸ Anita DeFrantz, a current FISA Executive member and former IOC Vice-President, argued "*We knew that we were racing 1000 metres because that was half what the men raced. There was no other justification and that's not a justification.*"⁶⁹ The decision to limit women's racing distance also meant that organising committees were required to have separate or movable starting gates that could be set up at the 1000 metres mark to start the women's

racers.⁷⁰ As a result, the women's championships were held one week prior to the men's, which further de-emphasised the importance of the event and established them as a sideshow to the men's regatta.

With the introduction of women's competitive international races, female coaches soon found their opportunities for advancement limited. Early female coaches worked diligently to gain acceptance for oarswomen and their training techniques in the realm of competitive rowing, but the introduction of new international events resulted, for a number of reasons, resulted in many female coaches being pushed aside by their male counterparts. Coaching is a field that requires an individual to take control over any and all situations involving athletes and has traditionally been seen as a masculine endeavour.⁷¹ This assertive characteristic was perceived 'unnatural' for women, who traditionally were considered to be more appropriate for support roles. Male coaches who already had international coaching experience were comfortable with the demands of international competition and were considered more capable to lead women's crews at the European championships and help them to victory. Since this time, men have continued to dominate the arena of coaching, holding the majority of coaching positions throughout the world of international rowing. Women who have gained access to international coaching positions face adversities, as they are continuously challenge the perception that men are more qualified to hold these coaching positions.

The introduction of women's competitive international racing in 1954 also had a significant impact on female rowing administrators. In order for oarswomen to gain acceptance into international competition, female rowing administrators knew that they had to elicit the support of their male counterparts. Men, after all, were the gatekeepers

and controlled access to international rowing. By gaining the help of the male rowing organisations and ultimately in joining them, the women often found that they had to relinquish some of the control they had over women's rowing. Women's national rowing federations were soon forced to amalgamate with the men's or disband completely, and many female rowing administrators found that their positions were either eliminated or had been filled by men. For example, the amalgamation of the WARA and the ARA in 1963 was designed to allow British oarswomen access to the national sport governing body's training facilities and managerial expertise. However, in doing so, the WARA became a subsidiary section of the ARA, and lost its control over women's competitive rowing. The all-male executive assumed control over the selection and management of the women's competitive national program, while the women were left to address issues associated with women's domestic rowing, such as local regattas and the collection of membership fees.⁷² With men holding the majority of decision-making positions in rowing administration, for both men's and women's rowing, they were able to maintain their hold over the rules and regulations that they deemed suitable for women's international rowing.

The gendering of coaching and sport administration at the national and international level as a male preserve inherently limited the opportunities available to women in the international domain. Penny Chuter, former Chief Coach for Great Britain during the 1980s, indicated that the road that led to her international coaching achievements was often difficult because she was a woman, "*it was quite, quite a steep hill to climb.*"⁷³ Despite the fact that the introduction of women's competitive international rowing led to more women becoming involved in the sport as athletes, fewer

women currently hold decision-making positions within rowing organisations. Feminist sport historian Susan Cahn has argued that sporting women have traded “control over sport for greater access to sporting opportunities and resources.”⁷⁴ We see examples of this in several sports, but the most glaring example in the Western world is linked to the introduction of Title IX in the United States. Originally designed to bring parity among men’s and women’s educational and collegiate sports programs, this piece of federal legislation has helped to dramatically increase the number of women participating in intercollegiate athletics, 16000 female athletes in 1968 to 8402 women’s teams in 2004.⁷⁵ Title IX has also led to a decreased number of female coaches and administrators involved in women’s sport.⁷⁶ Sport sociologists Vivian R. Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter have pointed out that prior to Title IX women coached more than ninety percent of women’s college teams, but by 2004 women held less than forty-five percent of these positions.⁷⁷ They also found that in 2004 women held less than thirty-five percent of all administrative positions in women’s college sport, while more than seventeen percent of women’s athletic programs had no female administrators.⁷⁸ As sport sociologist Jennifer Hargreaves has noted, the increased professionalisation of sport clearly resulted in fewer women holding positions of power in sport organisations.⁷⁹

The Growth of Women’s Competitive International Rowing

After FISA took control over the regulation of women’s competitive international rowing, the sport began to grow internationally, with an increased importance placed on women’s success. The introduction of women’s international competitions prompted more national rowing federations to introduce women’s national rowing championships and to send women’s crews to international competitions. Between 1954 and 1973 the

number of countries competing at the women's European championships rose from fourteen to nineteen, and the number of entries increased from thirty-four to fifty-three.⁸⁰ This increased interest in women's international rowing supported FISA proposal to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that women's rowing should be introduced to the program of the Olympic Games. However, the international sport governing body had yet to complete one element that the IOC required for introduction into the Olympic Games, the establishment of a women's world rowing championship. In 1971, FISA President Thomas Keller encouraged the rowing federation's Ordinary Annual Congress to agree to the introduction of a 1974 world championship regatta for women.⁸¹ The Congress agreed and thus, FISA had fulfilled their obligation to the IOC, which helped to ensure the introduction of women's rowing on the 1976 Olympic program.⁸²

In the early 1980s, FISA became aware of a particular problem associated with the women's racing distance; a problem that was magnified because Eastern Bloc countries dominated women's international rowing between 1954 and the late 1980s. Although the number of countries entering women's crews at international regattas was increasing, many were concerned with the number of medals won by Eastern European nations. Ellis indicated that during the Cold War it was common to have "*five Eastern Bloc countries [racing] against*" one boat from the West in the final.⁸³ Tricia Smith, Canada's most successful female rower during the 1970s and 1980s, concurred with Ellis and added:

*... [there] was always this force [from the Eastern Bloc countries], the Romanians, the Bulgarians, East Germans ... Russians, Poles. Most finals that Betty [Craig] and I were in were all Eastern Bloc countries except us. There were occasionally good crews in our event from Great Britain, the Netherlands, or the United States, but the norm was all Eastern Bloc, except us [in the finals].*⁸⁴

It was speculated that these countries were so successful because the women's racing distance of 1000 metres twinned the women's races with a power event that was highly influenced by the use of anabolic steroids. DeFrantz argued, "*I think the state sanctioned doping systems were there and it made a lot of sense for those who had such a system to avail themselves of it because it was a flat out sprint.*"⁸⁵ FISA had originally limited the women's racing distance to 1000 metres because it was believed that women were unable to endure the full racing distance of 2000 metres, but in 1985, it was decided that a major change was needed in women's rowing.⁸⁶ The FISA Extraordinary Congress agreed that women's rowing required endurance and technique, not simply brute force.⁸⁷ It was therefore agreed that the women's competitive racing distance was to be changed from its original distance of 1000 metres to 2000 metres.⁸⁸

At the same time, FISA became interested in expanding the sport throughout the world by attracting competitive rowers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁸⁹ The American rowing association suggested that the introduction of lightweight women's rowing would make the sport more attractive to a wider audience of female oarswomen.⁹⁰ It was argued that events designed for women who weighed less than sixty kilograms would open the sport to Asia, a continent in which the majority of women fit into this category.⁹¹ Eager to see the sport expand throughout this part of the world, FISA agreed to introduce women's lightweight events at the 1985 world championships.⁹² The IOC also saw the potential of lightweight rowing opening the sport to a larger market of oarswomen and agreed to introduce lightweight women's rowing on the 1996 Olympic program.⁹³ With the number of events in the Olympic Games growing rapidly however, only one event was sanctioned, the lightweight women's double sculls, which replaced

the women's four without coxswain.⁹⁴ The decision to remove one heavyweight women's event for a lightweight women's event did not occur without controversy:

... well I knew it was a close voting ... getting lightweights in anyway, so I think it was hard for ... a lot of the East ... [European] countries because they didn't want to take away heavyweight events because they couldn't increase the number of rowers that went to the Olympics, so they had to take away ... the[women's] four [without coxswain].⁹⁵

Despite the lack of interest in establishing lightweight women's Olympic rowing, the introduction of the lightweight women's double sculls event at the 1996 Games in Atlanta, United States of America, has prompted numerous national rowing federations, even in Eastern Europe, to promote women's lightweight competitive international rowing.

Thus, women's competitive international rowing has passed several hurdles since the inception of the women's European championships in 1954. By 1996, women's competitive racing events were included on the program at the European championships, the world championships, and the Olympic Games. Additionally, lightweight women's events were added to the program at the world championships and the Olympic Games, and women's racing distance increased from 1000 metres to 2000 metres. Throughout the history of women's competitive international rowing, oarswomen have negotiated to gain access to international competitions, facilities, and equipment; female coaches have worked to establish and maintain authority over training female athletes in a male dominated field; and female administrators have negotiated to regain the control they had in the early stages of competitive women's rowing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document the history of women's competitive international rowing from the moment when women were allowed to race at the European championships in 1954, to the year 2003.⁹⁶ Although much has been written about the history of men's participation in the sport of rowing, women's competitive international rowing has received little attention:

There is no question but that rowing has been a predominantly male sport for all of its history, and a predominantly male chauvinistic sport in many places for much of its history. In the motherland there have been some spectacular feats by women, such as the nineteenth-century fisherwomen's crew, skippered by Anne Glanville, who rowed a pilot gig from the Tamar River in Cornwall across the Channel to Le Havre and won a regatta there. Such achievements seem to have been rare; although there are occasional references to the prowess of nineteenth-century oarswomen, documentation is hard to come by. Most women were confined, or preferred to be confined, to the decorous role so loved by their menfolk.⁹⁷

Women have been participating in the sport of rowing for centuries,⁹⁸ but the majority of texts available focus upon men's rowing.⁹⁹ This study expands our knowledge by documenting the many negotiations of early female rowing enthusiasts to gain entrance into the world of competitive international racing and describes the struggles through which the competitive female rower was ultimately acknowledged and accepted in the ranks of international rowing. In particular, it examines how female rowers, coaches, and administrators have negotiated their positions within the male dominated realm of competitive international rowing since FISA's decision to introduce women's races in 1954.

Organisation of the Dissertation

This dissertation begins with a brief outline in Chapter 1 of the history of women's competitive international rowing and introduces some of the struggles that

oarswomen, female coaches, and administrators faced during their negotiations to achieve acceptance in the realm of competitive international rowing. It is situated within a broad body of literature that has documented and analysed women's sporting history. Chapter 2 examines this literature and explains how the history of women's competitive international rowing, a history that has been overlooked, fits into existing literature on women's sport and the history of rowing. As well, I articulate how many elements of liberal sports feminism can be observed in the history of women's competitive international rowing. This is followed by a description of research methods that were involved in the collection of data. In the third chapter I explain the data collection methods that were used to analyse original documents, and conduct interviews with current and former female rowers, coaches, and administrators and demonstrate how they fit into a feminist qualitative research paradigm.

The history of women's participation in the sport of rowing throughout the world has not been well documented, and I do not attempt to provide a complete history of all women's experiences in a rowing boat. Rather, my study begins by documenting the struggles of early female rowing enthusiasts to gain entrance into FISA-regulated international regattas and the process through which the inaugural women's European rowing championships took place in 1954. I provide evidence that women were, in fact, actively involved in the sport of rowing during the first half of the twentieth century in spite of the fact that many male rowing administrators refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of their participation. I argue that it was these early female rowing enthusiasts who negotiated with their local clubs and national rowing federations to support women's

rowing that ultimately led to FISA accepting women's rowing on the program of the 1954 European championships.

The introduction of women's events at the European championships did have an impact on women's competitive rowing throughout the world and chapter five analyses this impact. In Chapter 5, I begin by analysing the influence that the creation of FISA-regulated women's international regattas had on women's rowing in Eastern Europe and how the sport was used as a way to promote socialist political ideology. This is contrasted to the experiences of oarswomen in the West and the various obstacles they faced at the local and national level, despite the fact that women's rowing had been accepted on the international racing program. I argue that this limited acceptance of athletic women was a common occurrence throughout the Western world and with the help of second wave feminist initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s that were directed at promoting women's competitive sport participation, women's rowing slowly increased in importance.

The work of liberal feminist activists during the 1960s and 1970s and the introduction of gender equity legislation in many parts of the Western World during this time helped promote women's competitive sport, but I argue was not the primary reason male rowing and sport administrators lobbied for the inclusion of women's events on the programs of the world championships and the Olympic Games. In Chapter 6, I propose that the public lobbying by male sporting administrators for women's inclusion in these events was politically motivated and that these men were not simply interested in the development of women's competitive international rowing, but rather, sought to improve their own administrative careers and/or help to promote their political ideology. I

examine the reasons why male sporting administrators were motivated to promote women's competitive international rowing and the process through which women's events were included on the programs of the world championships and the Olympic Games.

In Chapter 7, I examine the ways in which female rowing administrators and coaches negotiated to achieve equity for women's competitive international rowing. Furthermore, I analyse the process through which lightweight women's events came to be accepted on the programs of the world championships and the Olympic Games, and the transition of women's racing distance from 1000 metres to 2000 metres.

Many oarswomen between the 1960s and 1980s who had benefited from the work of female and male sporting administrators and coaches who negotiated the inclusion of women's rowing events on the programs of international regattas, decided after their retirement from competitive rowing to become coaches and administrators themselves. Chapter 8 analyses the challenges and barriers that oarswomen faced during their transition from competitive international athletes, to becoming a coach and/or sport administrator. I examine some of the key reasons why women are under-represented in the sphere of international coaching and why it is considered more "natural" for men to hold such positions. Because of the barriers that female coaches face, such as family responsibilities, some retired oarswomen turn to sport/rowing administration rather than coaching. Although family responsibilities and administrative work can often be balanced, female administrators do face other obstacles that can prevent them from holding positions of authority in national and international sport organisations. The final

chapter presents a synopsis of the findings and major conclusions, and provides recommendations for future research.

Notes

- ¹ M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), 1.
- ² Diana Ellis, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 19 August 2004, Schinias, Greece.
- ³ Christopher Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing* (London: Stanley Paul, 1991), 217.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71.
- ⁶ Robert J. Paddick, "Amateurism: An Idea of the Past of a Necessity for the Future?" *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* vol. III (1994), 4.
- ⁷ Cited in Keith L. Lansley, "The amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism," PhD Dissertation (University of Alberta, 1971), 17, found in Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 72.
- ⁸ Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 71.
- ⁹ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 242-243.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ Club rowing in the United Kingdom was associated with leisure activities among the socially elite.
- ¹² Neil Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing* (Great Britain: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1992).
- ¹³ Angela Schneider, "Rowing," in *International Encyclopaedia of Women and Sports Volume 2*, ed. Karen Christensen, Allen Guttmann, and Gertrud Pfister (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001), 950.
- ¹⁴ Anna Seaton Huntington, "Women on the Water," in *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*, ed. Lissa Smith (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998), 111.
- ¹⁵ Karen Solem, ed., *The Rower's Almanac 2004-2005: The Official Guidebook to Rowing Around the World* (Washington, DC: The Rower's Almanac Inc., 2004), 123.
- ¹⁶ Deutscher Ruderverband, "German Rowing History - A Summary," http://site.drivnet.de/German_rowing_history_-_a_summary.html retrieved 8 April 2006.
- ¹⁷ Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 2.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ¹⁹ Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster, *Geordies: Roots of Regionalism* (Northumbria University Press, 2005), 118.
- ²⁰ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*.
- ²¹ Ingrid Dieterle, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 10 June 2005, Frankfurt, Germany.
- ²² Seaton Huntington, "Women on the Water," 106.
- ²³ See Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1994); Hall, *The Girl and the Game*; Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports* (London: Routledge, 1994); Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986).
- ²⁴ Dieterle, interview.
- ²⁵ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 78.
- ²⁶ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 165.
- ²⁷ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 75.
- ²⁸ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 57.
- ²⁹ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 57.
- ³⁰ See Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*; Claire Parker, "The Social History of English Women's Rowing 1920-1963: A Case Study of Weybridge Ladies Amateur Rowing Club" (Master's Thesis, The University of Warwick, 1993); and Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*.
- ³¹ Parker, "The Social History of English Women's Rowing," 28.
- ³² *The Doidge's Western Counties Illustrated Annual* (1886), 172, quoted in Parker, "A Social History of English Women's Rowing," 28.
- ³³ Werner Körbs, *Vom Sinn der Leibesübungen zur Zeit der Italienischen Renaissance*, edited by Wolfgang Decker (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1988), 26-27, quoted in Allen Guttmann, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 65-66.

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- ³⁴ Guttman, *Women's Sports*, 65-66.
- ³⁵ Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 24.
- ³⁶ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 336.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Parker, "The Social History of English Women's Rowing," 27.
- ³⁹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 90.
- ⁴⁰ Schneider, "Rowing," 952; Seaton Huntington, "Women on the Water," 106.
- ⁴¹ Seaton Huntington, "Women on the Water," 106.
- ⁴² Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 338.
- ⁴³ Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 107.
- ⁴⁴ Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 111.
- ⁴⁵ Ellis, interview.
- ⁴⁶ Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 111.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Hylton Cleaver, *A History of Rowing* (London: Herbert Jenlins Ltd., 1957), 157.
- ⁴⁹ Minutes of Meeting [WARA] held at Sporting Life Office, Thursday 3 November 1924. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
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- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ James Riordan, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Sporting Women in Russia and the USSR," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), 188.
- ⁵⁷ James Riordan, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Sporting Women in Russia and the USSR," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), 188.
- ⁵⁸ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 106.
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- ⁶⁰ "Spirit," *Amateur Athlete* (October 1932), 7 found in Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 77.
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- ⁶³ Women's Rowing Commission, "Inquiry for Women's Rowing carried out in 1970 by the national federations," 1970. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.
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- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ Anita DeFrantz, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 26 July 2004, Banyoles, Spain.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁷¹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 200; Jim McKay, *Managing Gender: Affirmative Action and Organizational Power in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand Sport* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).
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⁷⁴ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 261.

⁷⁵ R. Vivian Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter, "Women in Intercollegiate Sport: A Longitudinal, National Study - Twenty-Seven Year Update 1977-2004," 2-3, www.womenssportsfoundation.org/binary-data/WSF_ARTICLE/pdf_file/906.pdf#search=%22%22Acosta%22%20%22Women%20*%20Intercollegiate%20Sport%22%22 retrieved 15 July 2004.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 and 23.

⁷⁹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 198.

⁸⁰ Jean-Louis Meuret, *FISA: 1892-1992: The FISA Centenary Book* (Switzerland: FISA, 1992), 107 and 163.

⁸¹ Minutes of the Ordinary Annual Congress held on the occasion of the 1971 European Championships on Tuesday, 17th August at 9.00 a.m. in the Hotel Lyngby, Lyngby, Copenhagen, Denmark. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

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⁸⁴ Tricia Smith, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 4 July 2005, Vancouver, Canada.

⁸⁵ DeFrantz, interview.

⁸⁶ Procès-verbal du Congrès Annuel à l'occasion des Championnats d'Europe de Milan Mercredi 30 août 1950 au Palazzo Vercesi. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁸⁷ Congrès Extraordinaire de la FISA du 10 au 13 janvier 1985. Commentaires de quelques points importants de l'ordre du jour, 1. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Minutes of the Ordinary Congress held on Saturday, 21st August, 1982 at 9.00 am in the Palace Hotel, Lucerne. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁹⁰ Patricia Ann Wilkinson, National Women's Rowing Association to Nely Gambon-de-Vos, 29 March 1981. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland; Christopher I. Blackwall, Executive Director of the United States Rowing Association, to Magdalena Sarbochová, Chairwoman of FISA's Women's Commission, 24 August 1982. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁹¹ Minutes of the FISA Extraordinary Congress held from Thursday, 10th January, 1985 at 2pm, until Sunday, 18th January, 1985 at the Parco dei Principi Hotel, Rome. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board, Atlanta, 15-17 March 1993. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Colleen Miller, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 17 April 2005, Victoria, Canada.

⁹⁶ The term international is used in this project to refer to women's participation at FISA-regulated championships, including the Olympic Games, the world championships, the former European championships, and world cup regattas.

⁹⁷ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 336.

⁹⁸ A special race for fisherwomen at a fishermen's boat race in Chester in 1733 was noted in Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 24.

⁹⁹ See R. D. Burnel, *Henley Royal Regatta: A Celebration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989); Christopher Dodd, *Henley Royal Regatta* (London: Stanley Paul, 1983); P. A. King, *125 Years at Kingston R. C.* (Kingston RC, 1983); R. Mark, *Talking Tarn A. R. C. 125 Years* (TTARC, 1984); G. Tomalin, *The Henley Royal Regatta Since 1839* (Henley on the Thames: Julian Berrisford Associates, 1972); H. B. Wells, *Vesta Rowing Club Centenary History* (Vesta R.C., 1970); and Neil Wigglesworth, *A Short History of Rowing in Lancaster* (John O'Grant R.C., 1980).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Over the past two decades an increasing amount of literature on women's sporting histories has become available because scholars are aware that this type of analysis "provides a basis for understanding sports today."¹ Furthermore, feminist historiography "has disabused us of the notion that the history of women is the same as the history of men and that significant turning points in history have the same impact for one sex as for the other."² With this in mind, feminist historian Joan Kelly-Gadol has encouraged scholars to not simply add women to the dominant history, but rather rewrite history according to the major turning points affecting women, such as childbirth, sexuality, and family structure.³ While women's history is different from men's, the two are in fact relational, neither exists in isolation:

When women are excluded from the benefits of economic, political, and cultural advances made in certain periods, a situation which gives women a different historical experience from men, it is to those "advances" we must look to find the reasons for the separation of the sexes.⁴

In the case of the history of women's competitive international rowing, the experiences and histories of female rowers, coaches, and administrators are directly linked to the history of men's international rowing, those who governed international rowing, and negotiated with female rowing enthusiasts were men. I argue that a history of women's competitive international rowing would not be complete without a critical analysis of women's participation in sport and an understanding of the effects of gender and power relations experienced by oarswomen, female coaches, and administrators in the pursuit of access to elite competitive international sport.

Women's Rowing Literature

Until recently, the primary sources of literature on rowing were written by male rowing enthusiasts concerned with recording a history of their local club or regatta and almost all of these texts lack social commentary or reference to female participation.⁵ The sheer amount of rowing literature written by Oxbridge men is a reflection of a sport in which white, socially elite males traditionally have dominated.⁶ Competitive rowing exemplifies the exclusion of working class and women from participating in what has historically been an elitist, masculine arena.

This section begins with an examination of the literature that documents primarily men's rowing history, as well as their brief discussions concerning women's rowing history. This is followed by an analysis of the popular literature dedicated to documenting women's rowing history, and finally, an examination of the academic theses that focus solely on the history of women's rowing. Although these documents do provide some insight into the history of women's competitive international rowing, they are by no means complete histories and more research needs to be done on the history of women's rowing at all levels.

Men's Rowing Literature

Women's participation in organised rowing has a relatively short history when compared with men's and it is not surprising that women's history is intertwined with the development of men's rowing. Both Neil Wigglesworth's *A Social History of English Rowing* and Eric Halladay's *Rowing in England: A Social History* described in detail the history of men's rowing in England, while women's participation is barely mentioned.⁷ Wigglesworth and Halladay did acknowledge that women participated in rowing at

various clubs and universities after the turn of the twentieth century, but the notes appear as only witty anecdotes or as a footnote to men's rowing history.

In *The Story of World Rowing*, Dodd examined the history of rowing throughout the world from its origins in Greek, Viking, and Venetian times, to 1990.⁸ This book is an important text that outlines significant historical moments and influential individuals in the history of rowing during this time. Furthermore, Dodd had provided a limited amount of information about women's competitive international rowing, but again, this history is more of a side-note to the information regarding men's competitive rowing.

In 1992, FISA celebrated its centennial anniversary and to commemorate this occasion, the federation enlisted the help of historian Jean-Louis Meuret to write a detailed chronology of the international federation's history. *FISA 1892-1992: The FISA Centenary Book* documented the history of the international rowing federation with synopses of the major discussions that took place at the annual congresses and executive meetings. It provided results from all the FISA European championships, world championships, and Olympic Games, including results from the qualifying heats, repêchages, semis, and finals.⁹ This is an important reference as it provides the reader with detailed information regarding results from every international championship since the formation of FISA in 1892. Yet, there is no analysis or discussion about the results or the decisions that were made at the FISA meetings or annual congresses.

Women's Rowing Literature

In *Stroke: The Inside Story of Olympic Contenders*, Heather Clarke and Susan Gwynne-Timothy used information from interviews to describe the experiences of eight Canadian oarswomen leading up to their participation in the 1988 Summer Olympic

Games in Seoul, Korea.¹⁰ Informal interviews were conducted with twenty-five other athletes and coaches to contextualise women's rowing in Canada during the late 1980s and to introduce the reader to the vast array of individuals involved in women's high performance rowing in the country. Clarke, a member of the 1988 Canadian women's Olympic eight, and Gwynne-Timothy, a former rower, discussed their own personal experiences as oarswomen in an attempt to explain what it was like to be a Canadian oarswoman and Olympian in the late 1980s. The book detailed interesting stories about the Canadian women's international rowing program and highlighted issues of gender and power. However, the authors failed to reflect on the relevance of these relationships in sport to the greater social context. Clarke and Gwynne-Timothy also neglected to contextualise the history of women's international racing or discuss the significant changes that were made to women's international racing during the 1980s, including the transition from women racing 1000 metres to 2000 metres and the introduction of lightweight women's international rowing. *Stroke* has been criticised by many of the women who were involved in the selection of the 1988 women's rowing team for its inaccurate interpretation of participants' statements and the negative comments expressed about coaches and other oarswomen.

Seaton Huntington provided a brief introduction to the development of women's rowing in America in "Women on the Water."¹¹ She examined various eras throughout the history of women's rowing in the United States and provided information about influential American women who supported and promoted the sport throughout the twentieth century. Seaton Huntington did not explain how the sport grew in popularity throughout the century or how pioneering female rowing enthusiasts gained access.

A complementary text to the numerous books available about the history of men's private rowing clubs and local men's regattas is *A History of the ZLAC Rowing Club: 1892-1992*.¹² Helen Wetzell Wallace, a member of Crew VIII, published a history of San Diego's oldest rowing club, ZLAC (which stands for the first names of the founders of the women's only club Zulette Lamb, Lena Polhamus, Agnes Polhamus, and Carolyn Polhamus), to commemorate and honour the club in which she is a member. Wetzell Wallace provided information on how ZLAC was formed by the daughters of Captain Albert A. Polhamus, Lena, Agnes, Caroline, and their friend Zulette Lamb in 1892 after Captain Polhamus gave the young girls a small, old boat to row around the San Diego wharves.¹³ This important text does provide information about this niche area in sport and women's rowing history.

The most recent text, Daniel J. Boyne's *The Red Rose Crew*, documented the selection and training of nine women who represented the United States at the 1975 world championships in the women's eight.¹⁴ Boyne provided short stories of the nine women's experiences in rowing and how they struggled in their personal lives and at their own academic institutions to become accepted in a male dominated sport. He described how these large and physically strong women resisted traditionally defined notions of feminine behaviour and appearance, but, he provided little historical reference to women's international rowing nor did he examine how women's international rowing came to be regulated by FISA. Without this information, the reader is unaware of the significance of the American women's participation at the 1975 world championships or of the struggles and negotiations of early oarswomen in their quest to gain access to the international rowing.

Theses

None of the limited number of texts that examine the history of women's rowing fully explains the social and historical significance of women's international participation. In "The Development of Women's Rowing in the United States," Jan Palchikoff provided a brief overview of the history of women's rowing in the United States from the introduction of Wellesley College's first women's rowing program in 1875 through to the development of American elite women's rowing 1978.¹⁵ Palchikoff's work is valuable as it documented some of the important moments in American women's rowing, including the founding dates of several women's rowing clubs and college programs, the founding of the National Women's Rowing Association (NWRA), and women's participation in inaugural regattas and international competition. In addition, Palchikoff made reference to several influential women and men who were instrumental in the development and promotion of women's rowing in the country between 1875 and 1978.

Claire Parker's master's thesis on the history of English women's rowing focused on the Weybridge Ladies Amateur Rowing Club (WLARC) and analysed the social, economic, political, and cultural trends that impacted women's participation between 1920 and 1963.¹⁶ This is a valuable thesis because it detailed the history of the WLARC and some of the influential women who were members of this club, including early female rowing pioneer, Amy Gentry. Parker briefly introduced Gentry's involvement in some of the early negotiations of the Women's Amateur Rowing Association (WARA) to place women's rowing on FISA's international racing program.

Feminist Approaches to the History of Women and Sport

In the early 1970s, sport feminist research emerged as a feature of second wave feminism following earlier sports histories which were largely descriptive rather than analytical.¹⁷ Until this time, researchers had tended to document evidence or facts rather than questioning and analysing the meanings behind sport. Social issues in sport had become a part of contemporary analysis of racism, violence, and drug issues, but as sport sociologists Michael Messner and Donald Sabo have argued, “the concept of gender was conspicuously absent from most analyses.”¹⁸ Sport historians Roberta Park and J. A. Mangan described the state of the history of women’s sport at this time as limited to a “few popular biographies of female athletes, some relatively obscure dissertations about influential physical educationists and highly specialized studies of specific physical education colleges and departments.”¹⁹

The early 1980s saw a shift away from the simple placement of women into the history of sport, to an analysis of the development of gender theory.²⁰ As Patricia Vertinsky pointed out, “the gradual inclusion within sport history of a focus upon gender ... [has] forced the academy to pay attention to a wider and deeper version of the history of sport and physical education is to be celebrated.”²¹ The analysis of women’s sporting history developed more rapidly during the 1980s as “new sources were explored: new and more densely textured questions were asked: and more comprehensive analyses were offered.”²² Furthermore, Vertinsky argued, the promoters of women’s sport history “increasingly questioned the strategy of viewing women and men through a separate spheres perspective for its tendency to emphasize difference rather than elucidating the reciprocity between gender and society.”²³

Nancy Struna was among the first feminist scholars to move beyond the traditional analysis of periodization and question how women's experiences were influenced by the "behaviours and attitudes redolent in society," exploring "such themes as identity, conflict and the relativity of equality."²⁴ Similarly, German sport historian Gertrud Pfister placed German women's sporting experiences throughout history at the centre of her research.²⁵ Feminist scholars such as Hall, Hargreaves, and Helen Lenskyj sought a theoretical framework to study women's sporting histories to show how sport has "historically perpetuated male dominance and female oppression."²⁶ These scholars emphasised the importance of placing women at the centre of the research project and analysing women's experiences rather than simply providing a description of their activities. Thus as Vertinsky explained:

The burgeoning scholarship in sport history and gender relations aims at much more than simply writing women into sport history. It seeks to forge new understandings of the historical relationship between sport and the social construction of gender by examining gender as a dynamic, relational process through which unequal power relations between women and men have been continually constructed and contested.²⁷

The history of women's competitive international rowing is a history of struggles and negotiations and feminist scholars of sport have viewed women's struggles for greater access to sporting pursuits from a number of perspectives. Hargreaves has explained that the important impact of feminist intervention into the study of sport has been the:

... practical and symbolic challenge to male privilege which has resulted in a general recognition of gender as a basic category of analysis, and it has raised consciousness about the complexities and contradictions of gender relations in sports theory and practice.²⁸

However, sports feminism is not a unified concept or movement. There is some "common ground" between the sports feminist approaches.²⁹ For example, sports

feminists want to eradicate discrimination, based on gender, from sport.³⁰ Yet not all sports feminists agree on the most effective approach to eradicating discrimination. It is important to recognize both the similarities and the differences in feminist theories because as Hargreaves has suggested, "The process of critical assessment can clarify problems and help to formulate alternatives."³¹

Equality

Sheila Scraton and Anne Flintoff have argued that early feminism was "based on the demand for women to have equal rights to those that men held 'naturally'."³² As such, "the dominant pressure in [liberal] sports feminism is the desire for equality of opportunity with men."³³ Hence, one of the central features of liberal democratic ideology was to offer equal sporting opportunities for female athletes by providing access to traditionally defined masculine activities, such as hockey, basketball, and rowing.³⁴ This perspective, which has also been termed co-option, "involves women 'catching up with men' in male sporting domains."³⁵

Throughout history many women have struggled to gain access to sport and physical activity that has been more readily available to men. Because of this, girls and women have been disadvantaged and therefore denied their rights.³⁶ This lack of opportunity has been attributed to different socialization practices, gender stereotyping, and discrimination.³⁷ For example, young girls have tended to be socialized into feminine sporting activities such as gymnastics or figure skating, whereas boys are socialized into masculine activities such as ice hockey and football. Furthermore, masculine sporting activities are often perceived as more important or more legitimate

than feminine activities. Traditionally perceived feminine sporting activities often receive less media attention, financial support, and social acceptance.

Additional, girls and women who do participate in traditionally defined masculine sporting activities face further discrimination. Female athletes in a traditionally perceived masculine domain are often considered not 'real' women or masculine. Furthermore, their participation is considered less important to their male counterparts and they often have to struggle to have the same opportunities that men have in the same sport. For example, Leander Club, one of England's most prestigious rowing clubs, remained a private men's rowing club until 1997. When oarswomen were permitted admittance, they had to apply for membership, proving that they were of international calibre, their practice times were restricted, giving priority to the men's programs, and their boats were stored on racks or slings that were less accessible than many of the recreational men's boats.³⁸ Scraton and Flintoff have argued that "discriminatory practices prevent women from having equal access to sport opportunities" which "include unequal access to facilities and resources."³⁹

Yet, liberal ideology embodies the notion that "throughout the history of industrial society, women have been approaching nearer to equality with men."⁴⁰ In a sporting context, this means that throughout history more and more women have gained access a greater number of sports and resources that were traditionally reserved for men. This process started prior the late nineteenth century and has accelerated in recent years. For example, at the Olympic Games, the first Games in Athens, Greece in 1896 offered no events for women's participation. Yet at the 2004 Games in Athens, Greece, women participated in twenty-six sports (out of twenty-eight) and 135 events (45% of the total

number of events).⁴¹ Female athletes represented 40.7% of the total number of athletes who competed at the Games, a record number. While male Olympic athletes still outnumber female Olympic athletes, 6296 compared to 4329, far more women participate in the Olympic Games than ever before.⁴²

Liberal sport feminists look to organizations which hold power over the regulation of sport, such as nation and international sport federations, including FISA and the IOC, to try to implement social and legal reforms within these organizations in order to benefit female athletes. Rosemarie Putnam Tong explained that "Liberal feminists claimed changes in society's political structures, particularly in its laws, could eliminate or at least reduce gender inequity by ensuring women are provided with the same ... opportunities men are provided."⁴³ The introduction of legislation in the Western World during the 1970s and 1980s, for example Title IX in the United States and the United Kingdom Sex Discrimination Act, identified women as a target population and has outlawed discrimination based on gender. Such policies resulted in increased access, better facilities and increased funding for women's sport, and have led to an increase in the number of girls and women participating in all levels of sport.⁴⁴ For example, women's collegiate rowing programs in the United States have benefited tremendously from the enactment of Title IX. Women's rowing has been recognized as a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sport (the national sport governing body for collegiate sport in the United States), while men's rowing has yet to receive this accolade. As a result, more colleges and universities offer women's rowing programs than ever before and at some academic institutions women's collegiate rowing programs receive more funding than their male counterparts.⁴⁵

One of the most important contributions that liberal sports feminism has made is its rejection of conservative claims of “biological explanations of women’s subordination in sport.”⁴⁶ Historically, women were perceived as inherently weaker physically, mentally, and emotionally and as such, they should not, nor could not participate in the same sporting activities as men. For example, when women’s events were added to the international racing program their racing distance was shortened to 1000 metres because it was believed that they could not race the full 2000 metre distance. Additionally, this biologically determined inferiority was cited as the reason why less girls and women participate in traditionally defined masculine sports. However, liberal sports feminists argued that low participation rates of women in sport are not biologically determined and that given the opportunity, girls and women can participate in the same sports that men enjoy.⁴⁷ Liberal sports feminists were able to establish that gender is socially constructed rather than biologically and that culture rather than nature is the reason why less women are involved in competitive sport compared to men.⁴⁸ However, despite the decades of debates surrounding gender equality for girls and women in sport, there is evidence to suggest that the sporting opportunities for female athletes remain less than that for male athletes.⁴⁹ Women remain under-represented in leadership and decision making positions in sport, such as coaching and sport administration.⁵⁰

While liberal feminism has been influential in challenging existing sport policy and practices and struggled to open the doors so that “*more* sport is now *more* accessible to *more* women,” there are some who suggest that liberal feminism is problematic because it tends to see women as a homogeneous group.⁵¹ Women were identified as a target group and policies were designed to accommodate all women, rather than

acknowledging the differences between women. It is assumed that an increase in sport participation is an improvement for all women. However, the unique problems faced by women from marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities, single parents, low socio-economic status individuals, and the disabled are rarely addressed. Vertinsky has argued that "clearly, women do not all have the same history, nor have they had the same opportunities to give voice to their own experience."⁵² Hargreaves explained that "women from different backgrounds do not experience patriarchal culture in identical ways and they have different opportunities and expectations."⁵³ She argued:

Generalizations based upon women as a supposedly homogenous group assume a spurious notion of consensus and ignore discriminatory practices and competing interests. They tend to mask the essential nature of the 'needs of women', the varied and contradictory features of sports for women and the wielding of power, not only between men and women, but between different groups of women and different groups of men as well.⁵⁴

The majority of advancements in women's sport have benefited white, middle-class, able-bodied women and continues to inhibit numerous other women from any form of participation. Christina Crosby has warned that if feminist historians continue to see women in terms of their sameness rather than their differences, feminist history will remain as part of a male historical discourse.⁵⁵

Scruton and Flintoff have argued that this "approach can be described therefore, as an implementary approach in that the focus is very much on reform, rather than on a fundamental challenge to the broader structural power relations of sport."⁵⁶ Liberal sports feminism accepts men's sport practices and organizations as legitimate and seeks for equality for women within these structures or model women's sport on men's without considering that they are socially and historically constructed. Giulianotti has suggested that "Co-option also puts women on the defensive, forcing them to meet males on male

ground and join male sporting rituals.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, the fundamental underpinning structures of society and the institution of sport that women are fighting to gain access are not questioned.

With this said, liberal sports feminism’s quest and strategies to gain equal opportunities for women in sport are widely accepted as helpful in advancing women’s sport and women’s sport participation.⁵⁸ Over the past two decades liberal sports feminist activism has been successful in gaining increased funding, greater opportunities, and social legitimacy for female athletes.⁵⁹ It has been suggested that the increased participation of girls and women in sport may result in an increased sense of empowerment and self-actualization for female participants that may lead to women challenging the gendered public/domestic split that forms the basis of men’s continued power and privilege over women.⁶⁰ From many perspectives, liberal sports feminism has been an influential and successful approach thus far and has “brought about changes that may serve as the basis for more fundamental, radical transformations.”⁶¹ It is through this lens that I document the history of women’s competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003.

Separatism

Separatism, widely supported by radical feminists, follows the philosophy that the primary cause of women’s oppression is the “sex/gender system.”⁶² In such a system, equal opportunity for women is impossible because “the system itself is fundamentally patriarchal in structure.”⁶³ Thus, radical feminists advocate the “destruction of patriarchal ideologies and the abandonment of hierarchical, patriarchal institutions and

relationships.”⁶⁴ In a sporting context, Hargreaves has explained that the separatist philosophies:

... have been a reaction, in one way or another, to dominant ideas about the biological and psychological predispositions of men and women, supposedly rendering men ‘naturally suited to sports, and women, by comparison, essentially less suited; they have also been a strategy for dealing with the cultural power that men wield in sports.’⁶⁵

Separatist feminists believe that women and men are inherently different physically, emotionally, biologically, and morally. Women should therefore not blindly follow the establishments that have been created by men. Women have different needs that are not addressed by the men or male run organizations. Women are considered the only individuals who can adequately address the needs of women.

Richard Giulianotti has argued, “separatism involves women’s ‘self-realization’ by organizing sports tournaments or associations independently of men.”⁶⁶ Early female physical educators set out to develop a completely separate sphere of sport, one that could qualitatively differentiate between conventional ideas of femininity and masculinity.⁶⁷ These early forms of sport and physical activity for girls and women largely supported the traditional biological assumptions of difference between the sexes. After the turn of the twentieth century, some sports feminists continued to promote a different philosophy for physical activity and sport for girls and women by advocating separate sports on the basis of ethics and morals. These female physical educators and sport administrators were opposed to men’s sport because of its focus on aggression, competition, and corruption. Cahn has explained:

Female educators say the increase in male-controlled school and commercial sport as an infringement on their professional turf, a violation of their rightful authority over the young female’s physical and moral development. They also understood the growth of popular sport to pose a serious danger to the female athlete.

Lacking the firm guidance of wise educators, enthusiastic young women risked being seduced by the glamour and fun of highly competitive sports. The result, according to physical educators, would be a loss of essential “womanly” qualities. Feminine health and reserve would be sacrificed to “masculine” habits, manners, and values.⁶⁸

Many physical educators struggled to establish a separate ‘brand’ of sport for girls and women throughout the early half of the twentieth century. Two competing ideals of athletic womanhood were presented, “the “wholesome, modest athlete” and the “athlete as beauty queen” – each designed in its own way to dispel persistent concerns about the “mannish” female athlete.”⁶⁹ These models of separate sport for women provided the basis of appropriate sports for girls and appropriate sports for boys and as Hargreaves explained, they established “an early pattern of sex-role stereotyping in sport.”⁷⁰ The long history of separate sports for women and men in addition to the continued support of single-sex physical education in schools provided an ideological and practical foundation for the continuation of separate sports for the sexes.⁷¹ Radical sport feminists have largely supported the separate sports model and have argued that “equal opportunity for women within the present society is impossible because the system itself is fundamentally patriarchal in structure.”⁷² Thus, women should be involved in an alternative model of sport, one not associated with men.

There is a cultural argument for this form of positive discrimination in sport. Sport has traditionally been dominated by men and permeated by sexist attitudes and behaviour.⁷³ Some women are aware that they have more opportunities and positions available to them in single-sex, female only, organizations than in mixed. Hargreaves has explained that the only way to be sensitive to the specific needs of women is to place their experiences at the centre of any analysis of sport and in order to do this, women

must be in control of women's sport.⁷⁴ For example, many of the founders of the National Women's Rowing Association (NWRA), the national sport governing body for women's rowing in the United States, were opposed to the organization's amalgamation with the men's national rowing federation to form USRowing. Debby DeAngelis, one of the founding members of USRowing, indicated that many of the female administrators of the NWRA believed that *"the women's organization was a better organization and that separate, but equal was a better way to go. That it valued women more than a combined system could."*⁷⁵ Some women's sports groups have adopted an exclusionist policy and refuse membership to men, even those who are sympathetic and supportive of women's sporting needs. This "closed space" for women:

... removes fears of harassment, ridicule, and inhibition which they might experience in mixed groups and affords important opportunities for female bonding. It frees women from the day-to-day discrimination and sexism which they experience and provides them with a sense of control and autonomy which they otherwise lack.⁷⁶

Women-run sport organizations is one answer to feminists fight against discrimination against women because as Boutilier and San Giovanni suggested, without a radical transformation of sporting activity, women would forever remain "the other."⁷⁷ Furthermore, Fasting argued that women's sport should operate in a separate sporting system because:

Women as a group have better prerequisites and are better suited for this than men ... due to their socialization, which has resulted in a female culture. It is these valuable female qualities that must be saved and developed, so we can create a better world to live in.⁷⁸

Some early female rowing administrators would have agreed with this statement.

Co-operation

Although more women are participating in sport than ever before, sport participation is not actively pursued by the majority of working-class and lower socio-economic status women. Hargreaves has explained:

Most women who participate in sport are middle-class, most of those who actively campaign for the rights of women in sport are middle class, and, almost certainly, the majority of the few women who hold positions of responsibility and power in sport are middle class, as are those who theorize about it.⁷⁹

Socialist feminists argue that in order to understand gender equities in sport, we need to know more about class inequalities and their impact on sport participation.

Socialist sports feminists advocate cooperation between women and men to help “establish new sporting models that negate gender differences.”⁸⁰ They look specifically at the relationships between class and gender and how they are impacted by the systems of capitalism and patriarchy.⁸¹ Furthermore, socialist feminists seek to abolish both class and sexual oppression. Vertinsky has explained:

Feminist-Marxist historians in the late 1960s and early 1970s had focused upon delineating women’s sphere as separate from and subordinate to men, and sought to show how women were restricted to their reproductive function and excluded from the male world of production.⁸²

While Marxist feminism argues that women’s oppression can be explained by class relations and the sexual division of labour and radical feminism argues that women’s oppression can be explained by men’s power over women, socialist feminism attempts to incorporate both of these arguments to provide a more comprehensive explanation of oppression.⁸³ More recently, socialist feminists have responded to research conducted by black feminists, who have argued against the ethnocentricity of white feminism, and examined more closely the “inter-relationships of gender, race and class located within

capitalism, patriarchy and neo-colonialism.”⁸⁴ For example, currently the FISA Women’s Commission is working to increase the number of involved in competitive international rowing, as athletes, coaches, and administrators, from developing nations through educational efforts including coaching clinics, medical information sessions, and financial subsidization. The FISA Women’s Commission is also working to address the specific needs of Muslim oarswomen, including regulations regarding racing apparel.

Socialist sports feminism also examines the support roles that women hold, such as providing the refreshments, washing team uniforms, transporting children to events. Additionally, women have traditionally held support roles with regards to the administration of sport, such as secretaries or assistants. Many women associated with FISA, and some national sport governing bodies, are actively involved in encouraging more women to become involved as coaches and administrators. Many rowing organizations are offering mentorship and apprenticeship programs in the hopes to increase the number of qualified women to hold coaching and administrative roles.

As we will see, many elements of liberal sports feminism can be observed in the history of women’s competitive international rowing. Some female and male rowing administrators supported the incorporation of women under the mandate of local, national, and international governing bodies for rowing. This was perceived by many, especially amongst many female rowing administrators, as the most appropriate way to ensure that oarswomen had access to local and national regattas, funding, coaching, and equipment. Additionally, many female and male rowing administrators supported the idea that oarswomen should have equal access to FISA regulated international regattas, including the same racing distance and number and types of events available for their

participation. Few women openly challenged the patriarchal structure of local, national, and international rowing organizations. Rather, female athletes, coaches, and administrators widely accepted and reinforced the established structures throughout their tenure in competitive international rowing.

Methodology

In the introduction of her edited book *Feminism and Methodology*, Sandra Harding argued against the idea that there is a specific feminist method of conducting research.⁸⁵ Rather, feminists can use any and all modes of methodology to conduct research, it is how feminist “carry out these methods of evidence gathering” that is distinctly different.⁸⁶ Caroline Ramazonogu with Janet Holland have argued that, “feminist social researchers set out to tell ‘better stories’ of gendered social realities than others.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, Harding has suggested:

... traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be “knowers” or *agents of knowledge*; they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one; that history is written from only the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man.⁸⁸

By establishing alternative epistemologies, women are legitimized as “knowers.”⁸⁹

Originally, feminist researchers tried to simply add women to their analyses, yet this was inadequate because it did not account for the diversity in women, such as classes, races, and cultures, or analyse women’s experiences and how they differed based on gender.⁹⁰ Harding has suggested that researchers must examine women’s experiences, stressing the plural in women.⁹¹ She added:

For one thing, once we realized that there is no universal *man*, but only culturally different men and women, then “man’s” eternal companion – “woman” – also disappeared. That is, women come only in different classes, races, and cultures:

there is no “woman” and no “woman’s experience.” Masculine and feminine are always categories within every class, race, and culture in the sense that women’s and men’s experiences, desires, and interests differ within every class, race, and culture. But so, too, are class, race, and culture always categories within gender, since women’s and men’s experiences, desires, and interests differ according to class, race, and culture.⁹²

Thus, we as researchers must acknowledge these differences in our analysis.

If as Joan Kelly-Gadol indicated “Women’s history has a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women,” then we must choose an appropriate research paradigm that enables us to do so.⁹³ In my efforts to document and analyse the history of women’s competitive international rowing, I felt strongly about the importance of giving women a voice and including some of their stories in this history. A feminist qualitative paradigm allows the opportunity to use a variety of data collection techniques necessary to learn about women’s history in competitive international rowing, capture participants’ words, and understand the importance women placed on the events in their world. One way to capture women’s words is to use interviews as a method of data collection.

Interviews

Like other feminist scholars, I seek to empower women by placing their experiences and voices at the centre of the analysis. However, there remains an inherent power imbalance in the relationship between the researcher and the participants; interviews are not neutral but are active interactions between researcher and participants that lead to “negotiated, contextually based results.”⁹⁴ I as the researcher controlled the flow, direction of the interview, the questions being asked, and ultimately the final analysis and write-up.

Interview methodology is not new to historical work. Historians have frequently used interviews as a form of data collection because they are a methodological process that generates “useful information about lived experience and its meaning.”⁹⁵ Feminist scholars have embraced the use of interviews and oral narratives as they place women’s voices at the centre of history and allow for women to articulate “what is of importance to *them*,” thus creating an opportunity for women to “use their own words to describe and interpret events in which they participated.”⁹⁶

Women’s perceptions and interpretations of their experiences as athletes are vital to understanding women’s sporting history. Feminist in-depth interviewing emphasizes the importance of agency and encourages “individuals to explain how they viewed their circumstances.”⁹⁷ Female athletes’, coaches’, and administrators’ personal stories about their participation in international rowing provide important insights into the power and gender relationships that are embedded in the sport. The use of interviews for data collection provides participants with the opportunity to give voice to their practices and to interpret their own historical experiences. The female participants of this study were able “to define issues in their own terms ... and to interpret the meaning of their lives to the researcher, rather than merely identifying the outcomes.”⁹⁸

Yet, because of my academic training, I hold “explicitly political vision[s] of the structural conditions that lead to particular social behaviors [*sic*]” that influence my interpretations of participants’ stories and experiences, interpretations that may not be recognized by the research participants.⁹⁹ Feminist theory allows researchers to make powerful critiques of gender and power relations in society which poses the question of “how, then, might we [as researchers] present our work in a way that grants the speaking

woman interpretive respect without relinquishing our responsibility to provide our own interpretations of her experience?"¹⁰⁰ This issue can become more problematic because relationships are often developed between the researcher and her participants.

The development of relationships between participants and researchers has been discouraged in order to emphasise "scientific objectivity."¹⁰¹ Researchers have been encouraged to "remain detached and dispassionate," to "separate subject from object."¹⁰² These 'textbook' descriptions of how to conduct interviews, for example avoiding emotions and interactions with participants, arguably minimizes the quality of the data obtained through interview methodology.¹⁰³ If researchers want to know how women feel about and interpret their experiences, "then we have to allow ... [participants] to talk about their feelings as well as their activities."¹⁰⁴ For example, one participant discussed her role as head coach of the men's national rowing program in Great Britain and how many of her male colleagues conspired to force her out of this position:

But then all my problems started in a way, because I was surrounded by men who wanted my job. I was... looking around my shoulder for the whole of my coaching career... So, I was very, I mean, against, with all this background it, it was really difficult, because when you're a female, if you create a revolution, to change a system with a history that we have in Great Britain for rowing, trying to move anything, it was difficult. So I wasn't going to last the course because I had put so many people's noses out of joint that there was no way.

She explained that this was upsetting and that she felt alone during her tenure as head coach, but that there was nothing she could do about it.

Arguably, because the relationship between the researcher and the participants depends on trust and attachment, there is a greater possibility of betrayal and manipulation by the researcher.¹⁰⁵ The researcher is free to leave when the project is concluded, abandoning the participants and any relationship that has developed.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, because the researcher is solely responsible for interpreting and then publishing the data collected, despite the implication of a collaborative effort between researcher and participant, there is a distinct power imbalance.¹⁰⁷

This poses another important question, “Who has the right to interpret another’s reality, to define what should or should not be excluded and what meanings should or should not be attributed, and by what right do they do so?”¹⁰⁸ Concerns arise regarding the potential for researchers to usurp participants’ right to self-definition. Scholars’ interpretations, no matter how well intended, “may represent a powerful, uninvited intrusion into participants’ lives which robs them of some element of their freedom to make sense of their own experiences.”¹⁰⁹ For example, one participant discussed her experiences with weight management during her career as an international lightweight oarswoman. She spoke about the sense of empowerment she felt in being able to control her weight:

...experience helped you [to know] ... how much your body could handle, how much you could lose, the whole science of what, how much you could eat the day before, how much water [you could drink to maintain your weight and] not to be dehydrated. You knew your weight often within 100 grams.

Although some have argued that weight management practices in fact objectify athletes and that prolonged weight management for sport participation has led to athletes developing chronic issues with food and eating, this participant’s statements contradicted these arguments. Therefore, who am I to argue that she did not feel a sense of empowerment for her ability to control her body, and weight?

Arguably, the power imbalance between the researcher and her participants does not necessarily lead to exploitation.¹¹⁰ Exploitation occurs when researchers “use their superior power to achieve their objectives at real cost to those they are studying.”¹¹¹ One

way to prevent exploitation of participants is for the researcher to claim authority of their interpretations. Scholars must make themselves visible in the texts in which they write and to present the evidence upon which their interpretations are based.¹¹² By making themselves visible in the text, authors open the possibility for other scholars to challenge their interpretations and arguments regarding participants' experiences. As well, researchers can ensure that there is an open exchange of ideas between themselves and the participants to ensure that they "do not simply gather data on others to fit into [their] own paradigms."¹¹³ This sharing of interpretations can be easily articulated in the write-up as scholars can provide participants' interpretations of experiences, followed by their 'academic' interpretation, with supporting evidence. In my own work, I have attempted to avoid exploiting the participants of my study. The techniques I used during data collection are discussed in the following chapter.

Although interviews were imperative to this project, it was by no means the only form of data collection. As researchers within the Chicago School frequently used data collected from life-histories and other documentary material as forms of complementary information, I too used a variety of data collection techniques to document the history of women's competitive international rowing.¹¹⁴ Data collected from archival materials, for example meeting minutes, correspondence letters, journals, newspapers, and literature were combined with interviews that enabled triangulation of the data.

Documents

Given that femininities and masculinities, or gender roles, are socially and historically constructed, historians must examine these discourses and how they impacted women's experiences. In this study I chose to use a variety of data collection methods in

order to both document the history of women's competitive international rowing and examine the gender relations that existed. To begin, I followed the lead of feminist historians before me, and re-examined historical documents, including meeting minutes, correspondence, newspaper articles, and popular literature, that had been used to produce the history of men's competitive international rowing to analyse what role women played.

Documents, particularly archival material, are an important part of historical research. John Scott has argued that classic historians view documents as the starting-point in social research, as they "are the traces which have been left by the thoughts and actions of men of former times,"¹¹⁵ and as Smith has explained, these various documents help to mediate our knowledge of the world.¹¹⁶ National and international sport federations' documents provide, as Christopher J Pole and Richard have indicated, three forms of information for researchers: 1) "a 'factual' statement of government plans; 2) an example of government self-marketing; and 3) raw material for an analysis of power and ideology in contemporary society."¹¹⁷

Discourses are often preserved in written documents.¹¹⁸ Yet, not all documents are equal in the eyes of society.¹¹⁹ As Vertinsky has explained, "words that a particular authority has written" are often "claimed as truth" as they are considered to be more valuable than others.¹²⁰ For example, the delegates of FISA and national rowing federations, who have predominantly been men, have traditionally been perceived as experts and their statements within the discourse of rowing are thus taken most seriously as knowledge.

Furthermore, we must examine texts "in the contexts of their conditions of production and reading."¹²¹ Pole and Lampard have stated that, "documents are

constructed by social actors within social structures and hence need to be viewed in their cultural, organisational and historical context.”¹²² This means that researchers must take into account not only whether the text was written from first hand experience, or secondary sources were used to inform the data, but who wrote the information down and what is their relationship to the organisation. Was the text edited, anonymous or signed? For example, the secretary recorded FISA meeting minutes; to save time the secretary often paraphrased the speakers’ comments. Arguably the secretary could have misinterpreted the speaker’s argument or point during the write-up. For this reason, historical scholars seek to use other texts or methods of data collection to enable triangulation and as Hodder has suggested, data collected from “texts may be used alongside other forms of evidence so that the particular biases of each can be understood and compared.”¹²³ Furthermore, Pole and Lampard has noted the effectiveness of using data collected from archives alongside data collected from other sources, such as secondary sources and/or interviews.¹²⁴

Researchers should not naively assume that the “aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture;” rather, the combination of different forms of data is a way to “counteract various possible threats to the validity” of the analysis.¹²⁵ Arguably, what people say often differs from what people do. For example, Chuter and Ellis both argued that they were not feminists, or “*women’s libites*,” but the meeting minutes and correspondence letters retrieved indicate that they were in fact following a feminist agenda and have worked extensively to improve women’s opportunities in competitive international rowing.

Summary

The current literature regarding the history of rowing and women's participation in rowing has left a gap that needs to be filled. Presently there is no scholarly literature that documents the history of women's competitive international rowing; this dissertation seeks to fill this gap. In the following chapter we can see that many elements of liberal sports feminism can be observed in the history of women's competitive international rowing. Primarily, many early female and male rowing administrators sought equality for oarswomen in the male dominated realm of competitive international rowing. These women and men negotiated for women to have access to the same opportunities that were available to oarsmen and worked for oarswomen to be considered equal on the competitive international rowing scene.

In order to document this history I have attempted to do as many feminist scholars have suggested and not simply add women to history, but rather I seek to empower women by placing their experiences and voices at the centre of the research project. Through the use of a variety of data collection techniques, including interviews and document analysis, I have documented the history of women's competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003. I do not suggest that this is a complete history, merely a beginning. Yet, this dissertation can be used as a foundation for others to expand upon.

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²³ Vertinsky, "Time Gentlemen Please," 231.

²⁴ Vertinsky, "Gender Relations," 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 26.

²⁹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 26.

³⁰ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 26.

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Chapter 3

Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the theoretical framework that underpins this research project and explained how a liberal sports feminist framework was useful when documenting the history of women's competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003. In order to develop an understanding of this history as well as the gender and power relations that existed, we must analyse the discursive construction of gender as well as the particular power relations that have shaped the sport historically. To do this, a variety of data collection techniques were required. This chapter discusses the methods through which the data for this research project was collected and examined.

Documentary Evidence

Negotiation Access with Gatekeepers

Gaining access to information is always a concern when conducting research.¹ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson have argued that achieving access often depends on the discovery of obstacles prior to investigation and creating an "effective means of overcoming them."² Access to documentary evidence for this project provided three distinct difficulties, geography, documentation, or lack thereof, and language. While I initially intended to visit the head offices of several national rowing federations, it became obvious that this goal was unrealistic due to time and financial restraints. Language barriers would also have been a problem because the two languages that I am most comfortable with are English and French, and the documents of the Romanian national rowing federation, for example, are in neither of these languages. Furthermore,

after making contact with individuals at the federation headquarters, including Australia, Canada, and the United States, I was informed that no archives existed and most of the historical material was missing or had been thrown away. I therefore focussed my attention on three primary places for data collection, the FISA archives, the IOC Olympic Studies Museum and Archives, and the archives at the River and Rowing Museum. However, during my interview with Ellis, she informed me that some historical documents were available at the ARA head office in London, England and invited me to spend some time examining those that were of relevance to this project.

When I began this research project I was eager travel to Lausanne, Switzerland, the home of FISA's head office and the IOC Olympic Museum and Olympic Studies Centre (OSC), to begin collecting and examining the archival material on rowing and more specifically women's rowing, that was available. I had also been informed that rowing historian Christopher Dodd, who was keen on doing his own research on women's rowing and is the director of the River and Rowing Museum in Henley-on-Thames, England, was interested to meet with me and help me in any way possible.

As Pole and Lampard have noted, the collection of documentary research often involves travelling and negotiating with gatekeepers to access data.³ Thus, my first step was to arrange a trip to Europe, specifically Henley-on-Thames, England and Lausanne to collect data from the River and Rowing Museum and the FISA archives. Dodd and Matt Smith, Executive Director of FISA, were contacted and a request was made for permission to visit and conduct research at their facilities. Prior to my contacting Dodd and Matt Smith, FISA Women's Commission Chair Tricia Smith had informed both men of the project I was working on and asked for their assistance. Dodd and Matt Smith

were more than happy to accommodate my request, informed me of the offices' business hours, and indicated that I was welcome to conduct research at their facilities at any time.

I also made a preliminary contact with the OSC, specifically Ruth Beck Perrenoud. I informed her of the project I was working on and requested permission to use the archives at the museum. Perrenoud was more than happy to hear of my new research and asked that I submit a formal request, by completing an on-line form, a minimum of two weeks prior my arrival at the museum.⁴

Before I discuss the data that was collected from FISA, the IOC, the River and Rowing Museum, as well as the ARA, it is important to outline the relationships between these organisations. As stated previously, FISA is the international sport governing body for rowing and is responsible for the development of competitive rowing throughout the world.⁵ FISA is also responsible for the establishment and enforcement of rules and regulations concerning the sport of rowing and for ensuring their application at international competitions.⁶ National rowing federations, including the ARA, are responsible for promoting and regulating the sport of rowing in their own country and work with FISA in the organization of world cup events, world championships, and the Olympic Games.

FISA and the IOC are intimately connected in their relationship to the Olympic Games. According to the *Olympic Charter*, as the international sport governing body for rowing, FISA must "assume the responsibility for the technical control and direction of their sport at the Olympic Games and at the Games under the patronage of the IOC."⁷ Although FISA is responsible for the technical control of the Olympic rowing regatta, the IOC has the ultimate decision on which events are included on the programme. For FISA

to change the Olympic program – for example when women’s rowing was added to the programme in 1976 and when the lightweight women’s double was added in 1996 – the organisation was required to request permission from the IOC to do so.⁸

River and Rowing Museum, Henley-on-the-Thames

David Lunn-Rockliffe, former executive secretary of the ARA, and Dodd were inspired by an exhibition at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games to establish a museum for rowing.⁹ The British duo agreed that Henley-on-Thames was the ideal location, given that the town was host to the prestigious international Henley Royal Regatta, and the doors were opened on 6 November 1998.¹⁰ As part of the museum, the Thomas Keller Library and Study Centre “holds a comprehensive archive of books, photographs and manuscripts on the River Thames, Rowing and Henley on Thames.”¹¹

While the bookshelves do house rowing literature from around the world, including histories of local and national regattas, autobiographies and biographies of rowing heroes and legends, and histories of clubs, the majority of this information did not relate specifically to this project. The archives however did have a significant amount of information pertaining to the history of women’s competitive international rowing, including meeting minutes from the WARA, ARA, and the Stewards of the Henley Royal Regatta meeting minutes. Data collected from these meeting minutes gave insight into some of the formal discussion that took place concerning women’s competitive rowing at the local and national levels in Great Britain. Although these documents provide information regarding the discussion that occurred in Britain only, their contents are not without value. Dodd has argued that the British were the first to establish formal rules and regulations for competitive rowing and held the sport in high regards as a bastion of

amateurism and masculinity throughout much of the twentieth century.¹² Furthermore, within these documents several references were made concerning women's competitive rowing in other parts of the world to support and oppose arguments that were made by rowing administrators.

Additionally, the River and Rowing Museum was in possession of rowing magazines and newsletters from Europe and North America. Articles from these resources were used to further expand on arguments and discussions that were presented in meeting minutes. This data was also valuable evidence of rowing discourse from various parts of the world which was sometimes conflicting.

FISA Archives, Lausanne

FISA's archival materials are not held in a climate controlled storage facility, such as the facilities at both the River and Rowing Museum and the IOC Olympic archives. Rather, the international federations' historical material is kept in boxes on shelves in the photocopy room. Prior to arrival in Lausanne, Matt Smith cautioned me that the federation did not have a great deal of historical information and warned that I might be disappointed with what was in the boxes in the photocopy room. Although the federation does not have a sophisticated archive, the boxes did hold an enormous amount of historical information. Furthermore, the documents available were clearly marked, including date, origin, and author.

The documents I examined at FISA included meeting minutes, correspondence, rules and regulations, photographs, as well as magazine and newspaper articles. While sifting through the FISA archival material during many days, it became clear that I would be unable to read and interpret all of the available documents. I quickly turned my

attention to scanning documents for key words, such as *femme* and *feminine* in French documents and *women* in English documents. Documents that were related to women's rowing were then photocopied and filed, and brought back to Canada to be translated and analysed at home.

Just as Guy Schultz used meeting minutes from the International Athletics Association Federation (IAAF)¹³ and IOC to document the history of women's involvement in the IAAF, the history of women's competitive international rowing can be traced through the meeting minutes of national rowing federations, FISA, and the IOC.¹⁴ Although traditionally official documents have said more about men's lives than women's, their content indicates important messages about the social discourses that have permeated sport. Meeting minutes collected from FISA provided insight into the socially constructed knowledges and beliefs held the international delegates through the arguments made in support or opposition to women's competitive rowing participation. These knowledges and beliefs influenced early oarswomen's perceptions about their bodies and as Vertinsky has suggested, "their capacity for physical activity."¹⁵

Furthermore, the rules of racing established by FISA to regulate women's competitive international rowing influenced how others in the international rowing community interpreted and valued women's rowing. Similar to Hall's argument that the modification of rules for women's basketball in the 1920s and 1930s devalued the women's accomplishments, these rules were analysed along in connection with other data collected to understand their impact on the history of women's rowing and rowing discourse.¹⁶

Additionally, I looked for correspondence letter between FISA delegates, IOC officials, and national rowing federation representatives to help contextualise the information found in official meeting minutes. Meeting minutes provided a brief synopsis of the discussions, but correspondence letters often provided more details of delegates' opinions regarding women's international racing.¹⁷ The information gained from correspondence is partial and reflected the "interests and perspectives" of the author.¹⁸

Olympic Museum and Study Centre, Lausanne

Inaugurated in June of 1993 under the direction of then IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC Olympic Museum and OSC were created to celebrate and honour the history of sport, the Olympic Games, Olympism, and culture.¹⁹ Although the museum had found a new home along the banks of the small Swiss community of d'Ouchy, this was not the first IOC museum or archives. Modern Olympic Games founder Pierre de Coubertin established the first Olympic museum and archives in 1915 in a room at the Montbeno Casino in Lausanne.²⁰ The museum and that archives moved to two separate located over the years before reaching its final destination. The current archives house nine hundred linear metres of documents that trace the history of the Olympic movement beginning in 1894.²¹

Upon arrival I met with Perrenoud and four other OSC staff members to discuss which documents I would like to examine and the protocol for conducting research at the facility. At the completion of the meeting I was given access to a work area where I waited for my requested documents, meeting minutes, correspondence, rules and regulations, and post Olympic Games' reports, to arrive. Unlike the other archives I

visited while conducting this research, I was unable to personally select the documents I wished to examine. Rather, I had to provide the archivist with a written request of the types and themes of documents I intended to examine. Using key words, such as women and rowing, I scanned the available documents. Similar to my method of data collection at the FISA Headquarters, my time at the IOC archives was limited, thus documents that were relevant to the history of women's competitive international rowing were photocopied and indexed to be analysed and/or translated upon my return to Canada.

Meeting minutes and correspondence were the two primary types of documents retrieved at the OSC. Like those collected from FISA, IOC meeting minutes provided insight into the international administrators', primarily men, socially constructed knowledges and beliefs regarding women's competitive international rowing. Meeting minutes were further contextualised by correspondence letters between IOC and FISA officials.

ARA Archives, London

The ARA archives, housed at the ARA head office in London, England, resembled those of FISA. Historical documents are kept in boxes, scrapbooks, and file folders in the basement of the federation's head office. Some of the files and boxes indicated themes and/or dates, while the majority lacked any identifying properties. Upon arrival, I was given a tour of the facilities and was granted access to any and all of the information available at the ARA.

In addition to the ARA and WARA meeting minutes, the ARA archives contained historical newsletters, pamphlets, photographs, journals, and books. One of the most interested items in the archive was a journal from one of the members of the WARA

women's crew who travelled and competed at the dual meet in Australia in 1938. The journal contained photographs of the WARA women, a detailed schedule of events, as well as highlights from cultural excursions that were enjoyed outside of time on the water. I also located copies of the WARA's former monthly newsletter, *The Oarswoman*, in which articles about not only women's rowing in England, but also excerpts about women's national and international rowing throughout the world. As well, the authors of these articles about women's international rowing often provided their own interpretations on the subject and how rowing in these countries differed from rowing in Great Britain. This provided imperative information regarding oarswomen's own beliefs and perceptions of rowing in their own country and throughout the world.

Interviews

Interviews are a form of data collection that generates "useful information about lived experience and its meaning."²² Interviews were chosen as one form of data collection because they prompt the collection of more in-depth data than questionnaires and allowed me to better understand the world from the participants' point of view.²³ As Steinar Kvale has argued, "An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest."²⁴ The purpose of interviews in this research project was to try to encourage participants to articulate their interpretations of their experiences during their tenure with competitive international rowing.

In order to obtain knowledge of the history of women's international rowing, I interviewed thirteen women who, combined, have been involved in one form or another over the entire period of women's competitive international racing, 1954-2003 (See

Appendix 1).²⁵ The selection criteria for these participants was as follows: current or former female national team athlete who has competed for their country for a minimum of five years and has raced at one major international regatta each year during those five years, including the Olympic Games, European championships, and the world championships; current or former female international coach who has been working as an international coach for a minimum of five years and has coached at least one crew that has raced at the world championships, European championships, or Olympic Games; current or former female rowing administrator who has served as a member of the FISA's executive committee or specialist commissions for a minimum of five years.

Participants were initially contacted via electronic mail with a letter outlining the project and asked for their participation (see Appendix 4). The electronic mailing addresses of participants were available on either the web pages of the international rowing federation, FISA, or the home pages of each national rowing federation. Individuals who agreed to participate in the project were then electronically mailed an information letter and a consent form (see Appendix 5) to read and sign at their convenience.

The majority of participants were eager to be involved with the research project, although some were reluctant and concerned that my intentions were to collect 'dirt' on those involved in women's competitive international rowing. Only one woman did not want to be involved in the project and did not respond to any of my electronic messages.²⁶ To reassure participants that I was not interested in writing a 'tell-all' book about international rowing, I met with each woman prior to their interview in a casual environment, introduced myself and provided them with the opportunity to ask me

questions about myself and the research project. These informal meetings were extremely valuable in establishing rapport with participants. It was during this time that the participants and I finalised the date and time for their interview.

The scheduling of interviews was sometimes complicated, often had to be delayed, but was not a major restriction. Gaining access to participants located outside of North America posed multiple barriers. Because the purpose of this research project was to document the history of women's competitive international rowing, many of the women I sought to interview live outside North America. Fortunately, many of the participants were in attendance at FISA-regulated regattas, including the world championships, the Olympic Games, as well as other famous international regattas including the Head of the Charles. Furthermore, because I was trying to interview participants during these major international competitions, I had to work around their schedules. Interviews had to be arranged for after competitions had ended for the day or after regattas had ended completely. There was only one incident in which I had to reschedule an interview with a participant for my next trip to Europe eight months later. This again was not disconcerting because I had already scheduled an interview with a European participant for the same time and therefore was able to arrange the trip to meet with both women.

Interviews lasted between one and three hours, were conducted on a one to one basis, had a semi-structured format, and were audio tape-recorded. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed at a later date. Interview questions focussed on the participant detailing their personal history in the sport of rowing. Participants were encouraged to be spontaneous and interactive, focussing on their personal experiences.

Participants were asked to analyse their own experiences in the sport of rowing and asked to examine how gender and power relations impacted these experiences.

With each participant there were a sequence of themes and suggested questions that I wanted to cover. I composed a list of nine questions (see Appendix 6) and because the interviews were semi-structured in nature, I was able to change the sequence and forms of questions as well as follow up on answers and stories provided by the participants.²⁷ The women who were interviewed have expert knowledge of the key moments in the history of women's international rowing and were asked to discuss and examine their experiences during these events, including the introduction of women's events at the European championship, the world championships, and the Olympic Games; the change in women's racing distance from 1000 metres to 2000 metres; and the introduction of lightweight women's rowing events at the world championships and the Olympic Games.

Ethical Considerations

The risk of harm in socio-cultural research is vastly different from the expected harm in medical or biological experiments, but can still be damaging. There were no expected physical risks to participants in this research project, however there was the concern that while discussing their history in rowing, that participants may speak about experiences that were emotionally painful. The women were all informed that if they were free to refrain from answering any question they felt uncomfortable with. Participants were also advised that if any sensitive and emotional topic arose that they wished to further discuss outside of this project, they were to contact FISA Women's Commission Chair, Tricia Smith.

In addition to examining the potential harm that this project may have on participants, I reflect on my own biases and how they might impact the study or potentially lead to exploitation of participants. The feminist research paradigm encouraged me to reflect on my own involvement in the study and become aware of my impact on the research and the research process. Unquestionably, the researcher holds power in the research process through social location, data collection, and through the write-up and representation of the data.²⁸ Hammersley and Atkinson argued “there is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it.”²⁹ Therefore, as the researcher, I must reflect on the values and interests are shaped by my social history. I recognise that as a middle-class, university-educated female in the Western World, I hold a place of potential power, both politically, and socially. As Hargreaves explained “I am both the researcher and the narrator, placing other women’s stories into a context and putting my interpretation on them.”³⁰ By including women’s voices in the analysis, I will try to “avoid imposing a biased Western view ... by positioning the women themselves at the center.”³¹ I acknowledge that I do hold certain biases, which may be apparent in my interpretations.

As a rower and a coach in Canada since 1991, I already have substantial knowledge about the sport of rowing at the club, university, and international level. This along with my ability to use the language associated with rowing and my friendships with international rowers, coaches, and sport administrators provides me the privileged role as an insider. Because of this, I was able to probe deeper and ask my participants to further explain their answers. This helped to ensure that I did not take the participants’ information for granted and impose my own meanings into their answers.

Furthermore, I attempted to avoid exploiting participants by sending them each a copy of the dissertation to read, review, and decide whether they wished to change, or add to any of their statements. The women were also free to remove their name from a quotation if they desired. To ensure privacy, participants received a copy of the dissertation that contained pseudonyms for all of the women's names except their own. While I am aware that this dissertation will become publicly available as will the women's words and stories, my intent was to allow each woman an opportunity to review their own words prior to publication and provide me with feedback. Furthermore, by asking the women to read and provide any feedback on not only their own words but the document as a whole they were able to read my interpretations of their stories and challenge any of my arguments.³²

Prior to the beginning of this project, ethical approval was obtained from the University of British Columbia's Office of Research Services, via their Behavioural Ethics Review application process (see Appendix 3).

Data Analysis

In total there were over 300 pages of transcripts, countless pages of meeting minutes, correspondence letters, newspaper and magazine articles, and federation publications to be analysed. I began by separating the information from primary documents into themes regarding events and issues. This data was used to document and analyse the major changes that occurred in women's competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003, which include: the introduction of women's events at the 1954 European championships, the 1974 world championships, the 1976 Olympic Games; the change of women's racing distance from 1000 metres to 2000 metres; and the

introduction of lightweight women's events at the world championships in 1985, and their introduction into the Olympic Games in 1996.

To make sense of the data collected through interview methodology, I used a computer program, Atlas.ti, to facilitate the process of coding and organising. According to Susan Jones, coding is the organisation of collected data into manageable categories,³³ and Gery W. Ryan and H. Russell Bernard have argued that "Coding is the heart and soul of *whole-text analysis*."³⁴ Nigel Fielding has argued:

The role of coding is to stimulate the identification of analytic themes, organize the data so that the strength of its support for those themes can be determined, illustrate themes by providing quotable material, and support data reduction by representing its key features and identifying redundant, peripheral or irrelevant data.³⁵

The data was first divided into three categories, athletes, coaches, and administrators. Once this was complete, I examined the data and looked for recurrent sub-themes that were present throughout the interviews, such as issues of access, queen bee syndrome, and attitudes towards feminism.

Once the data had been coded and categorised, I then set out to analyse the discourses of gender and power relations in the research and as stated previously these took the form of written and spoken word. By examining these discourses it was possible to begin to understand the gender and power relations that existed in competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003.

I was initially concerned that because participants were re-living historical experiences, that issues of memory or lack of memory would arise and this would impact the quality of data collected and the analysis. Feminist scholar Jan Sangster has argued that researchers conducting interviews that require participants to relive their experiences

must “explore the construction of women’s historical memory.”³⁶ She proposed that researchers ask:

...why and how women explain, rationalize, and make sense of their past [as this] offers insight into the social and material framework within which they operated, they perceived choices and cultural patterns they faced, and the complex relationship between individual consciousness and culture.³⁷

In addition to issues of memory, researchers must also be aware of issues of reliability and validity. As Paul Rosenblatt has argued, participants often “feel entitled in an interview not to tell the whole truth”³⁸ and avoid saying anything that might embarrass themselves or hurt, embarrass, or offend others.³⁹ Interviews will contain a mixture of information that is “true and false, reliable and unreliable, verifiable and unverifiable.”⁴⁰ Kvale has explained that “reliability pertains to the consistency of the research findings.”⁴¹ He made the suggestion that the interviewer can test this by repeating the same question in different versions throughout the interview, and if the participant consistently responds with the same answer, reliability is achieved.

I took these factors into account both during the interviews and data analysis, which led me to use methods of triangulation during the analysis. Hammersley and Atkinson have defined data-source triangulation as “the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the field-work.”⁴² This was achieved, for example, by comparing meeting minutes with interview transcripts. Yet, I did not naively assume that the “aggregation of data from different sources ... [would] unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture,” rather, the combination of different forms of data was a way to “counteract various possible threats to the validity” of the analysis.⁴³ The comparison of various forms of information enabled contrast and substantiation of data.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to outline how this research project was carried out. From a feminist methodological paradigm and through the use of a variety of data collection techniques, primarily interviewing and document analysis I was able to gather information that was sometimes conflicting and contradictory, but provided for a richer analysis. The following chapters are the product of my data collection and offer an analysis of the history of women's competitive international rowing between 1954 and 2003.

Notes:

¹ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 54.

² *Ibid.*

³ See Pole and Lampard, *Practical Social Investigation*, 151-152.

⁴ International Olympic Committee Olympic Studies Centre, "Request for Research at the OSC," http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_622.pdf retrieved 7 September 2006.

⁵ FISA, *2004 FISA World Rowing Guide* (Lausanne, Switzerland: FISA, 2004), 6.

⁶ International Olympic Committee, *The Olympic Charter*, Chapter 3, "The International Federations (IFs), 30: Role of the IFs, 51," http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf retrieved 12 October 2005.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹ River and Rowing Museum, "History of Museum," http://www.rrm.co.uk/topnav/info_history.htm retrieved 30 July 2006.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ River and Rowing Museum, "Library," http://www.rrm.co.uk/mus_library.htm retrieved 30 July 2006.

¹² Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*.

¹³ Formerly the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

¹⁴ Guy Schultz, "The IAAF and the IOC: Their Relationship and its Impact on Women's Participation in Track and Field at the Olympic Games 1912-1931" (Master's Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 2000).

¹⁵ Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, 8.

¹⁶ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 55-56.

¹⁷ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 171.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁹ IOC, "History: Mission, Support and Success of the Olympic Museum Lausanne,"

http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/museum/mission/history_uk.asp retrieved 6 September 2006.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ OSC, "The International Olympic Committee Historical Archives: The Evolution of the Olympic Movement since 1894," http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/studies/archives/index_uk.asp retrieved 6 September 2006.

²² Denzin and Lincoln, "Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Empirical Materials," 47.

²³ Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1996), 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ I originally identified fourteen women who have been involved as athletes, coaches, and/or administrators between 1954 and 2003, but one woman was unable to take part in the study.

²⁶ This woman later apologized for not responding to my electronic mails, but explained that she felt uncomfortable taking part in the study because she was worried that she would say something that could later be misinterpreted and would negatively affect her reputation and career in the sport.

²⁷ Kvale, *InterViews*, 124.

²⁸ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰ Jennifer Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 10.

³¹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 11.

³² Borland, "That's Not What I Said."

³³ S. Jones, "The Analysis of Depth Interviews," in *Applied Qualitative Research*, ed. Robert Walker (Dartmouth: Aldershot, 1985).

³⁴ Gery W. Ryan and H. Russell Bernard, "Data Management and Analysis Methods," in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2nd ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2003), 274.

³⁵ Nigel Fielding, "Computer Applications in Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 456.

³⁶ Sangster, "Telling Our Stories," 305.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.

³⁸ Paul C. Rosenblatt, "Interviewing at the Border of Fact and Fiction," in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 228.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Richard Cándida Smith, "Analytic Strategies for Oral History Interviews," in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 204.

⁴¹ Kvale, *InterViews*, 235.

⁴² Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 230.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 232.

Chapter 4

Gaining Entrance into FISA

Introduction

In 1892, stimulated by the popularity of men's rowing, representatives from five European countries met in Turin, Italy to discuss the establishment of an international rowing federation. The delegation however, showed no interest in the regulation of rowing for oarswomen despite the prevalence of women's participation in the sport throughout Europe at the time. Women have a long history in the sport of rowing, from their participation in "style" rowing for ladies along the Thames, to the racing of working class women along the canals of Venice. These early oarswomen were central to the development of women's competitive rowing and laid the foundation for future oarswomen to negotiate international recognition and ultimately gain entrance into FISA-regulated international regattas in 1954.

This chapter documents the early struggles of female rowing enthusiasts to gain entrance into FISA-regulated international competitions and the processes by which women were gained entrance to the 1954 FISA Women's European Rowing Championships. I begin by providing a brief description of how FISA came to be established in 1892 and how the organisation deliberately prevented the involvement of women through its rules and regulations, and more specifically, its definition of an amateur oarsman. I then discuss the many ways female rowing enthusiasts participated in the sport during the early half of the twentieth century and why these women negotiated to gain access to FISA-regulated international regattas. Finally, data collected from meeting minutes and correspondence letters were used to examine how FISA came to

regulate women's competitive international rowing and introduce the first ever Women's European Rowing Championships in 1954.

Fédération International Sociétés d'Aviron

FISA's humble beginnings date back prior to the turn of the twentieth century. At the time, men's competitive rowing was popular in a number of European countries including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland, but rules and regulations throughout the continent varied drastically. After Belgium hosted a series of what they claimed were European championships in 1890 and 1891, several national rowing administrators agreed that the time had come to create an international federation and establish uniform international rules for racing.¹ On June 25, 1892, eleven male representatives from Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, and Switzerland, met in Turin, Italy to discuss the organisation of an international rowing federation.² Rowing administrators from Germany, Great Britain, and Spain were unable to attend, but sent along their support and agreement to abide by the decisions of the meeting.³

Under the direction of Hector Corland, the representative from Belgium, the men solidified a set of uniform rules and regulations for international racing. The delegation began by establishing an annual international regatta, the European championships, and each year a different national rowing federation would host the regatta.⁴ It was agreed that the racing program for these European championships would include three events, the single sculls, the four with coxswain, and the eight, and races would be rowed over a distance between 1800 and 3000 metres on a straight course.⁵ Additionally, the delegates

established the federation's first definition of an amateur oarsman, thus regulated who was permitted to compete at these championships:

Amateur oarsmen in international rowing would be those who were deemed to be so by their own country. The following would be totally excluded: professional rowers, sailors, watermen, ferry men, professional fishermen, professional boatbuilders, boatmen, rowing coaches in receipt of payment, crew members who had been hired to race, and those who had competed in races open to professionals as defined above.⁶

Sporting men from the middle and upper classes during the Victorian Era were adamant about distinguishing the difference between amateurs and professionals. Robert Paddick indicated that amateurism was “essential to the pursuit of excellence and is the source of those values which make athletics worthwhile.”⁷

Amateur definitions varied from nation to nation, sport to sport, and often even within nations and sports. However the general idea remained, an amateur was defined as someone who did not receive money, including money as wages, prizes, advertising or endorsement, expensive gifts, or expenses, in connection with their sport participation.⁸ Furthermore, as we see from FISA's definition, many labourers were also considered professional athletes because “some working class occupations developed a proficiency which gave an advantage in some sports (and thus were equivalent to training).”⁹ Guttmann suggested that the “determination to exclude the lower classes may have been motivated, in part, by envy” because “Professional oarsmen attracted huge crowds and basked in their adulation.”¹⁰ Many believed that the participation of labourers led to the social degradation of amateur sport.¹¹ As a result, not all men were invited to participate in FISA-regulated regattas, only those who had the financial means to participate in rowing during their leisure time were permitted to race at the federation's championships.¹²

Finally, it was decided that this newly formed international sport federation would be named the Fédération Internationale Sociétés d'Aviron (FISA). The men had created an elitist international sport federation that excluded people on the basis of class and gender. Although they did not specifically state that oarswomen could not be members of FISA, the fact that they defined an amateur as an oarsman and established no races for women's participation indicated that they wanted an international sport federation reserved for men. This was not surprising given that most men during the late Victorian Era had little interest in seeing women compete in any sport.¹³

Women's Rowing Participation during the Early Half of the Twentieth Century

Although the FISA delegates did not consider women's events for their international racing program, women still participated in the sport. As stated previously, rowing was a popular leisure activity among middle and upper-class women in many parts of the Western World and was also a popular sporting activity for the working class throughout Europe. Private academic institutions in North America and in parts of Europe introduced the activity to promote elegance and grace, as well as participation and socialisation, all signifiers of heterosexual femininity. Additionally, women established their own private rowing clubs along the canals, lakes, and rivers occupied by oarsmen when private men's rowing clubs prevented their admittance.

We know very little about the history of working class women's involvement in competitive rowing since few documents exist that detail their participation. Yet, historians have located references regarding women racing that date back to the fifteenth century.¹⁴ Guttmann has noted that one of the most exciting annual events in Venice was the boat race for peasant women:

Understandably, the women's regatta enjoyed special popularity. The participants were peasant women of the area – especially from Pellestrina – who had plenty of practice thanks to weekly boat trips to the market in Venice. ... It is probable that the spectators were more attracted by the charming country costumes than by the sports performance. At any rate, Antonio Gabellico reported of the first official women's regatta in 1493, to celebrate the arrival of Beatrice d'Este, that the fifty competing peasant maids in their short linen skirts made a strong impression and that the spectacle, as unfamiliar as it was charming, greatly diminished the effects of the men's regatta which followed.¹⁵

Wigglesworth has also mentioned that a special race for fisherwomen was held at a fishermen's boat race in Chester in 1733.¹⁶ Yet, both of these references provide little information regarding eligibility or racing distance. Historians have argued that these early races were a mere sideshow to the men's event, an opportunity to provide entertainment for male spectators.¹⁷ Furthermore, heterosexist norms regarding appropriate femininity that were reserved for middle and upper-class women were not applicable to working-class women.

There is also a limited amount of information about middle and upper class women's participation in rowing. At the turn of the century, and continuing through the first half of the twentieth century, a popular form of rowing for middle and upper class women was called "style" rowing. Residual Victorian discourse regarding appropriate physical activity for the "fairer sex" remained prominent, which prompted medical practitioners to promote healthy exercise that helped women to develop the essential strength and endurance that was required to be a wife and a mother. Women were encouraged to walk briskly, ride bicycles, and take part in other activities that were considered appropriate for the delicate feminine physique. Vertinsky has shown that the medical profession legitimated the idea that middle-class women were inherently sick and were diagnosed as constitutionally weak.¹⁸ Pfister stated:

The medical perspective shows that physical culture cannot be regarded in isolation and that it is relevant to women's social roles and to women's everyday knowledge about themselves. There were close links between the discourse about the female body and the construction and legitimation of a social ideology based on the differences between the sexes.¹⁹

Furthermore, It has been suggested that the "oppression of women arose from the acquisition of private property under capitalist production, which made possible the exploitation of biological differences."²⁰ The stereotype of the frail middle-class woman "supported male domination economically as well as ideologically."²¹ However, as noted, gentle forms of appropriate physical activity were encouraged to aid in a young woman's health and in her abilities to bear children. Young women were discouraged vehemently from over-exerting themselves lest they become exhausted and damage their reproductive organs, or develop unfeminine muscles and ruin their appearance. Furthermore, Lenskyj has equated "any sign of athletic or intellectual competence with masculinity, and, by extension, with lesbianism."²² She added that "men often found competent women unappealing" presumably because "they lacked the feminine traits of emotionalism, passivity and helplessness that validated masculine identity."²³

Style rowing was therefore designed to promote outdoor physical activity for women without the disruption to perceived femininity. The ideal image of an oarswoman at this time conformed to conventional heterosexual assumptions. Hargreaves has explained that "the construction of heterosexual femininity is a powerful form of control."²⁴ The fear that female athletes would acquire masculine characteristics or become lesbians, motivated the decisions made regarding appropriate sporting activities, not to mention the attire that was to be worn while participating.

Early participants wore corsets, long, white summer dresses, and white cotton gloves.²⁵ As time progressed and the sliding seat was introduced, long dresses were replaced by “tying skirts” (skirts that could be tied around the legs, resembling bloomers) and long stockings.²⁶ The German rowing federation argued it was imperative for decent women to wear stockings while rowing in order to retain decency: “with the stocking leg we no longer see the line but only the leg, the leg in all its naked fleshliness.”²⁷ Respectable middle and upper-class young women did not show their “naked fleshliness” for the fear that it could inflame men’s passion. Men were considered unable to control themselves or their sexual instincts. Women’s perceived innate moral superiority gave them the discipline, skill, and ultimately obligation to prevent men from succumbing to inappropriate sexual desires. One way to prevent immorality was to remove all sexual stimuli. Thus, middle and upper-class women were required to cover their entire bodies with clothing, leaving only the skin on their faces visible.

Dodd has explained that style rowing was particularly popular in Germany during the early 1900s, as German male spectators “were keen on chauvinistic aesthetics of bodice and stocking for their female wonder-rowers.”²⁸ German women were said to have maintained their aesthetic beauty while at the same time they gained strength and fitness as “essential aims for future mothers of the Fatherland.”²⁹ Matthew Stibbe has stated that pregnancy and childbirth were portrayed as women’s “sacrifice to the Fatherland,” equivalent to men’s sacrifice in the army.³⁰ The primary task for the female body was to bear children, therefore, “All sports activities undertaken by adult women have to be judged from the point of view of reproduction.”³¹ The argument that “the strong are born only by the strong” suggested that women should be physically active in

order to become healthy and have the ability to give birth to healthy babies for the further develop of the Germany nation and Aryan race.³²

Style rowing remained part of the Germany racing program until 1969 and continued to be a popular physical activity in Western Europe through to the 1960s because it was considered “the basis for developing their (ladies’) charm.”³³ Dieterle recalled her early experiences with style rowing in Berlin, West Germany during the 1950s and 1960s:

Yes, you had to do a three by one hundred metres [row and] there were judges. You have to pass them three times and in the middle of the second you have to do ten racing strokes. And it was [judged on] rhythm, of course. It was the completely unique technique, every [rower looked the same], even the splash must be the same and if possible, if the coach was happy, or lucky, he had four completely similar girls, blonde if possible.³⁴

Even after the Second World War the allure of the pure Aryan nation remained and German girls were expected to breed quality children for the sake of the nation. As such, girls were required to participate in specific sports that would develop their abilities to be a wife and a mother. Dieterle indicated that when she became a German rowing administrator, she was eager to abolish this form of rowing for young girls because of its sexist nature:

Yes and when I became member of the German board, it was my first action to get rid of this. It’s a ... sexist way. We have to wear long white shirts, because [it gave the appearance of] getting a longer body, stupid things!³⁵

Dieterle associated the aesthetics of style rowing with that of synchronized swimming because female athletes were expected to look identical and express femininities.³⁶ The girls were required to appear as if the activity required no extraneous effort and display a smile throughout their performance. Similarly, feminist scholar Debra Shogan has argued that synchronized swimmers are the “quintessential female athlete,” in the sense

that they must hide their skill and strength under water and give the illusion of effortless sporting participation; they remain subterfuge.³⁷

Physically active women were well aware that male sporting administrators wanted to ensure that women remained feminine and therefore, many men had no interest in regulating competitive sport for the “fairer sex.” This prompted several female-sporting enthusiasts to establish their own women’s athletic organisations in a variety of sports. In 1918 Alice Milliat, a French rowing enthusiast herself, had become President of the *Fédération Sociétés Feminine Sportive de France* (FSFS) and organised national championships in field hockey, association football, basketball, and swimming.³⁸ Milliat later founded the *Fédération Sportive Feminine Internationale* (FSFI) in 1921, an all female international governing body for women’s track and field, and helped to establish the Women’s Olympic Games in 1922.³⁹ British and Italian women were also active in governing their own sport, founding the Women’s Athletic Association (WAA) in 1922,⁴⁰ and the Italian Federation for Women’s Athletics in 1923 respectively.⁴¹ In the United States, the Committee on Women’s Athletics (WAC) was founded in 1917.⁴²

Sport historians often refer to the 1920s as the “Golden Age of Sport” for female athletes in the Western world; a time when opportunities for many female athletes increased and women’s international sporting success became recognised by popular media.⁴³ Cahn has argued that the 1920s were a period in which “middle-class women shed the vestiges of Victorian reserve to explore new social behaviours.”⁴⁴ Women began competing nationally and internationally in a variety of sports, including tennis, track and field, and swimming. Celebrity athletes such as Gertrude Ederle and Suzanne Lenglen provided women with visual examples of the new competitive sports woman.

Furthermore, these celebrity athletes publicly challenged traditional medical discourse that argued that women were physically incapable of participating in competitive sport. Although the international rowing federation had yet to recognise women internationally, oarswomen followed the lead of other female athletes and worked to establish competitive international opportunities for themselves.

Not all female sport administrators were supportive of women's competitive participation. For example, in 1923, one group of influential female physical educators in the United States banded together to fight "against all forms of highly competitive sports, which leaders continued to perceive as inherently threatening to the female athlete's moral and physical well-being."⁴⁵ The organisation they established was called the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (WDNAAF) and their national platform was a "sport for every girl and every girl in a sport."⁴⁶ The WDNAAF supported physical activity for girls and women, but they emphasized that women were inherently weaker and frailer than men and thus sport should be modified to "fit the unique capabilities and needs of women."⁴⁷ Separatists largely supported the perceived biological inferiority of women and expressed fears that competitive sport would render female athletes incapable of bearing children and would result in the masculinization of the female physique. Unmodified sport was said to endanger women's reproductive health, however, they could not find conclusive data to support this argument.⁴⁸

The WDNAAF also condemned competitive sport because it led to the "exploitation [of female athletes] for the enjoyment of the spectator or for the athletic reputation or commercial advantage of any school or other organization."⁴⁹ They opposed the objectification of the athlete and the increasing commercialization of male

sport and argued that these trends should be resisted in women's sport. Furthermore, the WDNAAF was opposed to the corruption they witnessed within men's competitive sport and were appalled by the attitudes they witnessed in men's intercollegiate athletics. Thus, they rejected the "win at all costs" mentality. As a result, women's intercollegiate competition was banned in favour of "play days." Play days were organised in order for several colleges to come together to participate in non-competitive activities and socialize with other college women. Cahn has indicated that participants often had no prior training or organisation, and young women from the different schools in attendance were simply arranged into mixed teams "so that individual institutions would not compete against each other. All interested players could attend, with no special awards for [athletic] skill or achievement."⁵⁰ Oarswomen, for example, often won awards for their singing talent and their aesthetic form in the rowing shell.⁵¹ The WDNAAF wanted women to participate in appropriate sports and the only way to ensure that this occurred was for the control of women's sport to be in the hands of female physical educators and sport administrators.

While the WDNAAF supported a separate sphere approach to women's sport and physical activity, their sphere was limited. Separatist sport feminists vehemently opposed competitive and or elite sport, preferring that girls and women participate in sport and physical activity as a way to develop the female physique. Hargreaves suggested, "the leaders of women's physical education in the USA appeared to be ahead of their time; they had a critical appreciation of the potentially harmful affects of top-level sport, and a belief in the philosophy of 'activity for all'."⁵² Cahn argued that the group probed "insights into the potential for sexual and economic abuses in highly commercialized

women's sport."⁵³ However, their cause was focussed primarily on sport for middle and upper-class women. The group fought against the sexual exploitation of women in sport, "yet neglected to examine either the economic exploitation of working women or their own class and racial biases."⁵⁴ They considered competitive athletic events to be low-status and vulgar, and associated competitive sport with working-class and black women. Thus, "their position embodied mainstream ideas, implicitly supportive of class and ethnic division in American society."⁵⁵

Members of the WDNAAF were particularly concerned that if female athletes submitted to the temptation of competition then they would fall prey to the world of men's sport and its problems. This would result in men and male sporting administrators taking control over women's sport and render female administrators virtually powerless. This was ultimately a difficult battle for the federation. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, many female athletes became interested in participating in traditionally defined masculine sport, including track and field. Liberal sport feminists however, actively supported women's participation in competitive sport. They argued that equality was only achieved if women and men participated in the same sports at the same competitive levels. This approach to equal opportunities for women in sport was, as Hargreaves indicated, "accepted as 'commonsense' by the majority of people pioneering for improvements for women in sports."⁵⁶ Arguably this was an accepted approach for both women and men because rather than challenge male sports, it endorsed them.⁵⁷ Separatist feminists on the other hand wanted to disassociate themselves from men's sport and their emphasis on competition. Hargreaves has suggested the separatist's approach "made it easy for the IOC to slow the expansion of women's Olympic sports."⁵⁸

In the end however, competitive sport for girls and women reigned. The seductive appeal of participation in the Olympic Games was too strong for most sportswomen. The WDNAAF was eventually disbanded in 1940 and men's sport federations began to incorporate women's federations and take control over women's sport.

In the sport of rowing during the 1920s and 1930s, many women worked to encourage male rowing administrators to include women under their organisations' mandate and began to establish competitive rowing programs and national federations. In 1920, a group of Australian oarswomen founded the Australian Women's Rowing Council, five years before the men had created their own national sport governing body for rowing.⁵⁹ German oarswomen also created their own women's national rowing federation during the 1920s.⁶⁰ In England, Amy Gentry helped to establish the Women's Amateur Rowing Association (WARA) in 1923. This national women's rowing federation regulated both competitive and leisure for women in Great Britain.⁶¹

Furthermore, not all men's national rowing federations were averse to including women within their mandate. A number of European federations, for example Russia, France, and the Netherlands, were progressive in their attitudes regarding women's competitive rowing and accepted women's racing, albeit on a limited basis and not necessarily because they believed in the equality of the sexes. For example, many French sport administrators and physical educators supported "elegant, dutiful and lively" sport participation as a method to enhance "true" femininity."⁶² However, despite the promotion of appropriate femininity by some sport administrators, these national rowing federations did introduce women's sections and regulated women's racing early in the

first half of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, FISA delegates from these same nations were instrumental in the introduction of women's events on FISA's international racing program.

Interest and discussion regarding the development of international competition for oarswomen grew from delegates in women's national rowing federations and several mixed gendered federations throughout the world. International dual meets were organised and crews from the WARA travelled to Warsaw in 1931,⁶³ Paris in 1933,⁶⁴ and Australia in 1938 to compete.⁶⁵ Although competition was an important part of these dual meets, these international competitions were also intended to promote "friendship and understanding among nations."⁶⁶ Similar to separatist feminists, organizers of these events supported the notion that women's sport should entail aspects of socialization. Furthermore, organisers believed that these dual meets created an opportunity for oarswomen, coaches, and administrators to meet and learn how women's rowing was governed and organised in other parts of the world.⁶⁷

Female administrators were well aware that some male rowing administrators were reluctant to support these dual meets, or even women's competitive rowing in general. Thus, a number of astute female rowing administrators devised a strategic plan to involve their male counterparts in the selection of crews and the officiating of regattas.⁶⁸ By emulating the men's selection process and requesting their involvement in the selection of the women's crews, WARA officials legitimised the women's competitions in the eyes of the men and helped prove that oarswomen were indeed able to compete at the international level. Additionally, they found a way to introduce other opportunities for women. For example, the WARA requested that experienced male

umpires officiate at their major regattas but also mandated that a “lady be allowed to accompany the Umpire” in the launch.⁶⁹ Women were largely excluded from competitive officiating positions, given that men had created a “self-constituting class of experts” of which women were not part.⁷⁰ Although the accompanying “lady” was not permitted to interfere with the umpire’s decisions, by gaining access to the officials’ launch, the WARA created a system for women to gain knowledge and experience of umpiring at competitive races.⁷¹ This laid the groundwork for future female umpires and officials.

Despite the fact that many women had founded their own competitive sport governing bodies, established local, national, and international competitions, all prior to the Second World War, some of these women also wanted access to FISA-regulated regattas, which included the European championships and the Olympic Games. Similar to other liberal sport feminists throughout the Western World, such as Alice Milliat and members of the FSFI, these female rowing administrators acknowledged that the only way for oarswomen to achieve equity in the sport of rowing was to have access to the same competitions as oarsmen. In order to gain access to these regattas, women’s competitive rowing needed to be recognised by the international federation. It was apparent from the development of women’s competitive participation in other sports such as track and field, that female sport administrators would have to hand over their control over women’s sport to men in order to gain access.

Just as early separatist sport feminists feared, the pursuit of competitive sport for female athletes led to women relinquishing control over women’s sport. In order for future oarswomen to gain access to international competition, female administrators had to hand over the control they had over women’s rowing to their male counterparts,

essentially leaving women with little say over the governance of their own sport participation. This was one of the concerns that American female physical educators warned against in the 1920s and 1930s. Traditionally, competitive sport has been regulated by male sport administrators who may not be sensitive to the specific needs of female athletes during decision making periods. Furthermore, the introduction of women's competitive rowing increased the potential for oarswomen to emulate male sport and adopt a "win at all cost" mentality. Despite the obvious drawback of losing control over women's rowing to men, many female rowing administrators and enthusiasts were eager to make this commitment and have women's events included on the programs of FISA-regulated international regattas. Many believed that this was the only way for oarswomen to achieve equality in the sport of rowing.

FISA's Early Discussions Regarding Women's International Rowing

FISA's early discussions regarding women's rowing participation in international competitions were limited. The topic was first addressed in 1937 at FISA's Annual Congress, but it was not until 1938 that a serious discussion took place. The discussion was initiated by Heinrich Pauli, president of the German national rowing federation, Deutscher Ruderverband (DRV). Pauli presented data on women's rowing participation from his home country and he showed that in Germany, female rowers entered the rowing scene in 1884 and that by 1892 every fourth rower in the country was a woman.⁷² By 1901, female German rowing enthusiasts founded the country's first women's only rowing club.⁷³ The first women's regatta for style rowing was held in 1919 and the first speed races, over a distance of 1000 metres, were introduced in 1921.⁷⁴ By the late 1930s, over twelve thousand women rowed in Germany, and Pauli argued that he was

conscious that the sport was also developing in many other places around the world.⁷⁵ For these reasons he suggested that FISA included women's races on the international racing program and establish rules and regulations to govern women's rowing. He indicated that if FISA did not act quickly and establish regulations for women's competitive international rowing, the opportunity to shape and control women's racing would "escape" from their hands.⁷⁶ If FISA gained control over women's international rowing, the all-male delegation could thus define women's participation on their own terms, maintaining a hegemonic arena.

When discussions arose regarding women's participation in any sport during the early half of the twentieth century, many male-sporting administrators inevitably looked to the Olympic Games as a reference for established norms because the IOC became the international reputable resource regarding amateur sport. The majority of the IOC members continued to be actively involved in the governance of sport in their home nations and thus, information regarding amateurism and appropriate athletic involvement for female participants was shared amongst the delegates. In the late 1930s, women's participation in the Olympic Games was limited to those events considered appropriate for feminine participation and this became a strong argument to prevent FISA from integrating women's races into their international program.

The concern regarding feminine-appropriate sport participation has always existed. Society has deemed certain sports more suitable for women's participation, those that enhance and display grace and femininity, while masculine-appropriate sports involved aggression, dominance, and often violence. Hargreaves has argued that:

Sports have been classified as 'masculine-' and 'feminine-appropriate' because of fiercely defended heterosexist traditions. Conventional femininity does not incorporate images of physical power and muscularity.⁷⁷

Women are expected to play traditional female sports and when they play traditional male sports, they risk being called "pseudo-men', 'unfeminine', 'gay', 'masculine', 'mannish', 'butch', 'dykes', or 'lesbians'."⁷⁸ Many FISA delegates, as well as others governing international sport, were adamant that rowing not disrupt oarswomen's heterosexual femininity, and thus, disagreed with the introduction of women's events on the international racing program.

FISA delegate Maurice Mahut, President of the French national rowing association, Fédération Française des Sociétés d'Aviron (FFSA), reflected on scenes from the Olympic Games and stated, "le sexe faible pratique les sports qui mettent en évidence sa grâce et son élégance (the weaker sex only participate in events that promoted grace and elegance)."⁷⁹ He argued that rowing was a sport that required strength and muscular endurance, a traditionally masculine event and was therefore unsuitable for female participation.⁸⁰ Female participation in rowing challenged ideologies regarding what constituted socially acceptable feminine behaviour. Competitive oarswomen would develop muscular strength and endurance, physical abilities that were reserved for men and masculinity. Additionally, several FISA delegates associated rowing for "ladies" with leisure pastimes and competitive rowing with working class women. With FISA's strict rules regarding amateurism, working class women were therefore not eligible for participation. Some delegates neglected to realise that women from all backgrounds, and not only working class women, were indeed active participants in competitive rowing throughout the Western World.

Furthermore, rowing was traditionally considered by many male administrators as a vehicle through which to develop boys into men. FISA's Swiss delegate, Dr. Hans Walter, cited the sport's ability to develop character in young men.⁸¹ Furthermore, "Competitive sports are celebrations of physical differences – between people of the same sex, but also, and in a most profound way, between males and females."⁸² Walter argued that, rather than introduce women's international rowing, FISA should focus its attention on the introduction of rowing for boys.⁸³ Walter added that he was personally convinced that rowing was a good sport for women, but that there were dangers associated with female physical health if proper rowing technique was not observed. A hasty decision regarding women's competitive international racing was, therefore, irresponsible.⁸⁴ The perceived limited physical capabilities of women rendered them unable to properly execute the techniques associated with competitive international rowing. Here, administrators conveniently forgot that oarswomen from Great Britain, Australia, and Russia had already participated in competitive dual meets against one another without problem. The 1938 FISA Ordinary Congress agreed that the matter required further discussion, but at a later date. The Dutch delegate then proposed that a questionnaire be sent to affiliated national rowing federations to gain their input on the subject.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, due to the breakout of the Second World War, the FISA delegates did not meet again until 1946, and at this Congress the topic of women's rowing was left off the agenda.

Undeterred by FISA's slow progress to introduce women's events at internationally sanctioned events, several European national rowing federations introduced women's national championships prior to the Second World War.⁸⁶ By the

early 1950s, Germany, Denmark, France, Greece, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Czechoslovakia had all introduced national rowing championships for women.⁸⁷ The events available for oarswomen's participation were limited, but contributed to the advancement of future competitive women's international regattas. These regattas provided a public venue at which oarswomen could display not only their athletic abilities, but also their desire for competition.

With an increase of women racing throughout Europe, Antoinette Rocheux of the FFSA, who many have credited as the driving force behind the introduction of women's competitive international events, decided that it was time for FISA to re-examine the issue of women's competitive international racing and introduce women's events at the European championships.⁸⁸ In 1947, under the direction of Rocheux, Mlle Eyquem, also a member of the FFSA, sent letters to other national women's rowing federations informing them of the FFSA's intent to press FISA to re-examine the issue of a women's European championship and requested support from their colleagues.⁸⁹ Female rowing administrators, well aware that FISA had previously turned down the proposal to introduce women's events at the European championships, agreed that they needed to mobilise support from as many rowing administrators and national rowing federations as possible.⁹⁰ They were unwilling to sit idly by and allow male rowing administrators to decide upon their athletic destiny.

Gaining Entrance into FISA

With new support from women's rowing federations from a greater number of national rowing federations, the topic of women's competitive international racing was again proposed to the FISA members, this time by the delegates from the Netherlands.⁹¹

Aware that this topic was slated for discussion, delegates prepared in advance. The men at the 1950 FISA Annual Congress were faced with two questions: could women physically compete at the international level, and did the delegates really want them there? Whether the men were for or against women's competitive international rowing, the delegates came to the 1950 Annual Congress ready to make a decision. Members arrived armed with statistics, graphs, medical reports, and testimonials to make their arguments on the subject. The strongest detractor of women's rowing was Massimo Giovannetti, President of the Italian national rowing federation, Federazione Italiana Canottaggio (FIC). He offered results from Dr. La Cava's studies which indicated that rowing was inappropriate for female participation because it was a physical exercise that exceeded the physiological limits of the body and stimulated abdominal muscles.⁹² Even today, feminist scholars argue that "muscles are *the* sign of male power, signifiers of patriarchy, and *the* sign of masculinity."⁹³ Hargreaves has suggested that "in mainstream sports heterosexuality is viewed as the only rational, 'natural' and acceptable orientation," thus, "female muscularity is treated as a sign of masculinization."⁹⁴

Giovannetti's concerns were consistent with Italian medical and social discourses regarding women's participation in competitive sport at that time. In Italy after the First World War, women's physical activity was typically limited to activities that would help women's reproductive functions.⁹⁵ Italian sport historian Gigliola Gori has indicated that in the 1920s, women's involvement in sporting participation was "encouraged by the Fascist movement, in line with the revolutionary spirit of the first period of Fascism, which exalted the body and its activity."⁹⁶ However, during the early 1930s, Italian women were urged to remain in their homes, to be submissive wives who were strong

mothers of numerous children; as such, physical activity was reduced to basic gymnastics.⁹⁷ As time progressed, Italian women were encouraged to expand their participation in physical exercise, within limits, and become involved in activities that caused little fatigue and were less violent than men's sport, such as archery, tennis, golf gymnastics, hiking, bicycle tourism, non-competitive swimming, and non-competitive athletics.⁹⁸ Italian women were advised to participate in these forms of non-competitive physical activity as long as they did so away from the male gaze.⁹⁹ The Italian sport medicine organisation, Federazione Italiana Medici dello Sport (FIMS), was also reluctant to advocate women's competitive sport seeing that they considered that women were "first and foremost Italians and should, therefore, avoid any "Americanisation"."¹⁰⁰ There was the concern that if Italian women followed the path of their American sisters and became involved in competitive sport, they would abandon their duties of a wife and mother and confuse the distinction between women and men.

The Roman Catholic Church also discouraged women from involvement in competitive sport. Church leaders were convinced that women would reproduce the competitiveness of sporting activities in their everyday life and distract their attentions from household duties in favour of work and politics.¹⁰¹ Italian sporting women were encouraged to emphasise participation in physical activity that promoted health rather than in activities that focussed solely on winning international sporting medals.¹⁰²

Although the Italians were concerned about the "Americanisation" of women from their country, many physical educators and physicians in Italy and the United States subscribed to a similar doctrine regarding women's physical activity. As noted previously, many American female physical educators followed the "separate spheres"

ideology and promoted “improved health while avoiding overexertion and the dread spectre of exercise-induced infertility.”¹⁰³ These women advocated “mass participation rather than elite sport; play for play’s sake, instead of victory at any price; personal growth and safety, not exploitation and commercialization.”¹⁰⁴ During the first half of the twentieth century, many female physical educators continued to be opposed to elite competition, including the Olympic Games.

Throughout parts of the Western world “highly conventional, idealized notions of female desirability” were emphasised.¹⁰⁵ Robust women were considered vulgar and women’s physical activity was “carefully monitored, regulated and circumscribed” because “feminine demeanour was insisted upon.”¹⁰⁶ Some FISA delegates supported this ideology and Walter argued for the creation of “another form of rowing for women, one that wouldn’t develop muscles.”¹⁰⁷ At the completion of a lengthy discussion at the 1950 FISA Annual Congress, the delegates estimated that rowing could be both a masculine and feminine activity, as long as oarswomen participated in specific events that were more suitable for their specific physique.¹⁰⁸ It was agreed that FISA would establish international regulations for women’s competitive rowing that took into account both the physiological and cultural considerations of the nations involved.¹⁰⁹ An emphasis was placed on sculling boats because in Europe most women began their rowing careers as scullers. The symmetrical nature of sculling was believed to be more appropriate for female participation and also easier for inexperienced rowers.¹¹⁰ FISA delegates made the decision to shorten the women’s racing distance to 1000 metres rather than 2000 metres, half of the men’s, as a way to prevent oarswomen from overexerting their supposedly delicate bodies. However, the decision to shorten the women’s racing

distance would later become a predicament within the international rowing community (See Chapter 7).

FISA's decision to govern women's rowing did not mean that the congress had agreed to allow oarswomen unbridled access to international championships. The men's European rowing championships was in existence since 1893 and rowing was on the Olympic program since 1896.¹¹¹ Women racing in these regattas clearly threatened the tradition of masculine sporting experience. Thus, rather than disrupt the men's championships, it was agreed that oarswomen would take part in a separate FISA-regulated regatta the day before the men's races, specifically not a European championship, but a "curtain raiser to the men's European championships."¹¹²

On August 23, 1951, in Maçon, France, women from four European nations, Denmark, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, competed in four events over a distance of 1000m.¹¹³ The regatta not only provided an opportunity for oarswomen to compete internationally, but also allowed national rowing federations to compare their women's programs with their European competitors. The Dutch women's physical size and superior abilities made a significant impact on their competitors. Gentry, who attended the regatta as an observer for the WARA and also to show her support for women's competitive international rowing, described her observations of the regatta to her fellow WARA members in a post-competition summary:

There was no doubt of the superiority of the Dutch eight on these grounds alone, for their smallest member was the size of our biggest – incidentally their superiority did not end there either. My first sight of the Dutch girls told me what to expect for their whole standard was outstanding, as their time shows [3:11.24]. I watched them take their first stroke away from the boat rafts and when I saw how every blade cut the water firmly & decisively right from the catch and the quick drawing home of the hands making a hard firm puddle straight astern, I knew what to expect.¹¹⁴

Gentry was also impressed with the organisation and level of support other European nations provided for their oarswomen. The FFSA received government assistance for both their men's and women's programs and the male Dutch coaches were very helpful in coaching the women.¹¹⁵ Both countries had primarily mixed gendered rowing clubs, which led Gentry to question whether this led "to a united governing body – or was it the other way round? did [*sic*] the fact that the governing body legislated for both men and women lead to the Government help?"¹¹⁶ The success of the oarswomen from the Netherlands and France raised several questions regarding the governance of women's competitive rowing. Primarily, was the success of a women's international crew determined by the assistance received from male coaches? Furthermore, did the unification of both the men's and women's national programs assist in oarswomen's international success? The races in Maçon helped to validate the establishment of women's competitive international races and as Gentry indicated, were a well-deserved reward for the "long fight in the interests of women's rowing."¹¹⁷

The success of the first women's international regatta sparked a renewed interest in some female and male rowing administrators to include women's races on the program of the European championships. At the 1953 Extraordinary Congress, Dr. Hendrik Bruyn of the Netherlands, supported by the delegates of the FFSA, insisted that FISA amend the European championships to include races for women.¹¹⁸ The Netherlands had a strong, competitive women's rowing program, as was evident from their recent results at FISA's women's regatta in 1951, and Bruyn argued that women's rowing was steadily developing, not only in his country, but throughout the world.¹¹⁹

Some male administrators were still reluctant to accept oarswomen on the international racing program. Concerns were again raised regarding women's delicate physicality. FISA President Gaston Müllegg, a native Swiss, claimed that some national federations would not be interested in hosting the men's and the women's European championships, for social or economic reasons.¹²⁰ Jacques Spreux of Belgium did not approve of the inclusion of women's events at the European championships because women did not row in his own country; a comment that appeared surprising in light of the country's extensive support of men's competitive rowing.¹²¹ Giovannetti of Italy reiterated his federation's disapproval of women's rowing because of the potentially unfavourable consequences that Italian physicians claimed would occur to female participants.¹²² Swiss delegate Walter agreed with Giovannetti and added his own concerns and questions regarding the cultural appropriateness of women's participation in competitive international rowing.¹²³

Not all the delegates were opposed to women racing in the European championships. Dr. Walter Wuelfing, President of the West German national rowing federation, provided details of why the military supported women's rowing and claimed that the DRV also supported the proposition of including women's races in the European championships.¹²⁴ Mr. Kroupine of the USSR defended the idea of women's international racing and claimed that over 15,000 women rowed in his country, thus, the inclusion of women's rowing events at the European championships was important to his national rowing federation.¹²⁵ Romanian delegate Mr. Baranyi even offered for the Federatia Romana de Canotaj (FRC) to host the women's championships in Bucharest

because the organisers of the 1954 men's European championships, Belgium, refused to organise the women's regatta.¹²⁶

The sentiments of the Eastern Bloc delegates were not surprising. As Guttman has explained, East Europeans during the Cold War were more progressive with respect to women's sport participation.¹²⁷ In Eastern Bloc countries, sport was seen as a catalyst for social change, headed by the state political leaders.¹²⁸ Riordan and Cantelon have argued that Soviet nations emphasised how physical activity was vital for human and cultural development and that sport policies had six major priorities, nation building, integration, defence, health and hygiene, social policies, and international recognition and prestige.¹²⁹ Women played a significant role in establishing Eastern Bloc nations as the world's strongest sporting powerhouse.¹³⁰ Female athletes were used as a political tool to strengthen the Eastern Bloc influence on the international sport scene.¹³¹ East European nations paid a great deal of attention to women's international sport, contrasting the "relative neglect in both the more *enlightened* nations of the West and in developing states."¹³² One East German sports official, Otto Schmidt, noted that "while other nations can produce men's teams as good as, if not better than, ours, we beat them overall because they are not tapping the full potential of their women."¹³³ Female athletes were targeted in turn for success at the international level without regard for medical and aesthetic dogma.¹³⁴

At the 1953 Extraordinary Congress, Bruyn's proposal to amend the European championships to include races for women went to a vote, and with thirty-four votes, it passed; women's rowing was officially accepted on the program for the European championships.¹³⁵ FISA was still reluctant to allow oarswomen unbridled access to

international competition. The women's regatta was to be held the week prior to the men's events and was in no way to be associated with the men's championships. It was decided that women would maintain the racing distance of 1000 metres rather than racing the 2000 metres distance the men rowed (arguably an appropriate distance for the delicate nature of oarswomen).¹³⁶ Reminiscing about this early restriction, DeFrantz pointed out, *"we raced a 1000 metres and we objected to it from the beginning because we knew that we were racing 1000 metres because that was half what the men raced. There was no other justification and that's not a justification."*¹³⁷ Oarswomen were also limited in the events that were available to them since FISA decided that women would only be permitted to race in the single sculls, double sculls, quadruple sculls with coxswain, four with coxswain, and eight with coxswain.¹³⁸

On August 20th 1954, the first women's European championships were held in Amsterdam.¹³⁹ Women from fourteen different European nations competed in the five events open to women, with those from the USSR taking home first in each event.¹⁴⁰ At the conclusion of the regatta FISA's president praised the Russian oarswomen for their success, which they achieved, he said, *"without losing their femininity."*¹⁴¹

Summary

The normalized perception of heterosexual femininity throughout most of the Western World during the first half of the twentieth century impacted the forms of sport and physical activity in which women participated. Rowing, traditionally perceived as an activity for middle and upper-class men, due to its inherent physical demands, was socially discouraged for the fairer sex. Women were expected to be feminine and their primary responsibilities were that of a wife and mother, and to breed the future children

of the nation. Furthermore, medical discourse in the first half of the twentieth century perpetuated the notion that the female physique was ill equipped for competitive sport participation in traditionally perceived masculine sports such as rowing. The perceived biologically inferior nature of a woman's body rendered her incapable of enduring the physical exertion required to be a competitive rower. Additionally, competitive rowing was believed to be a sport solely for men; an arena for the public display of physical masculinity. Despite these beliefs and injunctions, many women from all classes participated in the sport that their brothers and fathers enjoyed, albeit at different capacities. Originally oarswomen from the middle and upper-classes participated in rowing as a leisure activity, focussing on style, form and grace while working-class women had opportunities to race in competitive regattas, even though these races often served as entertainment for male spectators. As time progressed, female rowing enthusiasts from the middle and upper-classes established their own clubs, regattas, as well as national rowing federations. Yet, similar to their male counterparts, oarswomen excluded working-class women from gaining access. 'Their' form of rowing was not what middle and upper-class women wanted to be associated with and they established their own amateur definitions.

The increased number of women participating in rowing prompted several female and male rowing administrators to work for the introduction of women's events at FISA-regulated international regattas. Not surprisingly, many male rowing administrators were unsupportive of women's rowing on the international racing program, citing medical and social discourses as reasons to prevent women from gaining access. Despite the reluctance, however, oarswomen did gain access to the European championships in 1954,

albeit on a limited basis. Yet, Hargreaves has suggested that we must critically examine the class based implications of generalized increased access.¹⁴² FISA, along with several other national rowing federations, remained strict supporters of the code of amateurism. As such, women from the middle and upper classes gained access to international competition, while working class oarswomen largely remained isolated from FISA-regulated international competition.

As we will see in future chapters, male delegates undoubtedly had a variety of reasons for promoting women's international rowing. FISA delegates such as Pauli of Germany, who were early supporters of the introduction of women's events to the program of the European championships, were aware that their admittance provided FISA control over women's rowing. Whatever their motivations may have been, the support provided by male rowing administrators did help to secure a place for oarswomen on the international racing program. As we see in the next chapter, this inclusion onto the international racing scene had a significant impact on women's competitive rowing in Eastern European nations at both the local and national levels. Conversely, oarswomen in the West found that they were still limited in their opportunities and it would take decades before this noticeably changed.

Notes:

¹ Meuret, *FISA*, 9.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Robert J. Paddick, "Amateurism: An Idea of the Past of a Necessity for the Future?" *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* vol. III (1994), 3.

⁸ Robert J. Paddick, "Amateurism: An Idea of the Past of a Necessity for the Future?" *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* vol. III (1994), 4.

⁹ Robert J. Paddick, "Amateurism: An Idea of the Past of a Necessity for the Future?" *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* vol. III (1994), 5.

¹⁰ Allen Guttmann, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 96.

¹¹ Allen Guttmann, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 96.

¹² Meuret, *FISA*, 10.

¹³ See R. W. Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2002); Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Mangan and Park, From Fair Sex to Feminism*; Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*.

¹⁴ Werner K rbs, *Vom Sinn der Leibes bungen zur Zeit der Italienischen Renaissance*, ed. Wolfgang Decker (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1988), 26-27, quoted in Allen Guttmann, *Women's Sports*, 65-66.

¹⁵ Guttmann, *Women's Sports*, 65-66.

¹⁶ Wigglesworth, *A Social History of English Rowing*, 24.

¹⁷ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*; Guttmann, *Women's Sports*.

¹⁸ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*.

¹⁹ Gertrud Pfister, "The Medical Discourse on Female Physical Culture in Germany in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Journal of Sport History* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1990), 183.

²⁰ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 47.

²¹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 47.

²² Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press Issues, 1986), 74.

²³ Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press Issues, 1986), 74.

²⁴ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 169.

²⁵ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 336.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 337.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 336.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Matthew Stibbe, "Anti-Feminism, Nationalism and the German Right, 1914-1920: A Reappraisal," *German History* vol 20, no.2 (2002), 190.

³¹ Heinz K stner, "Frau und Sport," *Die Medizinische Welt* (1931): 791 found in Pfister, "The Medical Discourse of Female Physical Culture in Germany in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," 192.

³² Gertrud Pfister, "the Medical Discourse on female Physical Culture in Germany in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Journal of Sport History* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1990), 189.

³³ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 337.

³⁴ Dieterle, interview.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Shogan, *The Making of High-Performance Athletes*, 59.

³⁸ Mary H. Leigh and Th r se M. Bonin, "The Pioneering Role of Madame Alice Milliat and the FSFI in Establishing International Track and Field Competition for Women," *Journal of Sport History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1977), 73.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁰ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 131.

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- ⁴¹ Gigliola Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body: Sport, Submissive Women and Strong Mothers* (London: Routledge, 2004), 154.
- ⁴² Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 61.
- ⁴³ See Cahn, *Coming on Strong*; Guttmann, *Women's Sports*; Hall, *The Girl and the Game*.
- ⁴⁴ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 35.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.
- ⁴⁷ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 62.
- ⁴⁸ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 62-63.
- ⁴⁹ "Athletics for the Girls and Women of America," *Playground* (May 1923), 116-117 cited in Guttmann, *Women's Sports*, 138.
- ⁵⁰ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 66.
- ⁵¹ Palchikoff, "The Development of Women's Rowing in the United States."
- ⁵² Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 215.
- ⁵³ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 76.
- ⁵⁴ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 76.
- ⁵⁵ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 215.
- ⁵⁶ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 29.
- ⁵⁷ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*.
- ⁵⁸ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 215.
- ⁵⁹ Australian Rowing, "Australian Women's Rowing Council," <http://www.rowinghistory-aus.info/rowing-associations/rowing-australia/02-women's-council.html> retrieved 25 July 2005.
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- ⁶¹ Schneider, "Rowing," 952.
- ⁶² Richard Holt, "Women, Men and Sport in France, 1870-1914: An Introductory Survey," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1991), 123.
- ⁶³ WARA Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 27th July 1931. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Amy Gentry, "The Women's Amateur Rowing Association: The Early Days," *The Oarswoman: Official Bulletin of the Women's Amateur Rowing Association*, no. 1 (June 1950), 3. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ WARA Minutes of Meeting Held on 21 April 1925. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 77.
- ⁷¹ WARA Minutes of Meeting Held on 21 April 1925. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁷² Procès-Verbal du Congrès Ordinaire de la Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron, tenu à Milan le Mercredi 31 août 1938, p. 7. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland; and Solem, *The Rower's Almanac 2004-2005*, 145.
- ⁷³ Solem, *The Rower's Almanac 2004-2005*, 145.
- ⁷⁴ Deutscher Ruderverband, "German Rowing History – A Summary," http://site.drivnet.de/German_rowing_history_-_a_summ.287.0.html retrieved 27 March 2005.
- ⁷⁵ Procès-Verbal du Congrès Ordinaire de la Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron, tenu à Milan le Mercredi 31 août 1938, p. 7. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 171.
- ⁷⁸ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 171.
- ⁷⁹ Procès-Verbal du Congrès Ordinaire de la Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron, tenu à Milan le Mercredi 31 août 1938, p. 7. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*

- ⁸² Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 145.
- ⁸³ Procès-Verbal du Congrès Ordinaire de la Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron, tenu à Milan le Mercredi 31 août 1938, p. 7. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland
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- ⁸⁶ FISA Women's Rowing Commission, "Inquiry for Women's Rowing."
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ Amy Gentry, "Women's International Events at Macon, France," *The Oarswoman: Official Bulletin of The Women's Amateur Rowing Association*, no.3 (June 1951), 2. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁸⁹ WARA Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on the 31st March 1947. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁹⁰ WARA Minutes of Committee Meeting held on Monday 24th January 1949. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
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- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁹³ Jennifer Wesely, "Negotiating Gender: Bodybuilding and the Natural/Unnatural Continuum." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 18(2001), 166.
- ⁹⁴ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 169.
- ⁹⁵ Angela Teja and Marco Impiglia, "Italy," in *European Cultures in Sport: Examining the Nations and Regions*, ed. James Riordan and Arnd Krüger (Great Britain: Intellect Books, 2003), 145.
- ⁹⁶ Gigliola Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body: Sport, Submissive Women and Strong Mothers* (London: Routledge, 2004), 4.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ Teja, "Italy," 142.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 145-146.
- ¹⁰¹ Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body*, 75.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰³ Guttmann, *Women's Sport*, 136.
- ¹⁰⁴ Martha H. Verbrugge, "Recreating the Body: Women's Physical Education and the Science of Sex Differences in America, 1900-1940," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 71, no.2 (1997), 277.
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- ¹⁰⁶ J. A. Mangan, "The Social Construction of Victorian Femininity: Emancipation, Education and Exercise," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6, no.1 (May 1989), 5.
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- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 22-23.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ Barbara Fenner, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 28 July 2004, Banyolas, Spain.
- ¹¹¹ Although rowing was included on the programme for the Olympic Games in 1896, high winds caused the cancellation of the regatta.
- ¹¹² Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 339; Meuret, *FISA 1892-1992*, 101.
- ¹¹³ Meuret, *FISA 1892-1992*, 101.
- ¹¹⁴ Amy Gentry, "What Great Britain and Her Rowing Women can Learn From Macon," *The Oarswoman: Official Bulletin of The Women's Amateur Rowing Association*, no.4 (October 1951), 6. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
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- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁸ Procès-verbal du Premier Congrès Extraordinaire à Montreux les Jeudi 28 et Vendredi 29 mai 1953, 10. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²⁷ Guttman, *Women's Sports*, 155.

¹²⁸ James Riordan and Hart Cantelon, "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," in *European Cultures in Sport: Examining the Nations and Regions*, ed. James Riordan and Arnd Krüger (Great Britain: Intellect Books, 2003), 89.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 90-96

¹³⁰ Victor Peppard and James Riordan, *Playing Politics: Soviet Sport Diplomacy to 1992 (Russian and East European Studies)*, (Greenwich: Jai Press Inc., 1993), 19.

¹³¹ Gertrud Pfister, "Sport for Women," in *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, ed. Roland Naul and Ken Hardman, International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport Series, (London: Routledge, 2002), 171.

¹³² Riordan and Cantelon, "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," 95.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Pfister, "Sport for Women," 172.

¹³⁵ Procès-verbal du Premier Congrès Extraordinaire à Montreux les Jeudi 28 et Vendredi 29 mai 1953, 41. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³⁷ DeFrantz, interview.

¹³⁸ Procès-verbal du Premier Congrès Extraordinaire à Montreux les Jeudi 28 et Vendredi 29 mai 1953, 42. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

¹³⁹ Meuret, *FISA*, 107.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

¹⁴¹ Amy Gentry, "First European Women's Rowing Championships: Amsterdam August, 1954,) *The Oarswoman: Official Bulletin of The Women's Amateur Rowing Association*, no.10 (October 1954), 8. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.

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Chapter 5

Struggling To Achieve Equality at Home

Introduction

After the introduction of women's events at the 1954 European championships, international rowing administrators took a step back to allow affiliated rowing nations time to adjust. In Eastern Bloc nations, women's competitive rowing flourished because sport was seen as a way to promote Communist political ideology and female athletes were the perfect tools through which this could be accomplished. Eastern European sporting administrators were unconcerned with aesthetic dogma that plagued the progress of women's competitive sport in Western nations, which helped Eastern European athletes dominate women's international sport throughout the Cold War. To ensure their international success, all levels of Eastern European sport were regulated and controlled by the national governments.

However, in the West female athletes were not considered equal. Women's athletic achievements were often considered inferior and unimportant compared with men's. Female athletes received less press coverage and the coverage that they did receive often explicitly included stereotypical sexist undertones. Rowing in many parts of the Western world was considered a bourgeois sport, connected with the middle and upper classes, and 'ladies' of these social classes were considered too delicate and physically inferior; their participation was therefore assumed to be inappropriate. The combination of the sports association with the higher social echelons, the physical demands placed on rowers, and the sheer cost of equipment resulted in numerous Western international oarswomen struggling to access the financial assistance and

equipment that men's crews enjoyed. At the local level oarswomen had to negotiate to gain access to the clubs and university rowing programs that were available to men.

This chapter examines oarswomen's experiences in competitive rowing at the local and national level after women's rowing had been introduced to the international racing program. To begin, this chapter analyses the positive effect that the introduction of women's international races had on women's rowing in many Eastern European countries. In contrast, many oarswomen in the West still faced inequality and lack of support at both the local and national levels. It was only with the help of second-wave liberal feminist initiatives in the 1970s that federal legislation and programs were implemented to prevent sexual discrimination. This dramatically helped to promote and advance women's sporting opportunities.

Women's Rowing After the 1954 FISA Women's European Rowing Championships

Having gained access to the European championships, local and national rowing administrators, both women and men, continued their efforts to introduce new opportunities for oarswomen at home. Between 1954 and 1973, a number of national rowing federations introduced national championships for oarswomen including: South Africa and Australia in 1955; Sweden in 1957; Belgium in 1959; the United States, Croatia, and Korea in 1964; Burma in 1966; New Zealand in 1967; Algeria in 1968; and Canada in 1972.¹ These newly established women's national championships helped inspire more national rowing federations to send women's crews to compete at the European championships. Thus, between 1954 and 1973, the number of countries competing at the women's European championships rose from fourteen to nineteen, and the number of entries increased from thirty-four to fifty-three.² Although several

countries and national rowing federations became interested in women's competitive rowing, oarswomen's experiences often varied drastically from one region to the next. Women's rowing, and women's sport participation in general, were supported differently in Eastern European countries and in Western nations throughout the Cold War. In the former Communist nations, women's competitive sport was widely encouraged and female and male athletes had access to the same resources and financial support. Female athletes in the West still struggled to achieve equitable access to facilities, equipment, coaching, and financial support.

Women's Competitive Rowing Behind the Iron Curtain

Rowing in Eastern Europe had steadily increased in popularity throughout most of the twentieth century. Although socialist leaders originally rejected bourgeois sport, the potential to use international sporting achievement as a vehicle to communicate state ideology at home and on an international basis took precedence.³ As Dennis observed:

Sport was expected ... to contribute ... to the development of key characteristics of the socialist personality such as discipline, honesty, a collective spirit and a willingness to defend the homeland. Furthermore, the successes in international competition and a high level of popular participation in sport were intended to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system over capitalism.⁴

Specifically, communist leaders regarded sport as a spotlight of world attention to demonstrate the superiority of their ideology over leading capitalist nations, particularly the United States.⁵ The regulation of sport received high priority in Eastern Bloc nations and federal governments took it upon themselves to fund amply competitive sport during the Cold War. For example, the German Democratic Republic (DDR) developed a centralised governmental bureaucracy that invested two billion American dollars a year into sport.⁶ This was a staggering amount compared to its Western counterpart, the

Federal Republic of Germany (FRD), a country that was four times the size of the DDR and spent a mere seventy million on sport each year.⁷ The support Eastern Bloc athletes received went beyond finances alone. Elite and potentially elite athletes became part of the Eastern Bloc sporting machines and were privileged to a significantly better life than those who were not involved in international sport. Athletes and their families were provided with cars, better homes, education, and access to international travel, something that was not available to the general population. Dodd has indicated:

...athletes and coaches would receive cars and apartments in exchange for medals, with first – second – and third-place finishes earning much higher rewards than fourth – through sixth-place finishes. While average East German citizens waited five years for an apartment and 15 years for a car, athletes and coaches found themselves receiving new keys to jangle after only one or two years.⁸

Former East German oarswoman Jutta Lau discussed her privileged status as an international athlete, *“I lived in East Germany and so it was not possible to go to Canada as a normal person, so it was important, I was an important person to come to Canada [to compete internationally] as a German woman.”*⁹ International travel for East Germany’s general population was strictly regulated and athletes had the luxury of travel to nations that were otherwise inaccessible.

The development and maintenance of these Eastern Bloc sporting machines were meticulously implemented by each of the nations’ sport organisation. The Deutscher Turnund Sportbund (DTSB), the DDR’s most important sport organisation, “provided sport for the masses through nationally organized clubs with branches at workplaces.”¹⁰ Magdalinski has suggested that physical activity in East Germany was important “for inculcating socialist values in the GDR and thus provided opportunities to make young people into ideal socialist and East German citizens.”¹¹ Yet, Guttman and Dennis have

argued that the DTSB's mandate failed to provide opportunities for those outside of the elite sport system.¹² Sport participation for the working class and the "peasants" was severely neglected and "east German women ... rarely found time for sports participation."¹³ Despite the DTSB's neglect of those without the potential for international sport achievement, this program was phenomenally successful in producing elite athletes who competed at the Olympic Games and international championships. The DTSB state-run education programs were structured around the training and competition needs of each sport.¹⁴

Talented young girls and women were central to the development of the Eastern Bloc sporting machine and provided evidence of the expectation of the athletic equality of the sexes during a time when that was not apparent in the West.¹⁵ Pfister has argued that "above all it was the top performances achieved by women, 'the diplomats in tracksuits', that brought to the GDR the prestige of a world-class sports nation."¹⁶ Female athletes made up a large proportion of communist teams compared to their Western counterparts. Riordan has noted:

At the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, for example, Soviet sportswomen made up over a third (35%) of the Soviet team (overall women comprised 20.58% of all competitors) and contributed 36 of the 125 Soviet medals (almost 30%). The women of East Germany made up 40% of the GDR team and won more than half their team's gold and silver medals. by contrast, women comprised just over a quarter (26%) of the United States contingent, or 112 out of 425 competitors. British and West German women comprised slightly over a fifth (20.6% and 21% respectively) of their nation's teams; and French women less than a fifth (18.3%) of theirs.¹⁷

State sport representatives who visited schools and performed a series of anthropometric tests and measurements on young children administered recruitment of these potential female athletes. Sport historian Arndt Krüger has indicated that the scientific processes

of talent identification that were used in the GDR after 1968 were “the same anthropometric procedures developed by the [Nazi] racial scientists prior to 1945.”¹⁸ Dodd has explained that, “students who met the exacting standards laid down by the men with the tape-measures were invited to attend one of the twenty-seven sports’ boarding schools.”¹⁹ Lau was recruited as a child and participated in track and field when she first attended the Kinderyouth School in Brandenburg. When she failed to flourish as a track and field athlete, she was directed to the rowing program at the school and prospered there. This practice of recruitment was popular throughout Eastern Europe. Former Bulgarian oarswoman Svetla Otzetova remembered how she was first introduced to the sport of rowing:

...the system in my country (Bulgaria), at the time was coaches were going to schools and talking to the peoples and asking, explaining [to] them ... about the sport and ... [asked if] they would be interested to come and try. And we were a group of twenty [girls] maybe.²⁰

Both Lau and Otzetova indicated that sporting officials looked for certain criteria in children, criteria that would ensure their future sporting success. Otzetova remembered that the coaches were initially uninterested in her becoming a rower and stated:

I was too small and they just didn't want me, they though there was no potential with me. And they were openly telling me this, "What should we do with this mouse?" [I thought] I will show you (laughing). I mean I didn't decide [to row] this way, but I decided I would try and see what happens.²¹

She in fact did prove to skeptics that she had the ability to be a successful international oarswoman, as she won six world championship and Olympic medals throughout her thirteen years on the Bulgarian national women’s rowing team.²²

Once athletes had been identified, children spent numerous hours a week participating in sport. After the initial development phase, young athletes began to

specialise in their respective sports and it was at this point that educational programs were specifically tailored for the needs of the individual athletes. For example, rowing in East Germany required thirty hours of practice per week, and sport schools ensured that time was allotted for athletes to attend training camps that were held prior to major competitions.²³ Dodd has explained that elite athletes in socialist nations, especially the former DDR, were expected to log between 1300 and 1600 training hours each year.

It was not only sport schools that were expected to comply with an athlete's training regime. Factories and branches of state security were also expected to support the athletes who had been sent to work for them.²⁴ In fact, if an athlete deviated from the established socialist sport system, the athlete was reprimanded. Otzetova recalled that during her early years in international rowing in Bulgaria, she was working towards becoming an architect and was required to attend a professional school, as this academic field was not offered at the sport schools in her country. This became a problematic situation with her coach. *"It was really difficult because the coach, the head coach was not happy. He wanted, he was telling me ... I should make a decision, either sport or architecture."*²⁵ Because Otzetova was enrolled in a professional school, the institution did not follow the state regulations assigned to sport schools. As a result she missed many training camps and was forced to train on her own. Undeterred, Otzetova continued her training alone and still managed to secure a position on the Bulgarian national team. *"This is the good thing with rowing, there is a finish line. It's not the judge deciding you do this more and good or bad or whatever ... So, if I have an objective result, they cannot deny that I am [good enough]."*²⁶

Although several of the former socialist nations adopted similar recruitment, training, and educational programs for athletes, Dodd has argued that with the exception of the Romanian women's rowing program, no other country was able to achieve the success that East Germans did through their programs in Leipzig and Berlin:

For the system required not just money and thoroughness, but a structure backed by a political will to ensure that it was carried out. The background to this is the German tradition of linking sport and physical education to nationalism and political organization.²⁷

It was this system that helped the DDR women's rowing team win one-hundred and twenty-one medals (of a possible one-hundred and forty-two), seventy gold, thirty-four silver, and seventeen bronze, at FISA regulated European, world, and Olympic championships between 1966 and 1990.²⁸

Communist female sports bodies were in service of the nation beyond the roles of wives and mothers. These female athletes became champion vehicles for communist ideology through their international sporting success. This desire to promote political ideology through sport often trumped traditional sexist and heterosexist opinions of the appropriate and desirable female body. It became more important for female athletes to lift weights than wear makeup. Strong, muscular, athletic women were celebrated as heroines and icons, not Amazons or freaks in Communist countries. Lenskyj noted that the narrow definition of heterosexual femininity did not apply to Eastern European athletes.²⁹ These women were "capable of viewing themselves as attractive, sexual women, not by their measurements, but because of who they are as human beings."³⁰

Women's Competitive Rowing in the West

Despite the introduction of women's national championships in several Western nations, many barriers still existed for oarswomen. As evident in a number of sports, the

introduction of women's national or international athletic competitions did not necessarily result in female athletes gaining unrestricted access to facilities, equipment, or funding. Hargreaves explained:

When women played in separate spheres from the men, it was relatively easy for them to determine their own progress, but when they required the same facilities as men, they were inevitably discriminated against. In numerous sports contexts, men held the power to stop women's progress because they monopolized resources and held controlling and decision-making positions.³¹

Throughout North America, Western Europe, and parts of the Southern Hemisphere, oarsmen maintained a superior level of importance over female rowers. For example, at British universities with historical rowing traditions, such as Oxford and Cambridge, oarswomen had access to fewer boats, inferior coaching, inadequate financing, and less access to water training sessions.³² Participants indicated that men's crews that competed at the international level received the majority of the available finances, had the best coaches, and the best equipment. On the other hand, women's teams that competed at international championships received very little financial assistance, if any at all, and often had to find their own equipment and coach. For example, Ellis explained that the first time she competed at the European championships in 1966, the British women found themselves unprepared for competition:

... we didn't have an eight for [international] women [in Great Britain], there was no money to buy a new eight, [and] we had no boat. In fact, the boatman [from the club] next door cut one of the school eights in half [and] made it sectional for us.³³

She explained that although she and her crew were grateful for the assistance from the neighbouring club and its boatman, the boat they acquired was much too large for the British crew and thus inhibited their performance. After she had experienced these less than ideal conditions, Ellis indicated that she was determined to see that such a situation

would never happen again to a British women's international crew. Following the competition while they were on the return flight from Amsterdam to London, Ellis approached the team manager and said to her, "*I'm going to do something about this, I'm not going to see [other] women experience being so ill-equipped [for international competition]*".³⁴

Chuter also discussed the limited support that she received from Great Britain during her five years on the international racing scene, "*there was no support of any sort, or no financial support.*"³⁵ As a young female rower in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Chuter relied on her family to finance her rowing career. "*My father had to buy the boat, pay for me to go [to competitions], and this that, and the other.*"³⁶ Despite the lack of assistance, Chuter managed to be quite successful at the international level. In 1960 at the age of seventeen, she competed at her first European championships where she placed forth in the women's single sculls. In 1962, she achieved her best result on the international racing circuit and captured the silver medal at the European championships. She continued racing for Great Britain until 1964 and then was forced to retire from racing at the age of twenty-two. Chuter explained that she found herself unable to continue her competitive international rowing career because of the financial strain it was placing not only on herself, but her family as well.³⁷

In the 1970s, the British women's national rowing team faced substantial gender inequalities. For example, in 1975 the British Women's Rowing Committee (WRC), a subsidiary of the ARA which had taken control over the WARA in 1962, looked to solve the problem of the lack of adequate shower facilities for the women's international program.³⁸ The oarswomen used the very small women's washroom and were faced with

the option to either use the women's facilities at neighbouring clubs, or install a "detachable shower fitment."³⁹ The British men's program on the other hand had access to the permanent men's shower facilities in the ARA boathouse, as the clubhouse was originally designed to accommodate male members only.

Although women's rowing in the UK was increasing in popularity, there was much that needed to be done in order for oarswomen to gain equality. Chuter noted that she and her fellow female coaches and rowing administrators were faced with a dilemma; they wanted to actively promote women's rowing, but like their predecessors, they recognised that they needed influential men to be their public voices.

*I said "look, I think women's development in this country is not going to be helped by me leading it because I'm a female." And I was actually suggesting that if they had male selectors and/or more male coaches at that stage in the game, it would be more accepted than females ... waving the flag for the females ... and as soon as you had a few people on the ARA council, males, speaking up for women's rowing, then people would switch on and listen again."*⁴⁰

She admitted that if she were the only person to continually push the position for women's rowing, the male administrators would say, "'oh, it's Penny Chuter again, you know we've heard all those arguments before,' and they would stop listening."⁴¹ She argued that it was when men were "arguing on the behalf of women, and against the men sometimes, ya know, it began to bring change in, so that was good, that was healthy."⁴²

Unequal federal funding and administrative recognition were not the only indications of oarswomen's inferiority; the press also more readily acknowledged oarsmen's international success. Smith indicated that in Canada during the 1970s, Sport Canada, the national sport governing body for all sports in the country, equally financed both men and women based on international competition results. Because of the international success that she and her pair partner, Elisabeth Craig, had experienced, they

had received financial assistance from the federal government each year, “Betty [Craig] and I won a medal every year ... and it was, sometimes the only medal” won by the Canadian rowing team.⁴³ Despite their international achievements, the Canadian media frequently overlooked the pair:

It was always a big thing if the men even made the finals at the world championships and we wouldn't get quite the same [attention]. I remember seeing that in the Toronto Globe and Mail, that the men's pair had made the finals [and] it was huge, or there would be a big article on the men going to the Henley [Royal Regatta], which in those days was not an international level event. Yet, there wouldn't be a word about the women winning a world championship medal.⁴⁴

Feminist sport sociologists have argued that the lack of representation has undermined the “promotion of women’s sporting events or sportswomen as legitimate athletes.”⁴⁵

Thompson has indicated that liberal feminists have:

... lobbied to increase the media profile of sportswomen, to give equal recognition to their achievements. It was argued that this would lead to greater rewards for sportswoman and heighten their visibility as potential role models to promote increased female participation in physical activity.⁴⁶

We now know that the problem with women’s sport coverage lies deeper than the disparities in the amount of media attention given to women’s sport and that the quality of media coverage must also be examined.⁴⁷

Even though Canadian oarswomen received conflicting levels of support within their country, Smith recognised that she and her team-mates were far better off than oarswomen in parts of the Southern Hemisphere:

I remember going down to New Zealand and Australia in 1978 and the men there were very friendly to us but some of that I think was because we were all pretty girls so they didn't seem to mind us being around. But, if their sisters tried to row, it seemed to be a different story. There were a couple of guys in particular I remember who were very much against women taking up their sport in their country. Maybe it was because they were competing with them for funding, I don't know but it was really shocking. There were a couple of women who fought their way through the system. I remember a single [sculler] who made it to

*Europe for a number of racing seasons but I also recall her telling us how difficult it was. I really admired her tenacity.*⁴⁸

These situations were not uncommon. In 1975, FISA delegate Paolo de Aloja, President of the FIC, indicated to FISA President Thomas Keller that Italian women were restricted in their participation in competitive rowing for health reasons under the country's "sanitary law" (medical reasons).⁴⁹ After learning of this discrimination, Keller had his secretary general write to the FIC to find out why oarswomen had been banned from international competition.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, no formal reasons were provided by de Aloja. Although many elite oarswomen throughout the Western world faced obstacles in their quest for international sporting success, women at the club and university levels faced even greater challenges.

In much of the Western world during the 1960s, 1970s and in some instances during the 1980s, some local clubs and university rowing programs still prohibited female membership. For example, Dieterle recalled that in West Germany, during what she referred to as "*formal times*" (during the Cold War), the elite Berliner Ruderklub had a sign posted outside of the boathouse that read "*dogs and women are not allowed to enter the boathouse area.*"⁵¹ This was a club that was recognised as one of the premier development centres for the FRD national rowing team. The club's complete prohibition of oarswomen signalled to the rest of the country that the "weaker sex" was not welcome in their masculine sporting domain; a stark contrast from how oarswomen were treated on the opposite side of the Berlin Wall.

British oarswomen had also traditionally been banned from gaining membership at men's private rowing clubs and thus formed their own women's only rowing clubs. This tradition of women's only clubs continued until the early 1980s:

I was introduced to it (rowing) at another club because at that time in Great Britain ... in the 1960s, [because] right through until the late '70s, early '80s, all our clubs were women only clubs. It wasn't until later that women actually became women's sections of men's clubs. Our own club became a women's section of the men's club. But at that time we were a women's only club. So I joined an open ladies club in 1960.⁵²

As Ellis indicated, women's clubs in the United Kingdom eventually saw some benefits that came with affiliation with neighbouring men's clubs, including space, access to coaching and equipment.⁵³

Well what happened at my own club was our government had a rowing club on the tideway near Barnes Bridge. It was bigger than they needed although they had a strong men's club, there were only a handful of women in the women's club using the changing facilities which allowed my own and another women's club to share with them. We'd got too big, we had three eights, started with one and then we started to grow, it got very tight in changing facilities. No room to expand, no money to expand at the time. So ... (we) approached one of the men's clubs to see if we could amalgamate, initially it was just to use the facilities and what happened was they said "well okay" you can become our women's section" ... My club did this through some of our members who had married men from Twickenham Rowing Club, who we got to make an approach for us, it was agreed we could put our boats there and become the women's section of Twickenham.⁵⁴

She explained that the transitional period when the men's and women's clubs aligned was a difficult time as both women and men were concerned that the other gender would take control over rowing for both sexes:

... there was ... anxiety ... [amongst] the men that the women would come in and take over. And there was an anxiety from the women that the men would want to use all their equipment. You know the women had worked hard to get these new boats and [and there was a concern] that the men would go out and wreck these boats and not care.⁵⁵

Even after the men's and women clubs amalgamated and men's private clubs opened their doors for female membership, the men retained the right to assign boats to each crew. British rowing journalist Rachel Quarrell speculated that even in the twenty-first century "in probably fifty percent of clubs in the UK, the women will not get first choice

*of boats (equipment), even if their top boats (crews) [are] better than the men's."*⁵⁶

Despite the fact that she disagreed with this inequitable system, she shrugged her shoulders and stated, *"But that's part of the British system, men have always come first, really. It's very, it's a big hold over from the Victorian Era."*⁵⁷

In the United States and Australia, oarswomen experienced similar forms of exclusion to their British sisters. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, several private colleges and universities had begun to introduce women's rowing programs which were often a subsidiary of the already established men's programs. The original mandate of many of these programs was not to create a space where female athletes could develop a strong physical frame in a competitive environment, nor to help propel oarswomen onto their national rowing team. Rather, some women's programs were initially designed to provide young women with a new non-competitive athletic experience, one that had largely been closed to them before. The founders of these programs reassured potential participants that they would not be masculinized and would maintain their femininity, because the common perception throughout the world rowing community was that the physical demands of the sport inevitably fostered the development of enormous muscles and masculine characteristics. For example, in 1971, Amy Richler, one of the founders of the Princeton women's rowing program, printed an advertisement that encouraged women to join the newly established program which read:

You don't have to be an Amazon and crew won't make you into one. It will make you look a lot better though, and feel better. To be good it takes a certain amount of natural stubbornness. The way I figure it, you wouldn't be at Princeton if you like to do things the easy way.⁵⁸

Other women's programs were initiated as a form of comic relief for the men's programs.

Former United States of America international oarswoman Debby DeAngelis discussed

her first rowing experience at the University of California Santa Barbara. At this school, women were not permitted to row, but an alternative program existed called the "Shell and Oar," a sorority that supported the men's rowing program.

... it was very social. They, I'm not sure how much, but the men voted on what pretty girls they wanted around (laughing). But I went ahead and went to all of their races and kind of hung out with all of the crew guys. At the time it was the social thing to do. Now (laughing), ask me now (laughing), oh my gosh we did what! We baked cookies and were social hostess at their regattas, and they let us do that and get in the boat once a year.⁵⁹

Dissatisfied with their position within the men's rowing program, DeAngelis worked to introduce a women's competitive program at the university by negotiating with the men's coaches to allow women access to the men's equipment. She was also able to secure help from the men's freshmen coach who agreed to help start the program and coach the women during the initial stages.⁶⁰

Former Australian oarswoman Barbara Fenner had a similar experience to DeAngelis with her first university women's rowing program at the University of Melbourne:

... what they had was this annual event for rowing, but they thought, "oh let's let the women have a go." But the rules were you just had to hop in the boat on the day [of the race], having never rowed before, and try to get up to the 500m mark ... And that was supposedly [fun especially for the men] ... watching and having fun, which, was all good fun for us at the time, but in hind sight (laughing) was a totally wrong thing to be doing. It was just shocking (laughing).⁶¹

Rather than allow this patriarchal program to continue, Fenner took a stand and forced the men's program to allow the women to practice for this annual race. Her actions, although controversial at the time, helped establish a women's intercollegiate rowing program at the university.

The initiative that these women took in the 1970s to promote women's sport participation was not uncommon. Throughout North America, Western Europe, and parts of the Southern Hemisphere, female athletes became increasingly interested in competitive sporting opportunities. Yet, unlike the female sport pioneers of the 1920s and 1930s, athletic women of the 1970s looked for more than access; they wanted equality and many women fought for female athletes to have equal opportunities to their male counterparts.

Gender Equity Legislation and Women's Rowing

During the 1960s and early 1970s, throughout parts of the Western world people fought against the social inequalities that existed and struggled to enact significant social change in terms of civil rights, women's rights, and peace movements. Liberal feminists sought for reform to provide women "access to traditionally male structures, and to provide equality of opportunity once inside."⁶² Cahn has argued that:

Currents of political reform, women's activism, and cultural innovation fostered a renewed excitement about women's sport and an awareness of its feminist implications, an atmosphere much like that of the post – World War I era. This time, however, the disputed concept of a woman's right to athletic enjoyment became, for the first time, codified in law.⁶³

Liberal feminist activists argued that the only way to achieve equity was "through the development and use of legal and social policies, such as Human rights and Equal Opportunity legislation."⁶⁴

In the United States, some groups of citizens openly protested against these inequalities and demanded that the federal government take initiative and establish legislation that prohibited any form of discrimination against human beings. For example, in 1970, United States Congressional Representative Edith Green chaired a

series of hearings for the Special House Subcommittee on Education to assess the level of sex discrimination in education institutions across the country and found that schools overtly discriminated against female students. Green's commission set forth to draft federal legislation that stipulated, "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."⁶⁵ Cahn argued that "without even mentioning the word "athletics," Title IX ushered in what many believed to be a "revolution" in women's sport."⁶⁶ For intercollegiate athletic programs, this meant that academic institutions that offered men's sport programs were required by law to provide opportunities for women in proportion to the number of female students at the school.⁶⁷ Women's athletic programs were, theoretically, expected to receive the same financial support as their male counterparts. However, the enormous disparity of financial support received by women's programs made this equalization problematic. Cahn has noted that in 1974:

At a typical mid-western university in the Big Ten Conference, men's athletics received thirteen hundred dollars for every dollar spent on the women's program. A mid-Atlantic university allocated nineteen hundred dollars for women's sport while granting men's athletics over two million dollars. On the West Coast, Washington State University appropriated less than one percent of its two-million-dollar athletic budget for women's sports.

These major disparities signified that women's intercollegiate sport was of less importance to academic institutions. Athletic directors, most of whom were men, were reluctant to give the money they had allotted to the men's sport to women's. DeFrantz remembered that even after the enactment of federal legislation in the United States, female athletes still struggled for equity:

About access, and opportunity, we had, you know in the US we have this Title IX, which basically says equal opportunity for everyone and sport, cleverly was found not to be, ... the colleges/university system, you would just assume there was a [rowing] program for men and a boathouse and showers and all those things. And the women pretty much had to demand them.”⁶⁸

In the spring of 1976 a number of Yale university oarswomen did just that.

Yale's women's rowing program was established in 1972 and by 1975 the women's team had become highly competitive with a number of women selected to race for the United States of America's women's national rowing team. Despite their success, the school had failed to address the issue of changing and shower facilities for the oarswomen. The men's program, conversely, had access to heated changing and shower facilities and used them on a daily basis after practice, while the women were left to sit on the buses, often in the freezing cold, that transported the athletes back to campus and wait for the men to finish their showers and prepare for school. As a result, several of the members of the 1975/76 women's team became ill and injured. Despite their regular requests for even a trailer to change in, the athletic department did not respond. On 3 March 1976, led by their team captain Chris Ernst, the women's team marched into the office of Yale's Women's Athletic Administrator Mrs. Barnett, removed their tops and revealed their bare torsos on which they had scrolled "TITLE IX" across their backs and chests. With them, the women had brought a reporter from *The New York Times* to document their protest. While the team stood there in absolute silence, Ernst read the letter they had crafted:

Mrs. Barnett:

These are the bodies Yale is exploiting. We have come here today to make clear how unprotected we are, to show graphically what we are being exposed to. These are normal human bodies. On a day like today the rain freezes on our skin. Then we sit on a bus for half an hour as the ice melts into our sweats to meet the sweat that has soaked our clothes underneath. We sit for half an hour chilled ...

half a dozen of us are sick now, and in two days we will begin training twice a day, subjecting ourselves to this twice everyday. No effective action has been taken and no matter what we hear, it doesn't make these bodies warmer, or dryer or less prone to sickness. We can't accept any excuses, nor can we trust to normal channels of complaint, since the need for lockers for the Women's Crew has existed since last spring. We are using you and your office because you are the symbol of Women's Athletics at Yale; we're using this method to express our urgency. We have taken this action absolutely without our coach's knowledge. He has done all he can to get us some relief, and none has come. He ordered the trailer when the plans for real facilities fell through, and he informed you four times of the need to get a variance to make it useable, but none was obtained. We fear retribution against him, but we are, as you can see, desperate. We are not just healthy young things in blue and white uniforms who perform feats of strength for Yale in the nice spring weather; we are not just statistics on your win column. We're human and being treated as less than such. There has been a lack of concern and competence on your part. Your only answer to us is the immediate provision of use of the trailer, however inadequate that maybe. Yale Women's Crew 3/3/76⁶⁹

Although few women went to the extent of the Yale women's rowing team to gain the attention of their athletic administrators, the protest was widely recognised and appreciated. The message was clear, women were not willing to idly sit by and wait for gender equity to happen to them.

Like their neighbours to the south, the Canadian federal government also made advances to address gender inequalities. In the late 1960s, the Liberal government established a commission to evaluate the level of sexual discrimination that existed in the country and in 1970 the "Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada" was published. This document indicated, among other findings, that there was a lack of equal sporting opportunities for girls in school programs.⁷⁰ The report made two direct recommendations regarding this topic, one of which was that provinces and territories move to make a consolidated effort to "review their policies and practices to ensure that school programmes provide girls with equal opportunities with boys to participate in athletic and sports activities."⁷¹

Unlike the American government, the Canadian government did not use the findings from the commission to establish federal legislation that prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender. In fact, the recommendations provided by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada resulted in no efforts to federally or provincially reprimand schools athletic programs or sporting clubs that did not provide equitable access to both genders.

Although neither federal nor regional legislation was formulated, in 1981, under the direction of Abby Hoffman, Director General of Sport Canada, Sport Canada formulated and adopted a *Policy on Women's Sport*, which read:

To attain equality for women in sport. Equality implies that women at all levels of the sport system should have an equal opportunity to participate. Equality is not necessarily meant to imply women wish to participate in the same activities as men, but rather to indicate that activities of their choice should be provided and administered in a fair and unbiased environment. At all levels of the sport system, equal opportunities must exist for women and men to compete, coach, officiate or administer sport. The purpose of this goal is to create an environment in which no one is forced into a pre-determined role or status because of gender.⁷²

Sport Canada also pressed national sport organisations to include strategies for gender equity within their own mandate.⁷³

Across the Atlantic, legislators in the United Kingdom also worked to prohibit sex discrimination. The UK Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), which was passed in 1975, made it illegal to discriminate against an individual on the basis of gender "in the general contexts of employment and education; in the provision of goods, facilities and services; and in the disposal of premises."⁷⁴ However, as Hargreaves has explained, this legislation was flawed.⁷⁵ Sections twenty-nine and thirty-four of the SDA exempted private and single-sex sport clubs from this legislation, allowing them to continue to "operate 'overtly sexist policies and discriminatory practices without legal penalty'.⁷⁶

For example, Leander Club, considered by many to be the most prestigious rowing club in the United Kingdom, maintained their male only membership policy until 1997.⁷⁷ Although women were not permitted to be members, they were frequently recruited by club members to steer the shells:

*... I'd been going around for years being told by exactly the likes of the Oxford Blues ... "you know you can't be a member. I know you've qualified, but you can't be a member, we don't take women." And this was interesting because once ... [in] a while when they were desperate they'd get on the phone and want me to go down and cox for an outing, you know, it happens. Particularly when the era of the men's squad ... [the men's coxswain] would ring up and say, "shit can't get down there, my car's buggered. Here's Rachel's number, call her up," because I live closer. So that happened for quite a while, it was quite interesting to be told that I couldn't be a member.*⁷⁸

The primary reason Leander's club officials finally agreed to allow women to become members of this socially elite club in 1997 was to gain access to national funding. The boathouse, which was originally built at the turn of the twentieth century, required extensive renovation work and in order to receive financial assistance from Sport England, Leander was required to comply with their equal opportunities policies and open its membership to include women. Initially there were four women who were elected members; among them were Princess Anne and Di Ellis.⁷⁹ Ellis spoke enthusiastically about her involvement with Leander:

*I felt pleased to be invited and I always make a point to go to their AGM (Annual General Meeting) every year. I've never missed since I was elected ... because many men did it (gave women membership) for the right reasons, they felt women should be part of it (the club). And for them, not for those who were doing it for the money or for whatever other reasons were given, because there was a grant involved.*⁸⁰

Ellis was well aware that specific women had been hand-selected to become the club's first female members and implied that these were women who would not, ironically, "rock the boat."⁸¹ Although Chuter herself has an impressive international rowing

resume and has been actively involved in international rowing throughout her career in Great Britain, she was not one of the original four women selected for membership at Leander. She admitted that she was politically excluded because of her role as the ARA's chief coach:

*So I was perceived, I guess by Leander as being anti-Leander [because of my decisions as chief coach], which I'm not, I'm now a member. So I wasn't one of the first four, but a few men got quite scruffy and came up to me and said "we're going to propose you, will you join?" ...[I said] "Well, if, if you want to make a stand, okay." So I'm now a member of Leander [Club]. So I was then the fifth one.*⁸²

The inclusion of women into Leander Club, although not directly negotiated for by feminists, was a result of federal gender equity legislation that stemmed from the work of second-wave liberal feminists. The increased sporting opportunities for many female athletes in the West that resulted from the early negotiations of liberal feminists were significant accomplishments, but these gains also came at a price.

With the help of gender equity initiatives in the Western world, women's sporting opportunities steadily increased in the latter half of the 1970s, with an influx of funding which resulted in a form of professionalisation. Women's sport, including rowing, gradually came under the jurisdiction of male sporting administrators, as women traded the power of sport governance to gain access to competition, funding, and equipment. Additionally, this professionalisation of women's sport signalled to administrators that they needed to hire the most qualified people to coach women's teams because women's sporting success became important. For example, after the introduction of Title IX in the United States, women's intercollegiate sport rose in importance and fewer female coaches worked with women's teams than before the enactment of this legislation.⁸³ However, currently in intercollegiate rowing in the United States, more women are

coaching than ever before, yet fewer than fifty percent of those coaching women's crews are in fact female coaches. Traditionally, those who have been considered the most qualified to take on the task of leading the now significant women's teams have been men. This trade of control for access has resulted in female coaches and administrators having to negotiate to regain some of the power they once held over women's sport and is further discussed in Chapter 7.

Summary

The introduction of women's events into the program of the European championships helped to solidify the importance of women's rowing in Eastern Europe. Federal governments invested money in women's rowing and oarswomen became "ambassadors in track suits" who demonstrated to Western sport administrators that not only where elite sport was concerned was the Communist political ideology superior to that of the Democratic, but also, under the socialist regime women were considered equal.

The same cannot be said for the West. Oarswomen at all levels had to negotiate barriers and discourses that claimed that their participation in rowing was unimportant and unwelcome. With the help of liberal feminists and gender equity initiatives in the 1970s, female athletes from all sports were given far greater opportunities for participation at the local and national levels. Yet, this increased participation came at a price, as the total numbers of female coaches and administrators at all levels began to decrease.

At the same time that oarswomen and female rowing enthusiasts negotiated for equity at the local and national levels, other women and men diligently worked for

women's events to be introduced on the programs of the world championships and the Olympic Games. As we see in the next chapter, the motivation behind several administrators' support for women's competitive rowing at the Olympic Games and world championships varied drastically and were not always selfless in nature.

Notes

- ¹ FISA Women's Rowing Commission, "Inquiry for Women's Rowing," 2.
- ² Meuret, *FISA*, 107 and 163.
- ³ Tara Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity," *Peace Review* 11, no.4 (1999), 539-545.
- ⁴ M. Dennis, "Sport: GDR," in *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary German Culture*, ed. T. Dennis (London: Routledge, 1999), 576.
- ⁵ James Riordan, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Sporting Women in Russia and the USSR," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), 194.
- ⁶ Allen Guttman, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 303.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.
- ⁸ Christopher Dodd, "The Sun Sets on the East," *American Rowing* 23, no.3 (May/June 1991), 25.
- ⁹ Jutta Lau, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 8 June 2005, Potsdam, Germany.
- ¹⁰ Guttman, *Sports*, 304.
- ¹¹ Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity," 545.
- ¹² Guttman, *Sports*; Dennis, "Sport: GDR."
- ¹³ Guttman, *Sports*, 304.
- ¹⁴ Guttman, *Sports*, 304; Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 141.
- ¹⁵ Pfister, "Sport for Women," 172.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ James Riordan, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Sporting Women in Russia and the USSR," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), 194.
- ¹⁸ Arnd Krüger, "Breeding, Rearing and Preparing the Aryan Body: Creating Superman the Nazi Way," in *Shaping the Superman: Fascist Body as Political Icon*, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 44.
- ¹⁹ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 141.
- ²⁰ Svetla Otzetova, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 15 August 2004, Schinias, Greece.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Meuret, *FISA 1892-1992*.
- ²³ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 142.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Otzetova, interview.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 143.
- ²⁸ In 1966 the DDR and FDR both began sending separate teams to the European championships. Prior to this, both East and West Germany raced together; See Meuret, *FISA*.
- ²⁹ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 92.
- ³⁰ Mary Beth Kelly, Letter to Editor, *New York Times* (August 8, 1976) found in Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 92.
- ³¹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 125.
- ³² Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 125.
- ³³ Ellis, interview.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Chuter, interview.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Minutes of meeting held on Saturday, 1 November 1975 at the ARA Headquarters. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ³⁹ Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 12 January 1976, at the ARA Headquarters. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
- ⁴⁰ Chuter, interview.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Smith, interview.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Shona M. Thompson, "Sport, Gender, Feminism," in *Theory, Sport & Society*, edited by Joseph Maguire and Kevin Young (London: JAI, 2002), 117.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ See Pamela J. Creedon, *Women, Sport and Media; Challenging Gender Values* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994); Laurel R. Davis, *The Swimsuit Issue and Sport* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1997); Margaret Carlisle Duncan, "Sports Photographs and Sexual Difference: Images of Women and Men in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 7 (1990), 22-43; Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Michael Messner, and L. Williams, *Coverage of Women's Sport in Four Daily Newspapers* (Los Angeles: Amateur Athletic Foundations of Los Angeles, 1991); Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Michael Messner, "The Media Image of Sport and Gender," in *MediaSport*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner, 170-185 (London: Routledge, 1998); Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, "'Inside Sport' or 'On the Margins'? Australian Women and the Sport Medial," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 33 (1998), 19-32.

⁴⁸ Smith, interview.

⁴⁹ Paolo de Aloja to Tomas Keller, 2 December 1975. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁵⁰ Charles Riolo, FISA Secretary General to Federazione Italiana, December 1975. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁵¹ Dieterle, interview.

⁵² Ellis, interview.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Quarrell interview.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ William N. Wallace, "Women are Making Waves in Rowing," *New York Times* 9, no.1 (June 17, 1973), 6; found in Palchikoff, "The Development of Women's Rowing in the United States," 12.

⁵⁹ DeAngelis interview.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Fenner, interview.

⁶² "Cheering on women and Girls in Sports: Using Title IX to Fight Gender Role Oppression," *Harvard Law Review* 110, no.1627 (May 1997), 1634.

⁶³ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 249-250.

⁶⁴ Thompson, "Sport, Gender, Feminism," 109.

⁶⁵ *Discrimination Against Women Hearings on Section 805 of H.R. 16,098 Before the Special Subcomm. Of the House Comm. On Edu. & Labor*, 91st Cong. (1970) quoted in Ellen J. Staurowsky, "Title IX and College Sport: The Long Painful Path to Compliance and Reform," *Marquette Sports Law Review* vol. 14 (2003), 100.

⁶⁶ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 250.

⁶⁷ "Cheering on women and Girls in Sports," *Harvard Law Review*, 1634.

⁶⁸ DeFrantz, interview.

⁶⁹ A Hero for Daisy, "Gender Equity," <http://www.aherofordaisy.com/genderequity.html> retrieved 12 June 2005.

⁷⁰ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 166.

⁷¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970) 185-187, quoted in Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 166.

⁷² Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch, *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport* (1986), 14, quoted in Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 171.

⁷³ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 172.

⁷⁴ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 175.

⁷⁵ Sports Council, *Women and Sport: A Consultation Document* (London: Sports Council), 1992, 3 cited in Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 175.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ "Milestones of the 20th Century," *British Rowing Almanack and ARA Year Book* edited by Keith Osborne, 2000, 241.

⁷⁸ Quarrell, interview.

⁷⁹ The Princess Royal was selected to become one of the first female members of Leander Club in recognition of her role as a "leading sportswoman in her own right and her support of sport which includes rowing," furthermore she served in the role as "Patron of the World Rowing Championships [in] 1986."

Dianna Ellis, e-mail message to author, 13 September 2006.

⁸⁰ Ellis, interview.

⁸¹ Chuter, interview.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ See Acosta and Carpenter, "Women in Intercollegiate Sport."

Chapter 6

Fighting for Access to the Olympic Games and Gaining Entrance into the World Championships

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I indicated that the impact of the second-wave liberal feminist movement on women's rowing was most observable at the local and national levels throughout the Western world. When the time came to promote women's international rowing and introduce women's events on the programs of the Olympic Games and the world championships, gender equity was not at the forefront of male sporting administrators' minds. Influential men, such as FISA President Thomas Keller and IOC Technical Director Arthur Takac, did present the argument that women should have equal access to international sport, but clearly there were political motivations behind their statements. I argue that like other Eastern European sporting administrators, Takac sought for the inclusion of women's sport onto the Olympic program not purely for gender equity or altruistic reasons, but rather saw the potential to use women's international sport as a vehicle to promote communist political ideologies. Furthermore, Keller saw the potential in the promotion of women's competitive international rowing as a way to further advance his own political career in international sport administration.

Such political lobbying, of course, is not new to sport or the Olympic Games. Women's participation has often been at the centre of debates of lobbying among male sporting leaders anxious to control women's international sport participation. Kevin B. Wamsley and Guy Schultz have cited, for example, Johann Sigfrid Edström's political manoeuvring to include women's track and field on the 1928 Olympic program to show how the IOC and International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) had a direct impact

on the future of the sport.¹ Edström, who at the time was the president of the international track and field federation, was aware that the inclusion of women under the IAAF's jurisdiction meant that the international sport federation would be able to control and define women's participation on their terms. Similarly, the battle for the inclusion of women's rowing events on the program of the 1976 Olympic Games in Montréal, Canada, provides another demonstration of male efforts to control women's competitive international rowing participation. Despite these political manoeuvrings, competitive oarswomen reaped the benefit of gaining access to the both the Olympic Games and world championships.

This chapter documents the process through which women's events were introduced on the racing programs of the 1974 world championships and the 1976 Olympic Games. Specifically, I examine the political manoeuvring of female and male sport officials to ensure that their personal and political agendas were met.

Women's Participation in the Olympic Games

Women's participation at the Olympic Games – in any sport – began at the second Olympics in Paris, France in 1900, to the dismay of many IOC members. With local organising committees bestowed with the authority to select the Olympic program prior to the First World War, the 1900 Paris organising committee established events for women in croquet, equestrian, golf, lawn-tennis, and yachting.² A total of twenty-one women competed at these Games. Lawn-tennis player Charlotte Cooper of Great Britain became the first woman to win an Olympic championship.³

The fact that local Games organising committees saw fit to include events for women between 1900 and 1912 disturbed the Games' founder, Baron Pierre de

Coubertin, who was adamantly opposed to women's participation in this multi-sport spectacle. The Baron believed that the Games should serve as the "the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism, based on internationalism, by means of fairness, in an artistic setting, with the applause of women as a reward."⁴ He further stated that "a woman's glory rightfully came through the number and quality of children she produced, and that where sports were concerned, her greatest accomplishment was to encourage her sons to excel rather than to seek records for herself."⁵ The Baron acknowledged that women participated in a variety of sports at the local, national, and international levels, sports that were only open to men at the Olympic Games, but he did not support that sort of gender equity in the Olympic Games.⁶ He argued that "whatever the athletic ambitions of women may be, women cannot claim to outdo men in running, fencing, equestrian events, etc."⁷ Furthermore, he contended that there was no appeal in watching "a little female Olympiad alongside the great male Olympiad."⁸

The Baron's sexist opinions reflected his background and social position and his comments were not out of the ordinary at the beginning of the twentieth century. Until the late 1920s, most male sport administrators opposed women's participation in competitive sport, and as we have seen, such arguments had their bases in broader social and political contexts (see Chapter 4).⁹ The opinions of male sporting leaders, especially those associated with the Olympic Games, held enormous power since their perceived expert knowledge regarding sport helped to form the basis of discourses regarding international sport.¹⁰

At the end of the First World War, the IOC wrested control over the Olympic program from local organising committees and approved the inclusion of some of the

traditionally-perceived, feminine-appropriate events such as lawn-tennis, figure skating, swimming, and diving. With the guidance and support of the International Sport Federations (IFs), the IOC gradually introduced new events for women's participation; fencing in 1924, track and field in 1928, gymnastics in 1936, kayaking in 1948, and volleyball in 1964.¹¹ Some of these sports challenged the socially constructed divisions between the genders, forcing the IOC and the IFs to go to great lengths to modify the events in order to maintain the perceived femininity of female participants.

The IOC and IFs restrictions on women's competitive sport were supported by medical and scientific discourse that "confirmed the pathology of female biology and legitimated women's subjugation."¹² Feminist scholar Angela King further argued that physicians and scientists prescribed "what activities women should engage in, what clothes they should wear to preserve appropriate 'womanliness'."¹³ Sport participation, especially at the international level, was considered a contraindication to women's femininity.

Furthermore, social discourse perpetuated the notion that sport was an ideal venue to develop men out of boys and for male athletes to display publicly their masculine prowess. As Vertinsky has explained, "sport is one of the few ways in which the male body is continually represented, examined, worshipped: all too often to the exclusion of the female-body-as-active."¹⁴ The perceived norms associated with women's sexuality and femininity were widely accepted and IOC sporting officials contended that women should be limited to activities that promoted moral and social development and prepared women to be better wives and mothers. This mentality directly corresponded with medical discourse that dictated that women were incapable of participating in events that

required athletes to push themselves to physical exhaustion.¹⁵ Supposedly, women's delicate physiological nature rendered them unable to perform the same athletic tasks that men could; therefore, women required the expert knowledge of male sporting leaders to determine which events were suitable for their participation.¹⁶ Only very slowly, therefore, did the IOC and IFs begin to introduce new events for women and many sports remained unavailable to female Olympians, including rowing, for seven decades of the Olympic Games history.

Initial Steps in Women's Olympic Rowing

Despite their years of exclusion from the Olympic program, oarswomen had long been interested in participation in the Games. As early as 1927, Amy Gentry and the WARA campaigned to the ARA and the British Olympic Association (BOA) for help in their quest to seek the inclusion of a women's four with coxswain race in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic program.¹⁷ Aware that there would be little support for such a race, Gentry and members of the WARA wrote to the Secretary of the Amsterdam organising committee requesting that a style competition for women's rowing be added.¹⁸ However, no women's rowing events were added to the Amsterdam Olympic program. Over the next twenty years, WARA executives made several more requests to the BOA and the ARA which included their 1946 proposal to the London Organising Committee of the Games of the XIV Olympiad to "consider [the] possibility of raising an All England women's crew for an event at the Olympic Games in 1948."¹⁹ Female rowing administrators were determined to see women's races on the Olympic program, despite the reluctance of many male national sporting administrators. They realised that in order to find a place for oarswomen on the Olympic program they needed to negotiate with the

male gatekeepers and challenge rowing and popular social discourses that argued that women were incapable of competing at the Olympic Games in traditionally masculine events.²⁰

Even though inclusion into the Olympic program did not occur until 1974, young oarswomen remained eager to race in this prestigious international regatta. Chuter recalled the excitement she experienced at the thought of becoming an Olympic oarswoman despite the fact that she knew nothing about the racing program, especially the fact that women did not race at the Olympic Games:

... my coach, who's just a local club coach, thought that there was women's rowing in the Olympics in 1960. So with this big carrot [he dangled in front of me], he said "Look you've beaten this girl in this fixed seat boat, if you learn to row on a sliding seat with out riggers, if you can beat her in a shell, then you'll go to the 1960 Olympics." So I first got into a shell in '59, the autumn of '59, by about January 1960 ... my coach had found out that there wasn't any women's rowing in the Olympics (laughing).²¹

She also explained that this experience prompted her to work within the United Kingdom to rally the support of male rowing administrators to promote the introduction of women's Olympic rowing.²²

Within FISA, several European delegates supported the proposal to promote women's Olympic rowing while others continued to use the argument that women were incapable of competing in a sport that was so physically demanding. Some argued that it was acceptable for women to participate at the European championships, but not at the Olympic Games, providing no distinction between the two events to support their argument.²³ In 1950, Italian delegate Massimo Giovannetti threatened that the FIC would contact the IOC to voice their disapproval of any proposal that included the "fairer sex" in order to ensure that women's rowing was not added to the program.²⁴ Competitive

rowing remained a venue in which women were expected to be the supporters of their oarsmen boyfriends, not active participants; the same could not be said for oarswomen from Eastern Europe.²⁵

As noted in the previous chapter, international sport administrators from Eastern Europe were part of the Eastern Bloc sporting machine, and as such, they were dedicated to the promotion of competitive international sport, especially women's. It was this dedication to women's international sporting success, and the desire to promote communist political ideology, that drove Konstantin Aleksandrovich Andrianov, the IOC's first representative to the USSR, to propose the introduction of women's rowing events at the Olympic Games in 1955.²⁶ Although this early proposal resulted in no affirmative action taking place, it foreshadowed Andrianov's future initiatives to support women's international rowing. Sport historians have commented on the importance that Andrianov played in the IOC after his appointment in 1951.²⁷ Guttman, for example argues that between 1951 until the break-up of the Warsaw Pact in 1989-90:

...the members from Eastern Europe took their cues from the Russian members. Armand Massard of France noted sarcastically that when Andrianov and [Alexey] Romanov made a proposal they were backed by all the other Communists, who rose, one after the other, to parrot their approval and assent.²⁸

Alfred Senn too has shown that although Andrianov only served as a member of the Executive Board for two years and as Vice-President of the IOC for four years, he "became a significant force within the IOC."²⁹

Andrianov returned to the IOC General Congress in 1967 and questioned the sport governing body on its practices of gender equity and inclusion. The Russian sport czar argued that it was difficult to understand why female athletes freely participated at world and continental championships but were barred in some sports from the Olympic

Games.³⁰ He questioned why female athletes were restricted from the Olympic Games if women were skilled enough to compete at the international level.³¹ The IOC had, and still has, a tradition of gender inequality and Andrianov pointed out to the delegates that among them, there were no female IOC members at the time.³² On this point DeFrantz noted that:

*... people say that the IOC is made up of old, rich, white guys, well they're the ones who had the money and the time to put into it because there was no funding of IOC members and for the (United States Olympic Committee) USOC. There was no funding of the volunteers, so you had to get everywhere you went on your own ... essentially you had to be a volunteer and you had to have the wealth to volunteer.*³³

This hand selection of wealthy and politically influential IOC delegates helped ensure the exclusion of female sporting administrators from the world's largest sporting body. The absence of women in the IOC and in other sports governing bodies, including FISA, created a self-sustaining class of experts that left women out. This forced women to depend upon men to support their inclusion and lobby the sports organisations on their own behalf, a process that became commonplace within women's international sport.

Despite the lack of interest from most IOC and FISA delegates, the Russian rowing federation was determined to see women's events on the Olympic program. At the 1968 FISA Ordinary Annual Congress, FISA's Russian delegate again requested the inclusion of events for women's rowing in "future Olympic Games."³⁴ Yet again the proposal received little support as a result of the reluctance of several FISA delegates to endorse women's rowing because of their perception that the sport was directly connected with male athletics. Arguably the Russian rowing federation saw the potential in including women's events on the program and refused to give up their initiative.³⁵

Ultimately, FISA relied upon encouragement from an external source to initiate their support of women's Olympic rowing. This key push came from the IOC's Technical Director for the 1972 and 1976 Olympic Games, Arthur Takac of Yugoslavia. In his role as Technical Director, Takac was responsible for updating some of the rules and policies within the *Olympic Charter*. Specifically, he sought to balance the number of sports and events on the Olympic program as well as address the issue of women's limited participation within the Games.³⁶ In 1969, Takac claimed that the "IOC had solved up to now the participation of women in all the sports which figure on the Programme of Summer Olympic Games," but "the participation of women [was] still open in the following Olympic sports: cycling, [field] hockey, rowing and shooting."³⁷ Takac was eager to see the Olympic program include women's events in these sports and contacted the international sport federations for cycling, hockey, rowing, and shooting, and suggested that they each create a proposal for the IOC to include women's events in their respective sports.³⁸

At this point FISA's President Thomas Keller became heavily involved. Keller, a native Swiss, became president of the international rowing federation in 1958 at the age of thirty-four and was one of the youngest international sport federation presidents ever to be elected. Keller was considered by many to be connected closely to the needs of the athletes, having only finished his rowing career two years prior to his presidency. Despite his close relationship with international rowers, there is little evidence to suggest that Keller worked to promote women's international rowing prior to 1969. What is clear is that when he decided to take up the cause and promote women's Olympic rowing, he worked diligently to see events for oarswomen included on the 1976 Olympic program.

Keller was likely aware that the endorsement of women's Olympic participation would provide the international sport community with clear evidence of his dedication to the advancement and promotion of competitive international sport, and more specifically the Olympic Games. By doing so, the FISA president indicated to his fellow sport administrators that he was a natural leader, one who was willing and able to fight for sport. This was only one of Keller's public indications of his interest to further his international sport administration power. By 1967 Keller had helped to found the General Assembly of International Sports Federations (GAISF), an organisation designed to give a "powerful" voice to the IFs that were part of the Olympic Games.³⁹ In 1973, Keller used the GAISF as a forum to vent his opinions regarding the Olympic movement when he attended the Olympic Congress in Varna, Bulgaria, and publicly stated to the delegates:

Everyone interested in sports knows that entries for the Olympic Games have largely become an open exhibition of lying quite incompatible with the ethics of sport and the spirit of Baron de Coubertin ... The IOC attempts to support the fiction of amateur games with the help of Rule 26 (a definition used then that limited athletes' full-time training per year), although it is fully aware that most national Olympic committees and sports federations are primarily concerned to ensure that these conditions are circumvented as discreetly as possible, in order to be able to nominate their best athletes for the Games.⁴⁰

This multi-sport federation, GAISF, eventually became involved in a battle with the IOC for power over the Olympic movement.

With his own political aspirations in mind, Takac's suggestion to introduce women's rowing events at the Olympic Games prompted the FISA president's unconditional support. After the IOC's Executive Committee rejected the 1969 proposal to include women's rowing on the Olympic program, Keller committed himself to seek

women's inclusion and insisted, "I believe that in 1976 races for women will be included in the Olympic rowing programme."⁴¹

Over the next few months, Keller wrote to every national rowing federation and IOC member to gain their support. In a letter sent to IOC members, he encouraged them to reconsider their previous rejection of women's rowing on the Olympic program.⁴² He argued that women's rowing championships had been in existence for fifteen years which proved that international oarswomen could demonstrate aesthetic, spiritual, and moral values.⁴³

Keller also became aware that in order for women's rowing to be included on the Olympic program, the international federation had to meet certain criteria. Women needed to compete in the sport in at least twenty countries on three continents and a world championship event must exist.⁴⁴ This posed a problem for the FISA president because he had previously discouraged the introduction of women's events at the world championships for financial reasons. He was forced to retract these statements.

The Women's World Rowing Championships

Many rowing administrators saw the introduction of a women's world rowing championship regatta as a burden. Women's participation at the European championships had proven to be a costly endeavour for organising committees and few national federations showed interest in hosting the women's regatta. DeFrantz remarked that some national rowing federations felt that hosting the women's championships was, "*not worth it.*"⁴⁵ Organising committees explained that they would host "*regattas without women because it's too expensive to have this 1000 metres start.*"⁴⁶ Aside from the expense of creating a separate starting gate at the 1000 metres mark for the women's

aces, additional expenses included the running of the regatta, medals awarded to winning crews, souvenir medals and diplomas, and social functions.⁴⁷

The hosting of the world championships involved the supplementary expense of travel allowances for participating crews. It was the payment of these allowances that caused Keller to hesitate on the introduction of women's events at the world championships. He argued:

To decide to introduce World Championships for Women offering the same travelling allowances as in the case of Men's Championships would mean that in the future we should have the greatest difficulty in finding organisers for our World Championships. Financial considerations rather than the interests of the sport would be decisive in allotting these events. The interests of the sport would take second place, which would in consequence lower the value of our championships. Such a development would be highly undesirable. In future it would be almost impossible to consider small places with first class courses.⁴⁸

Despite the cost, there were several delegates who wanted to see women's races added to the world championship's racing program. In 1963, Mr. Kallos of Hungary proposed that FISA hold the women's championships during the same time of the 1964 men's world championships.⁴⁹ Keller promptly reminded the Hungarian delegate that FISA did not have a women's world championship regatta.⁵⁰ The FISA president concluded that nothing should be altered on the international program at that meeting and the issue would be readdressed in 1973.⁵¹ Yet, the discussion about the introduction of women's events at the world championships was addressed earlier than Keller had anticipated because of the federation's application for women's inclusion onto the Olympic program.

At FISA's 1970 Annual Ordinary Congress, Keller distributed a memorandum to the delegates expressing his opinion on the subject of women's events at the world championships.⁵² Conscious that IOC regulations stipulated that in order to add an event to the Olympic program a world championship event must exist, Keller was forced to

press the matter with FISA delegates. A number of the men were supportive of Keller's idea, but were worried because the FISA's statutes specified that the federation must wait until the quadrennial Extraordinary Congress, when all of the FISA delegates were in attendance, to make significant changes to the international racing program. Because this meeting was scheduled to take place after the 1973 men's world championships, delegates were anxious that this would have a negative impact on any proposal presented to the IOC regarding the introduction of women's rowing events on the Olympic program.⁵³ Keller was unaffected. He explained that FISA would simply eliminate the women's European championships and establish them as a world championship.⁵⁴ FISA followed their statutes and waited until 1973 to make this change official, but this was simply a formality. The suggestion was widely accepted by the delegates and at the 1973 Extraordinary Congress the delegates voted to introduce the first women's world championships to be held in 1974 in Lucerne, Switzerland.⁵⁵ Additionally, the congress agreed to admit women as umpires for international regattas.⁵⁶

Although the European championships essentially were renamed the world championships, this was a significant distinction in the international rowing community:

Now '74 for women's rowing, internationally, was significant because it was the first year they were called world championships. Previously, I have to say, that they were European championships and people think they were a lower standard ... so that was significant. But they were called worlds, which gave them a higher status. But, in actual fact they weren't of a higher status, it was just ... a name. So, those European championships were open to anybody. So if you won them, you were effectively the world champion.⁵⁷

Other participants, including Ellis, DeFrantz, Fenner, and Smith concurred with this statement and indicated that this seemingly benign distinction was necessary in order to further develop women's competitive international rowing.

The Final Sprint to the Olympic Line

Despite the fact that in 1972, FISA had yet to introduce women's events at the world championships, Keller set out to assess the level of women's participation in rowing throughout the world.⁵⁸ He requested that FISA's Secretary General Charles Riolo send a questionnaire on women's rowing participation to each affiliated national rowing federation.⁵⁹ The results of the questionnaire indicated that women's competitive rowing was practiced in twenty-four countries across five continents, but was primarily "a European activity, particularly in the eastern european [*sic*] countries."⁶⁰

Armed with these statistics, Keller attended the IOC's Executive Board meeting in May of 1970 to formally request the introduction of six women's rowing races to the Olympic program.⁶¹ The IOC's agreement to study the matter provided little comfort to Keller. He continued to press the issue with Avery Brundage, and requested that the IOC president "approve" FISA's proposal himself.⁶² Keller was aware that Coubertin himself had been an avid oarsman during his time and used this information to further promote FISA's agenda. The Baron had suggested on several occasions that rowing was ideal for sport participation and promoted social and moral development. In a letter to the citizens of Lausanne, he had encouraged his fellow male citizens to participate in the sport, saying:

Remember that ... rowing is the most perfect sport in existence and that for a Lausannois it is a crime not to make use of his admirable lake. The boat, the rowers and the oars form three parts of a machine and the perfection and pleasure of the movement depend upon the relationships which are established between them. The strength which your sons acquire today will be their country's strength tomorrow.⁶³

The Baron, as already noted, had limited his support to men's rowing.⁶⁴ The FISA president took it upon himself to contact Brundage personally and remind him of the

Coubertin's love of rowing and conveniently he omitted reference to the Baron's distaste for women's competitive sport participation. In his correspondence with Brundage, Keller argued that there was no "plausible reason for refusing women's participation in rowing in the Olympic Games."⁶⁵ However, Brundage also did not have a history as a strong supporter of women's sport in the Olympic Games having stated some years earlier at the Olympic Congress that women's participation in the Games should be limited to feminine-appropriate events or eliminated altogether.⁶⁶

Given the IOC president's reputation, Keller was not certain that Brundage would unconditionally support FISA's proposal. Therefore, he decided to attack the issue of women's Olympic rowing from a different angle. He was well aware of the IOC's predilection for an ideal image of fit, aesthetically-pleasing athletes. The IOC had long been wary of "masculine" looking women competing in the Games and many members still held traditional ideologies that women, especially athletic women, would lose their femininity through competitive sport. Keller realised that some members of the international sporting community believed that to be a successful oarswoman "*you have to be strong, you have to be ... not very tall, only strong and ugly.*"⁶⁷ He sought help from five women in the international rowing community, Magdalena Sarbochová of Czechoslovakia, Kornelia Pap of Hungary, Nelly Gambon-de-Vos of the Netherlands, Daina Sveica of Latvia, and Ingrid Dieterle of West Germany, to sit on his newly created FISA Women's Commission. Dieterle indicated,

*...the main reason [the FISA Women's Commission was created for] was to push forward the development of high competition [for women] and it was not only [to establish] the [women's] worlds (championships), it was especially [to gain access to] the Olympics."*⁶⁸

Success in the “push forward” of women’s rowing depended on the Women’s Commission’s ability not only to promote women’s competitive international rowing, but also to support dominant discourse concerning the appropriate visual appearance of female athletes and change the image of women’s competitive international rowing from that associated with the highly successful “*fat Russians*,” to that of a more feminine athlete.⁶⁹

The five women gathered information about the history of women’s rowing in each of the national federations to demonstrate the extent to which women’s rowing was practiced in many countries.⁷⁰ They also wrote letters that encouraged national rowing federations to send women’s crews to the European championships, even if it was only a single sculler. Dieterle pointed out that “*we had to show the IOC, where women’s rowing is on the world [stage], and you can only show it*” at the international championships.⁷¹

While Keller and his newly formed commission worked from the outside, Andrianov continued his pressure inside the IOC. The Russian delegate spoke openly of the social importance of women’s participation in sports and the significant influence their participation in the Olympic Games would have on the “development of the women’s sports all over the world.”⁷² He demanded that, “women should be given equal rights to participate in the Olympics.”⁷³ Andrianov lobbied specifically for women’s basketball, cycling, shooting, handball, and rowing.⁷⁴ In 1971, the IOC Executive Board agreed with Andrianov and approved Keller’s proposal to include women’s rowing events on the 1976 Olympic program.⁷⁵ However, the General Congress demonstrated less support and the proposal was rejected because of a technicality in the Olympic regulations. Because rule twenty-nine of the IOC regulations, a rule that outlined which

events were open for women's participation, did not include women's rowing, the delegates rejected FISA's proposal.⁷⁶ Ironically, in order to have women's rowing added to the Olympic program rule twenty-nine had to stipulate that oarswomen were permitted to compete in the Olympic Games. Because rule twenty-nine did not include women's rowing, the IOC delegates decided that women's rowing events could not be included on the Olympic program. This permitted IOC delegates to dismiss FISA's proposal without having discussed whether or not women's rowing was an appropriate event to introduce to the Olympic Games.

After the defeat, Keller refused to concede and again approached Brundage to gain his support in spite of the IOC president's distaste for women's participation in the Olympic Games. At the 1953 Olympic Congress in Mexico, Brundage announced to his fellow IOC members that women's participation in the Olympic Games should be limited to feminine appropriate events, or be eliminated altogether.⁷⁷ Despite this, Keller was well aware that Brundage was an adamant supporter of amateurism. He had long been known as the "amateur watchdog" and fought throughout his tenure as IOC president to secure the Games as the ultimate "amateur" sporting competition. Keller therefore contacted the IOC president and personally presented his plea to see women's rowing on the Olympic program in 1976, arguing that rowing embodied the "classic principles of amateurism" and requested that the IOC president act as the personal spokesman in the campaign for women's rowing and suggested he would be "helping the development of an ancient sport, steeped in tradition."⁷⁸ Keller was conscious that the aging president would retire after the 1972 Games in Munich, Germany and if he did not succeed in his

campaign for women's Olympic rowing at the 1972 IOC Congress, he would have to begin all over again with a new president and executive committee.⁷⁹

Regardless of all of his efforts to gain Brundage's support, the IOC president remained uninterested, as were some of his friends and colleagues. In 1972, the Chair of the United States Olympic Rowing Committee, Clifford "Tip" Goes, wrote to Brundage about his concern that women's rowing would become part of the Olympic program. Goes, who had graduated from Syracuse University in 1914 after coxing the school's varsity eight to a first place finish at the 1913 Intercollegiate Rowing Association Regatta Championships, was a firm opponent of women's competitive rowing. He asked Brundage for reassurance that women's rowing would never be included on the Olympic program. Brundage replied:

I note your position on rowing for women. We have resisted the application ... but more and more pressure comes from President Tom Keller of the Rowing federation. They claim that this has become a very popular sport in Europe. I wonder why?⁸⁰

These comments came less than a month before the IOC was set to vote on the inclusion of women's rowing in the Olympic Games.

Keller knew that in order for FISA's proposal to be passed by the all-male IOC delegates, many of whom shared Brundage's sentiments regarding women's competitive rowing, he must appeal to the delegates' beliefs about appropriate feminine appearance. In yet another tactical move, Keller secured a place for three delegates to attend the 1972 IOC Executive Board meeting in order to discuss the "many technicalities involved with their request" for women's rowing.⁸¹ Keller was the obvious choice to fill one of these seats, along with the FISA Women's Commission Chair Nelly Gambon-de-Vos, but the last seat was reserved for a special guest. Keller and the Women's Commission had long

discussions regarding who should fill the last seat. The conclusion was it should be a woman who fit the ideal image of a successful competitive oarswoman.⁸² Coincidentally the woman who had just won the 1972 European championships in the single sculls event fit their specifications to the letter. The Dutch single-sculler, Ingrid Maria-Dusseldorp, was perfect for the role. “*She had charisma,*” recalled FISA Women’s Commission official Ingrid Dieterle “*she was strong, tall, but she was not fat.*”⁸³ By introducing the all-male IOC executive board to an attractive, feminine oarswoman, Keller reassured worried delegates that rowing would not masculinize female athletes, but rather would help to develop their feminine qualities. Some believed that this tactic was the key to Keller’s success:

*Thomi Keller ... realized that if he could get women's rowing in the Olympics that was going to be the feather in the cap of rowing. So, in fact all the push where they got this super looking Dutch female, [he] shouldn't have done it that way, but it served a purpose and she was virtually in front of all the old men in the International Olympic Committee and she had fantastic legs and a beautiful figure and long fair hair ... And ya, I mean Thomi Keller picked her out and she just won them all over and we got rowing in the Olympics '76.*⁸⁴

The presentation of the popular Western image of heterosexual femininity to the IOC was indeed successful. The IOC Executive Board recommended that women’s rowing events be included at the 1976 Olympic Games and also amended rule twenty-nine of the IOC *Olympic Charter* to include women’s rowing on the list of sports on the Olympic program and oarswomen raced for the first time at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montréal, Canada.⁸⁵

Reaping the Olympic Benefits

The competitive aspect of these first Olympic Games in which oarswomen were permitted entrance was not lost on participants. Women from fifteen different nations

competed in six events during the week-long regatta. Eastern European nations dominated the medal podium, capturing fifteen of eighteen medals, with the GDR and Bulgaria sweeping the gold medal positions, winning four and two respectively.⁸⁶ Otzetova and her double sculls partner Zdravka Yordanava became the first Bulgarian women to win an Olympic gold medal.⁸⁷ DeFrantz became the first African American woman to win a medal in rowing at any international championships when the United States took bronze in the women's eight. Lau was part of the dominant GDR women's quadruple sculls with coxswain crew that rolled over their competition throughout the week of racing, and Smith missed out on capturing a medal in the women's pair without coxswain event after she and her partner Craig were blown off course at the start and became entangled in the buoyed lane markers.

Yet, it was not their athletic success at these Games that the participants fondly remembered. All of the women spoke of more profound feelings they experienced beyond competition:

*Tell you what struck me most, was being in the village, because that's also something that's unique to the Olympic Games. Where a sport, I forget how many nations were competing there, but it was wonderful to live in a village where everyone was successful. They've all been selected to represent their country, and there was mutual respect for one another. The racing was, you know it's racing.*⁸⁸

Otzetova agreed with DeFrantz's statement and added that she felt an extra amount of freedom in the village to speak with those not from Eastern European nations:

*... and even [in] the Olympic village with all these other sports and athletes and speaking and eating and talking and at that time politically things were not so tense any more as they used to be in the '60s so, I mean we could talk freely and have a nice conversation and discuss whatever we wanted to discuss, which was not the case [elsewhere].*⁸⁹

This feeling of euphoria extended beyond the Olympic village and even continued when participants returned home after the completion of the Games:

*The Olympics, yes ... this was fantastic. Um, as um, as the feeling, partying with the full ... [team] which had finished, with people which we had, have training camps together, because we had high altitude training camp, where all the top athletes are training and prepare for the Olympic Games, whatever. So we all knew each other. We knew the East Germans well because it was an East German centre. [I made] so many friends at the Olympic Games. When we came home, this was really when the [excitement happened], we felt it then, that um, what has happened. Because the Olympics in Montreal [you] were one of many [athletes competing]. But when you arrive at home, [it became] ... very special.*⁹⁰

The participation and success that these women achieved at the 1976 Olympic Games helped to foster national interest in women's rowing as well as prompting them to become further involved in women's competitive international rowing beyond athlete participation.

President Keller also reaped the benefits of securing a place for oarswomen on the Olympic program. Arguably Keller provided the international sport community with evidence of his commitment and dedication to competitive sport. Dodd has suggested that it was this commitment that prompted IOC President Avery Brundage to offer Keller a place in the IOC in 1969 and "coax Keller to succeed him as president."⁹¹ Although no records exist in the *Avery Brundage Collection* to support this claim, Dodd did include an excerpt from a letter that Keller sent to Brundage when the FISA president decided to turn down the IOC president's offer to join the Olympic Family:

I am convinced that it is not correct or advisable at the same time to be a member of the IOC and to hold the presidency of an international sports federation. At the present moment I could hardly leave my position in the international rowing federation as there is still a lot of work to do. I also intend to choose myself a successor and train him for the job ... Besides, it is quite possible that [this] coming May I shall be elected as president of GAISF for a period of two years.⁹²

Keller did go on to become the president of the GAISF and entered into a lengthy battle with the IOC to secure the rights and ownership over Olympic sport.

Summary

The acceptance of women's events on the programs of the Olympic Games and the world championships was the result of long and difficult negotiations between international sporting administrators. Even in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many were concerned about the masculinization of elite female athletes, especially those governing the Olympic Games. FISA's President Thomas Keller and the delegates of the FISA Women's Commission were able to reassure IOC officials that women's rowing indeed deserved a place on the Olympic program. In order to do so, they sold femininity once again with the presentation of Ingrid Maria-Dusseldorp; some forty years after male international rowing administrators first debated the issue of women's participation.

The process through which women's events came to be accepted on the programs of the Olympic Games and the world championships was not repressive. Women did gain access to the regattas that they had previously been barred from. In achieving access, this helped to change social discourses regarding women's athletic abilities and gave sporting administrators an indication that female athletes could do more than had once been believed.

These new racing opportunities helped to motivate some international oarswomen to become coaches and/or sporting administrators after their retirement from competitive racing. Those who did make this transition were motivated to seek equity for future oarswomen after they had garnered the benefits of the struggles and negotiations of those pioneering female rowing enthusiasts who had come before them. Yet, the transition into

the realms of coaching and administration was not seamless and many women had to negotiate their positions in these traditionally defined masculine professions.

Notes

¹ Kevin B. Wamsley and Guy Schultz, "Rouges and Bedfellows: The IOC and the Incorporation of the FSFI," in *Bridging Three Centuries: Intellectual Crossroads and the Modern Olympic Movement*, ed. Robert Barney, Kevin Wamsley, Scott Martyn, and Gordon MacDonald (London, Ontario: The University of Western Ontario, International Centre for Olympic Studies, September 2000), 13.

² Bill Mallon, *The 1900 Olympic Games: Results For All Competitors in All Events, With Commentary* (London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 26-27.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Pierre de Coubertin, *Pierre de Coubertin Olympism: Selected Writings*, trans. Norbert Müller (editing Director) (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 2000), 713.

⁵ Betty Spears, "Women in the Olympics: An Unresolved Problem," in *The Modern Olympics*, ed. P. Graham and H. Ueberhost (New York: Leisure Press, 1972), 63.

⁶ Coubertin, *Olympism*, 711

⁷ *Ibid.*, 711-713.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 713.

⁹ See Guttman, *Women's Sports*; Leigh and Bonin, "The Pioneering Role of Alice Milliat and the FSFI; Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*; Uriel Simri, *A Century of Women in the Olympics* (Netanyahu, Israel: Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sport, 1977); Wamsley and Schultz, "Rouges and Bedfellows."

¹⁰ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.

¹¹ David Wallechinsky, *The Complete Book of the Summer Olympics: Sydney 2000 Edition* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2000).

¹² Angela King, "The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, no. 2 (2004), 31.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Vertinsky, "Time Gentlemen Please," 8.

¹⁵ Verbrugge, "Recreating the Body," 273-304.

¹⁶ For example, female track and field participants at the 1928 Games found themselves limited in the number and types of events available to them. The IOC and IAAF had agreed to include events that would not damage the delicate nature of the female body, which included the 100 metres, the 4x100 metre relay, the 800 metres, high jump, and discus throw. The women's 800-metre race was later discontinued from the Olympic program. At the conclusion of the race in 1928, several of the competing women collapsed from exhaustion at the finish line. Appalled by this display, IAAF and IOC delegates made the decision that women's track and field events would be limited to 200 metres or less. This decision was upheld until 1960 when the women's 800-metre race returned to the Olympic program. Similarly, Olympic female kayakers also found their participation limited in 1948, as only one event was open for their participation, the kayak singles 500 metres, while men competed in eight events.

¹⁷ WARA Minutes of Meeting Held on 4th May 1927. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ WARA Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on Thursday 16th May 1946. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.

²⁰ WARA Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on the 1st November 1948. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.

²¹ Chuter, interview.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Procès-verbal du Congrès annuel à l'occasion des Championnats d'Europe de Milan Mercredi 30 août 1950 au Palazzo Vercesi, 24. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁵ See D. Smiler, "Guidelines for an Oarsman's Girlfriend," *Rowing: The Independent Magazine for Enthusiasts Everywhere*, April 1975, 10. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.

²⁶ CIO FI AVIRO CORR (0075149), IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne
Aviron Correspondance 1906-1965

²⁷ See Alfred Senn, *Power, Politics and the Olympic Games*; and Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

²⁸ Guttmann, *The Olympics*, 89.

²⁹ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 92.

³⁰ Minutes of the 65th Session of the International Olympic Committee, Tehran 6-9 May 1967, 6. Annex II, IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

³¹ Minutes of the 65th Session of the International Olympic Committee, Tehran 6-9 May 1967, 6. Annex II, IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ DeFrantz, interview.

³⁴ Minutes of the Ordinary Annual Congress held on the occasion of the 1968 Olympic Games on Friday, 11th October at 10.00 a.m. in Auditorium No. 5 of the Mexican Institute of Social Security in Mexico City, 16. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, "Artur Takac,"

<http://www.jewishsports.net/PillarAchievementsBios/ArturTakac.htm> retrieved May 31, 2006.

³⁷ Minutes of the Meetings of the IOC Executive Board, Dubrovnik, 23-27 October 1969, 96. Annex 23 – Report from Artur Takac, Technical Director of the IOC, Lausanne, October 1969. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Christopher Dodd, "Rowing and the Olympics," *American Rowing* 24, no.2 (March/April 1992), 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Minutes of the Ordinary Annual Congress held on the occasion of the 1969 European Championships from Friday, 5th September to Tuesday, 9th September in the Great Hall of the Konzerthaus, Klagenfurt (Austria), 7. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁴² Thomas Keller to the IOC, 14 May 1969, CIO FI AVIRO CORR (0075150), IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Aviron Correspondance 1966-1980.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Meetings of the IOC Executive Board, Lausanne, March 13-14, 1971, 70. Annex 20, IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁴⁵ DeFrantz, interview.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ FISA President Thomas Keller, "Thoughts on the Introduction of World Championship Regattas for Women and Annual World Championships for Men." (No date), 2. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Procès-verbal du Congrès Ordinaire annuel de la F.I.S.A. à l'occasion des Championnats d'Europe masculine, le Mardi 13 août 1963 à Copenhague, Denmark, 19. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Keller, "Thoughts on the Introduction of World Championship Regattas for Women and Annual World Championships for Men."

⁵² Minutes of the Ordinary Annual Congress held on the occasion of the 1970 World Championships on Tuesday, 1st September, 1970 in the Thistle Theatre, Brock University, St. Catharines, Canada. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Ordinary Annual congress held on the occasion of the 1971 European Championships on Tuesday, 17th August at 9.00 a.m. in the Hotel Lyngby, Lyngby, Copenhagen, Denmark. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁵⁵ Minutes of the Ordinary Annual Congress held on 25th – 28th October, 1973 at the Palace Hotel, Lucerne. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Chuter, interview.

⁵⁸ In 1972, under the direct influence of Keller, FISA amended its rules and regulations and announced that the women's events would be included on the program of the 1974 world championships.

⁵⁹ Charles Riolo, Secretary General to all affiliated Federations, 13 December 1969. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁶⁰ FISA President Thomas Keller, "Thoughts on the Introduction of World Championship Regattas for Women and Annual World Championships for Men." (1970). FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁶¹ Minutes of the Meetings of the IOC Executive Board, Amsterdam 8-16 May 1970, 11. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁶² Thomas Keller, FISA President, to Avery Brundage, IOC President, 18 March 1970, CIO FI AVIRO CORR (0075150), IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Aviron Correspondance 1966-1980.

⁶³ Coubertin, *Olympism*, 183.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 132.

⁶⁷ Dieterle, interview.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ National rowing federations were asked to fill out a questionnaire on nine specific categories on women's rowing: I Generality (how many oarswomen were affiliated to the federation and how many oarswomen were actively involved in competitive rowing in the country); II Organization (did the national rowing federation have its own Women's Section/Committee); III Regattas (how many regattas include races for women and in which types of boat categories do they race in); IV Number of women participating in a regatta in the last 5 years (1955-1969); V Does your Association organise national championships for women? (in which year did these championships begin and in which boat categories do women race in); VI Number of women having participated in national championships in the last 5 years (1965-1969); VII Are you in favour of the introduction of World Championships and Olympic Games for women?; VIII What are your views on the introduction of pair-oared racing for women; IX Do you believe in a positive evolution of the women's rowing? (FISA Women's Rowing Commission, "Inquiry for Women's Rowing.")

⁷¹ Dieterle, interview.

⁷² Minutes of the Meetings of the IOC Executive Board, Lausanne, March 13-14, 1971, 70. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the 71st Session of the International Olympic Committee, Luxemburg, 15-17 September 1971, 37-38. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁷⁷ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 132.

⁷⁸ Thomas Keller, FISA President, to Avery Brundage, IOC President, 12 August 1971. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

⁷⁹ There is no evidence that Brundage responded to Keller's 12 August 1971 letter or indicated to the FISA president that he would indeed be the spokes person for women's Olympic rowing.

⁸⁰ Letter to Clifford "Tip" Goes from Avery Brundage, 5 August 1972, *Avery Brundage Collection*, International Centre for Olympic Studies (London, ON: The University of Western Ontario), Avery Brundage Collection, Box 155, Reel 63.

⁸¹ Minutes of the Meetings of the IOC Executive Board, Lausanne, 27-30 May 1972, 17. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁸² Dieterle, interview.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Chuter, interview.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Meetings of the IOC Executive Board, Munich 18-22 August, 1, 6-8, 10-11 September 1972, 7. IOC Historical Archives, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

⁸⁶ Meuret, *FISA*.

⁸⁷ Later in the regatta Otzetova and Yordanova's fellow team-mates Siika Kelbetcheva and Stoyanka Grouicheva also won gold in the women's pair without coxswain.

⁸⁸ DeFrantz, interview.

⁸⁹ Otzetova, interview.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 378.

⁹² Thomas Keller to Avery Brundage (no date) cited in Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 378-379.

Chapter 7

A Time for Change: Negotiating for Equality and Transforming Women's Rowing

Introduction

Female rowing administrators between the 1970s and 1990s were well aware that they had yet to achieve equality for international oarswomen. Female rowers still raced only half of the men's 2000 metres distance, their events were held one week prior to the men's regatta, and lightweight women's rowing remained absent from the international racing program.

This chapter documents the process through which the women's racing distance was changed from 1000 metres to 2000 metres, as well as the introduction of lightweight women's events to the programs of both the world championships and the Olympic Games. I argue that the reason the women's racing distance was ultimately doubled in 1985 was for two reasons that are intricately woven together. Eastern Bloc oarswomen had dominated women's international rowing since its entrance into the 1954 European championships. The physical size and athletic superiority of oarswomen from the East prompted many to question the legitimacy of the athlete's gender; were the oarswomen from Eastern Europe in fact women? Furthermore, the size, strength and dominance of Eastern Bloc oarswomen made some in the international rowing community question whether these athletes were using performance enhancing substances. It was argued that the 1000 metre racing distance ensured that women's rowing was a power event, and thus the use of anabolic steroids could easily influence the outcomes of women's races.

While many raised questions regarding women's heavyweight international rowing, there were others who looked to promote women's rowing for smaller

individuals. Lightweight women's rowing had grown in popularity in a number of nations and a few people wanted to see races for these oarswomen included on the international racing program. However, unlike heavyweight rowing, lightweight rowing had often been perceived as inferior because the rowers were small in size and were weaker. Thus, lightweight oarswomen were doubly cursed; they were women, which made them inferior to men and they were lightweights, which made them inferior to heavyweight rowers. After careful negotiations, lightweight oarswomen did find a place on the international racing program.

The Change of Women's Racing Distance to 2000 metres and the Introduction of Lightweight Women's Rowing

After gaining entrance into the European championships, world championships, and the Olympic Games, many female rowing administrators set their attention to change the distance of oarswomen's international racing events. Originally shortened because of the alleged biologically determined physical inferiority of women and furthermore designed to maintain the femininity of female participants, the international rowing community came to realise during the 1970s and 1980s that the 1000 metres racing distance actually solidified women's rowing as a power event, making the use of anabolic steroids an attractive option to those seeking to win competitions. In a 1983 letter to President Keller, Chuter, who at the time was the men's Senior National Coach and Director of Coaching for the ARA, argued that in order for women to win a medal at the international level, the use of steroids, "particularly in the "crew" events," was a necessity.¹

In particular, Eastern European athletes were targeted as steroid abusers throughout the Cold War period. From the beginning of women's inclusion in the 1954 European championships, Eastern Bloc crews dominated women's competitive international rowing and had won almost eighty two percent of the available medals between 1954 and 1984.² As Hoberman has indicated, we "now know that the East German authorities mobilized over a thousand scientists, physicians and trainers in its programme to develop successful athletes by means of anabolic steroids."³ However, during the Cold War there was no evidence that these athletes were using steroids. It was the success of Eastern European crews, coupled with the visibly larger size of oarswomen from this region that prompted accusations of performance enhancing substance abuse from the Western sport administrators, athletes, and the media, who castigated these oarswomen as not 'real' women.

Rumours surfaced that the use of illegal performance enhancing substances was not the only reason Eastern European oarswomen dominated international rowing.⁴ Elite Eastern European oarswomen's larger size gave the appearance that they looked 'manly' and unfeminine, different from their female competitors from the West. The Western print and television media feared that the superiority of female athletes from the Eastern Bloc would ruin Western athletes' chances to win Olympic and world championships medals. They ridiculed the "strong Red ladies" and were instrumental in implying 'deviant' sexuality of successful Eastern Bloc female athletes.⁵ Western athletes were praised for their "good looks and charming ways," while competitors who opted to be "athletes first, girls second" were ridiculed for their "overdeveloped muscles and underdeveloped glands."⁶ They referred to Eastern Bloc female athletes as Amazons,

and commented on their ambiguous sexual appearance. Hargreaves argued that “athletes who are heavily muscled, small-breasted, and do not display on their bodies the usual insignia of conventional femininity, face insinuations about defeminization.”⁷ When successful Western female athletes also possessed masculine characteristics, journalists searched to find evidence of physical femininity as a means of justifying their “masculine physical ability.”⁸ The pervasive assumption that athletic excellence was incompatible with femininity and heterosexuality was rampant. It was speculated that some Eastern Bloc oarswomen were in fact men disguised as women.

The wide-spread concern that these ‘unfeminine’ female athletes were dominating international sport, ultimately out-performing Western athletes, prompted physicians and sport administrators to re-examine the biological and social definitions of femininity.⁹ Lenskyj has stated, “Clearly, sexual ambiguity, whether clinical or social, posed a threat to compulsory heterosexuality and male dominance.”¹⁰ Cahn has argued that the deeper-seated anxiety of the disturbance of feminine beauty was pervasive because, “The presence of powerful women athletes struck at the roots of male dominance in American society – the seemingly natural physical superiority of men.”¹¹ However, this “gender disorder” concerned both women and men and those in decision-making positions in competitive international sport established what they thought was the ultimate way to clarify sexual ambiguity. Thus, sex testing was introduced to the international sport community.

The IOC and its Medical Commission launched sex testing at the 1968 Games in Mexico City, as a way to prevent men from competing in women’s events. Originally a visual examination performed by a gynaecologist at or prior to competition, sex testing

required female athletes to 'prove' their gender. Over time, sex testing became more technologically advanced with the advent of chromosomal testing and the formerly invasive physical examination was replaced by a simple swabbing of the inner cheek of female athletes. Scientists and physicians began to look for chromosomal anomalies in female athletes rather than sex characteristics to determine whether or not athletes were in fact women. Lenskyj argued that "certain athletes," those who displayed visual signs of maleness, "were considered guilty of "masculinity" until proven innocent."¹²

This form of gender verification also subliminally "symbolized the idea of male athletic superiority."¹³ Hargreaves has argued "The femininity control test, which is obligatory for all female Olympic competitors, is the most potent symbol of the concern to prove that there is an absolute distinction between the sexes."¹⁴ Female athletes were required to 'prove' themselves according to heterosexual standards of femininity. Naturally muscular and flat-chested women were specifically targeted as sexually ambiguous and were scrutinized with particular insensitivity during testing.¹⁵ Lenskyj noted:

Following the 1968 Olympics, the chief sex tester, Ludwig Prokop, told reporters that his examination of 911 female athletes had convinced him that sports made them ugly, with hard, stringy bodies and, in some cases, hair on their chests.¹⁶

While the concern regarding masculine and sexually ambiguous athletes became an important part of international sport during the Cold War, Hall has stated:

Sex testing arose out of a contradiction: Olympic competition for women was becoming more rigorous, requiring athletes to be stronger, faster, and increasingly competitive; yet, at the same time they must *look* like women, and, most important of all, their femaleness had to be "scientifically" assured.¹⁷

What is even more interesting, no male Olympic athletes have ever had to be part of “masculinity control” testing, because no one had been concerned that a woman would, or could, ever impersonate a man to compete in an athletic competition.

Eager to ‘protect’ oarswomen from cheating athletes, FISA took the lead from the IOC and discussed the introduction of gender testing at the 1972 European championships.¹⁸ Jøgen C. Madsen, President Dansk Forening for Rosport (DFR), argued that FISA must protect oarswomen against those men who tried to gain an advantage by disguising themselves and racing in the women’s category; this was simply unfair for men to compete against women.¹⁹ Yet, due to “a difference of opinion on how to conduct the test ... no sex tests had been carried out at the 1972 Women’s European Championships.”²⁰ Mr. Neumann of the DDR suggested that, rather than FISA conducting gender tests at every championship, each female competitor should be tested at home and given “a license on which the sex of the holder would be certified in accordance with rules to be laid down by F.I.S.A.”²¹ Neumann was also concerned with the potential harm that female athletes could encounter during these tests, and more so with the inconvenience they rendered on organisers. He argued that, “Sex tests gave rise not only to psychological problems, but also constituted a heavy burden on the organisers of a championships regatta.”²² Because of the complications associated with conducting these tests, FISA did not introduce gender testing at either the European championships or the world championships prior to 1976. Yet, when women’s events had been accepted by the IOC and added to the Olympic program, gender testing again became a contentious issue for the international rowing federation.

As a result of the IOC's regulations regarding "Femininity control," when women's events were added to the Olympic program in 1976, oarswomen were required to undergo gender testing. Dr. H Howard of the FISA Medical Commission wrote to each affiliated national rowing federation prior to the 1976 Games and informed them of the gender testing that was to take place in Montréal. He stated:

The Femininity control of all the competitors participating in the women's sporting events in the 1976 Olympic Games shall be carried out in accordance with the decisions and instructions of the Medical Commission of the International Olympic Committee. The result of this examination will not be made public out of deference to the human rights of the individual. Competitors who have been registered as females must report to the femininity control head office as soon as possible after arrival.²³

Arguably both the IOC and FISA were eager to protect oarswomen from potential cheaters, but FISA delegates were particularly interested in protecting the federation's image and a positive test at the Olympic Games would give the world the impression that women's rowing was filled with men. The delegates agreed that preliminary tests should be conducted "at home" prior to arrival in Montréal:

Sex tests would be carried out for the first time at the 1976 Olympic Regatta in Montreal. In order to avoid a possible embarrassment, Dr. Howald urged national federations to make sure athletes took this test before leaving for Montreal.²⁴

Fortunately for athletes and the international rowing federation, no oarswomen tested 'male' at the 1976 Olympic Games. DeFrantz, Lau, Otzetova, and Smith recalled their experiences with the femininity control at the Olympic Games and that they were given an identification card that indicated that they were indeed female. While many of the participants indicated that gender testing was ridiculous, there were some who admitted that when they were racing during the Cold War they questioned the gender validity of some of their competitors from Communist nations.

When gender testing did not prove that Eastern oarswomen were men masquerading as women, accusations of drug abuse took precedent. Participants talked about some of the dramatic physical changes that were observed in their competitors over just one season and claimed that the size of the participants were *"just shocking ... some of the women were grossly over weight, grossly over weight! And I would have thought there was some drug abuse there."*²⁵ Another participant explained, *"you could see that there was something a little different about our competitors from that part of the world. And you know. We knew, but we didn't know, but we knew."*²⁶ Despite the allegations:

FISA never caught any East German rower testing positive for illegal chemicals, including the 1990 season when year-round random testing during training was carried out ... It was two Russian rowers who first were found to be using steroids, revealed by a test at Mannheim regatta in 1980. "If I had tested their whole team, they would have had no rowers at the Moscow Olympics," [Hans] Howald (the Swiss doctor who retired as Chair of the FISA Sports Medicine Commission in 1990 after sixteen years of service) claimed.²⁷

This widespread, though unproven at the time, belief that all Eastern European oarswomen abused anabolic steroids prompted Rosie Mayglothling, ARA Women's Coach and future member of the FISA Women's Commission, to raise the issue of increasing the women's racing distance at their annual meeting. She argued that:

...it would make quite a difference if we had a longer course distance [for women to race] because of the physiology of taking steroids. By taking steroids, weight training can take place every day during the winter to increase strength a lot faster and this provides the strength to deal with a 1000m course. If the course distance is increased, the strength factor becomes less important and it then becomes an endurance race.²⁸

Chuter concurred with this argument and added, "middle and long distance (sub-maximal) performance, i.e., 6 minutes or more, is less stressful upon the human organism than prolonged sprints, (maximal), type performances, i.e., 2 ½ - 3 ½ minute performances;" as well, "long distance performance is easier to train for because of the

lower anaerobic content in the performance.”²⁹ Additionally, the organisation of regattas would be easier for national federations.³⁰ She concluded that if the women’s racing distance was equal to the men’s then the “optimum physique” of the female rower “would become less power orientated” and would fit into a better overall image of women’s rowing.³¹

As mentioned in the two previous chapters, part of the FISA Women’s Commission’s original goals was to change the image associated with competitive international women’s rowing from overweight oarswomen to lean, competitive athletes. Dieterle pointed out that by lengthening the women’s racing distance crews were forced to alter their training regimes to prepare for an aerobic race rather than a power event.³² This would also benefit FISA and the international rowing community by changing “*the figures of the women*” racing.³³ The pervasive image of successful international oarswomen as large, bulky, ugly women was wide-spread throughout the sporting world. It was believed that by doubling the women’s racing distance, the image of international oarswomen would conform more naturally to the perceived ideal image of the heterosexual feminine athlete, long legged, sinewy, and beautiful.

There were however concerns about the doubling of the women’s racing distance. Some members of the FISA Women’s Commission were concerned that lengthening the women’s racing distance would make the disparity between the crews even more embarrassing.³⁴ Eastern European oarswomen convincingly and systematically beat crews from Western nations by a considerable amount. By doubling the women’s racing distance it was feared that losing crews would be humiliated by the distance with which

they were defeated. Before they could come to a conclusion on this issue another came to the forefront. This time the issue of lightweight women's rowing.

Although much of the focus of women's international rowing up until this time was placed on heavyweight or open women's rowing, many female rowing administrators were sensitive to the fact that not all women who rowed fit into this category, hence smaller athletes, especially those who weighed less than sixty kilograms, were neglected by the international racing community. Furthermore, in order to expand the sport to a more global market, it was argued that lightweight women's rowing needed to be added to the international racing program. DeAngelis argued:

*... by the time I ... [became a FISA administrator], men were already rowing lightweight [at the world championships], and why shouldn't women? And I just figured it was an equality sort of issue. I really believed that for the sport of rowing that for international development, that lightweight [rowing] is a really, really important part of our sport.*³⁵

In 1975, ARA's Penny Chuter proposed the introduction of lightweight women's rowing events at the 1978 world championships to FISA Women's Commission Chair Gambonde-Vos.³⁶ Men's lightweight rowing had been on the competitive racing program since 1974 and had since grown considerably in popularity. The introduction of a weight-defined racing category arguably had opened the doors to a wider audience of male athletes and increased the opportunities for oarsmen who weighed less than seventy-two kilograms to race at the international level. In a letter to the FISA Women's Commission Chair, Chuter argued:

...the instigation of a lightweight championships for women would encourage greater participation throughout – would encourage lightweight rowing at [the] national level and would give a chance to those excellent athletes who are just not big enough to compete on equal terms at heavyweight level. ... [The] World Championships encourage a narrow and vertical structural participation whereas

the introduction of lightweights would increase the breadth of participation on a wider scale.³⁷

Several national rowing federations agreed with Chuter, although Gambon-de-Vos was less supportive. In a statement to Eleanor M. Lester of the ARA, Gambon-de-Vos made clear FISA's and her disinterest in the introduction of lightweight women's rowing, "FISA management is only willing to introduce a new class if it is sure that such a class is reasonable development in many countries."³⁸ Aware that Eastern Bloc national rowing federations, the most successful elite women's programs in the world, were uninterested in establishing lightweight women's rowing programs, Gambon-de-Vos was concerned that lightweight competitive international rowing would not flourish. If FISA was to create a separate weight category for lightweight oarswomen and the races were not competitive because of lack of support and quality athletes, it would give male delegates evidence that women did not belong in competitive international rowing.

Furthermore, the biologically determined inferiority of oarswomen compared to their male counterparts was compounded by the fact that lightweight women were smaller, weaker, and their races were slower. Thus, not only were oarswomen considered substandard to male rowers, but lightweight women were considered inferior to heavyweight women.

FISA's limited recognition of lightweight women's competitive rowing not surprisingly had an impact on the ways in which others in the international rowing community perceived this discipline. Late twentieth century competitive international rowing discourse dictated the value of lightweight women's rowing, or lack thereof, ensuring the marginalisation of lightweight women in competitive international rowing.³⁹

Former Canadian lightweight oarswoman Colleen Miller noted, “*there would be times when we wouldn't*” be treated the same as the heavyweights.⁴⁰ She added:

*Women [were] not [considered] as good [as the men], and then ... [when] you're a lightweight woman, oh my gosh [that was considered worse]. And then there would be this sort of stigma, because you're making weight, because lightweight women are wacky and weird, it is true ... they go off the deep end all the time and lose it. But of course you'd lose it, you know if you didn't have a lot of food in your system [you would]. There would be a lot of heavyweight men or women who would lose it and no one would make a comment, but because you're a lightweight woman ... it's like oh, they were ... [the] wacky ones.*⁴¹

The physical limitations of lightweight women coupled with the perceived psychological side effects of continuous weight management rendered these women pariahs.

Although many in the international rowing community did not perceive lightweight women's rowing as legitimate, these same individuals could not deny that lightweight oarswomen did conform to traditional heterosexual feminine norms. Despite their incredible strength and endurance, lightweight women were the antithesis of the perceived “*fat Russians*” as they were smaller, lighter, and less muscular. The paradox of what an acceptable woman should look like was embedded in the discussions regarding who was an acceptable oarswoman. Large, muscular, ‘manly’ oarswomen were unacceptable, but so were lighter, slower, smaller female athletes.

Dissatisfied with the lack of international support for lightweight women's rowing, Patricia Ann Wilkinson of the National Women's Rowing Association (NWRA) in the United States set out on a quest to promote the event. The National Association of Amateur Oarsmen (NAAO) and the NWRA had agreed in 1980 to propose to the organisers of the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta, Canada's largest international club regatta, the inclusion of special international lightweight women's events on the 1981 program.⁴² Before Canadian Amateur Rowing Association (CARA) President Ben

TeKamp would agree to the proposal, he demanded that Wilkinson prove that other international federations were interested in sending representative lightweight women's crews to race.⁴³ Wilkinson wrote to forty federations and asked for their support:

We are very much interested in developing international level races for lightweight women. Lightweights may weigh as much as 130 pounds, but the boat, excluding coxswain, must average no more than 125 pounds. One of the regattas that would be excellent for international class competition for lightweight women in the Royal Canadian Henleys [*sic*], being held this year from August 5 to 9, in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. We feel the Henleys [*sic*] would be an ideal regatta for starting international competition for lightweight women because of its popularity among many countries, and could serve as a stepping stone for interesting other international regatta sponsors in races for lightweight women. Some of the countries that have sent crews to the Henleys [*sic*] include Canada, Australia, Mexico, West Germany, United States, and Cuba. We have held discussions with the President of the Canadian Amateur Rowing Association, Mr. Ben TeKamp, concerning the feasibility of the Henleys [*sic*] hosting special National team events for lightweight women. The crews in these events would be representing their countries. Mr. TeKamp feels that it would be possible for the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta to host National Team events in the four and the eight for lightweight women if other FISA countries are interested in participating.⁴⁴

Wilkinson then wrote to inform Gambon-de-Vos of the steps she had taken to secure lightweight women's rowing on the Henley program and asked for her help.⁴⁵ Her efforts were quickly squashed by FISA once Keller became aware of the American's work.irate, President Keller wrote to Wilkinson and informed her that the actions she had taken were "unacceptable" and FISA would not "tolerate" her initiative.⁴⁶ He wrote to each national federation and expressed his dissatisfaction with Wilkinson's efforts and requested that they pay no attention to her or her requests.⁴⁷ Keller then went one step further and wrote to CARA to denounce Wilkinson's labours and demanded that the federation "see to it that no such races ... [be] included on the programme of the forthcoming Canadian Henley Regatta."⁴⁸

Why would a president who had proven his support of women's competitive international rowing by ensuring that women's events were included on the 1976 Olympic program, be so resistant to lightweight women's international racing? One explanation was given at the 1981 FISA Ordinary Congress. Keller made clear that only a few national federations hosted sanctioned lightweight women's rowing races and the majority of European federations did not.⁴⁹ The Women's Commission echoed these sentiments and added that "the Eastern Block [*sic*] Countries at that time preferred the introduction of Junior rowing in the FISA calendar."⁵⁰ Another explanation is perhaps that Wilkinson had not gone through the "appropriate channels" to secure a place for lightweight women's rowing on the racing program. Keller was incensed by this lack of respect for FISA as the sole governing body responsible for international regattas.⁵¹ He believed that Wilkinson's efforts, although well intended, had done nothing to further her cause. She had tried to make changes for lightweight oarswomen, but was unsuccessful because she did not seek the support from those who regulated the sport at the international level.

Despite many FISA delegates' apprehensions and Keller's refusal to work with Wilkinson, there were some delegates who supported lightweight women's rowing.⁵² These supporters negotiated with Keller and convinced him to give CARA permission to hold "a limited competition between lightweight women from the United States, Canada, and Australia" at the 1982 Royal Canadian Henley regatta.⁵³ In turn, this opened the doors for the United States Rowing Association (USRA) and the NWRA to press the matter further with the international federation. The USRA's executive director, Christopher Blackwall, informed the newly appointed FISA Women's Commission Chair

Magdalena Sarbochová, that the members of his national sport governing body were eager to promote lightweight women's rowing.⁵⁴ He indicated that they believed that "many women in other countries ... would compete in [lightweight] rowing if such [a] category was allowed."⁵⁵

The United States women's and men's rowing federations looked again to their neighbours to the north for support. CARA was scheduled to host the 1984 FISA Lightweight Championships regatta in Montréal. Blackwell contacted James Joy, CARA's technical co-ordinator, and suggested "exhibition events [for lightweight women be] included on the schedule of the 1984 Lightweight Championships."⁵⁶ Before replying to Blackwell, CARA's President, Samuel Craig wrote to Keller personally. Clearly the FISA president did not support any suggestion of international lightweight women's events, even at regattas that FISA did not hold governance over, without permission being granted from the international federation beforehand. Craig formally requested that Keller and FISA sanction a series of lightweight women's demonstration events at the 1984 championship regatta.⁵⁷ He proposed that races for the lightweight women's single scull, double scull, four without coxswain, and eight with coxswain be included on the program.⁵⁸ Members of the international federation were hesitant for a variety of reasons. Primarily, the introduction of lightweight women's events on the international program brought with it new issues for FISA and hosting nations. International regattas were already two weeks in length, with the women's events first, followed by the lightweight men's, and finally capped by the heavyweight men's events in the second week. The addition of a new category would only lengthen the program, ultimately raising the cost associated with hosting.

I argue that at this point Keller had an epiphany. The lightweight oarswomen could serve as "guinea pigs" to test women racing the full 2000 metres course. Furthermore, this would provide FISA delegates with concrete evidence of oarswomen's physical capabilities over the 2000 metres race. Keller thus made the suggestion that CARA set the racing distance for the lightweight women's demonstration events equal to the men's distance.⁵⁹ The timing was perfect and the suggestion served two purposes; if the lightweight women raced the full 2000 metres and the events failed, it proved that women were incapable of racing the men's distance and that lightweight women had no place on the international racing program. Conversely, if the women raced that full distance and the events were a success, FISA had its proof that the women's international competitive racing distance could be lengthened to 2000 metres. If this occurred, the matter of formally including lightweight women's events on the international program could be addressed at a later date when the congress was ready.

Craig fully supported Keller's proposal. The lengthening of the women's racing distance made the organising of the championships significantly easier for CARA as they would not have to deal with the installation of starting gates for the women's races at the 1000 metres mark. Craig assured Keller that he had "no reservation about these women rowing 2000 metres."⁶⁰ In 1977, CARA had successfully changed the racing distance for the high school championships, for both men and women, to 1500 metres, which included events for fifty-seven kilogram lightweight girls.⁶¹

Not all rowing administrators were supportive of Keller's suggestion. Several members of the American federation argued that the lightweights should race the "same distance as the elite [heavyweight] women ... and to only change when they" did.⁶²

Others argued that all the competitions that led up to Montréal were 1000 metres, and therefore, the oarswomen would be inadequately prepared.⁶³ Debby DeAngelis (née Ayars), a strong advocate for lightweight women's rowing in the United States, disagreed with her colleagues and stated, "I think we must be forward thinking and try 2000 m. from the start."⁶⁴

Leading up to the lightweight regatta, anticipation mounted. Would lightweight women be able to race the full 2000 metres course? Would their performance be strong enough to win Keller's support? It was at these championships that lightweight oarswomen first publicly challenged wide spread opinion that they were unfit to race at the international level. Wes Kuran, a Canadian umpire at these championships, noted that FISA President Thomas Keller was happy with the lightweight women's results in Montréal:

His comment was that he was very impressed with the caliber [*sic*] of the lightweight women races ... and that it was definitely worthwhile including [lightweight women's races] in the Worlds but it is not a given that it will be accepted [*sic*] by other members of FISA and especially the Eastern Block [*sic*].⁶⁵

The success of the lightweight women's demonstration events in Montréal reassured tentative FISA delegates that women could indeed race the full 2000 metres.⁶⁶

At the 1985 FISA Extraordinary Congress, it was reported that "in competitive sport, it is recognized that endurance is better for women than force."⁶⁷ When put to a vote, the delegates agreed to change the women's racing distance from its original 1000 metres, to that equal with the men's, 2000 metres.⁶⁸ This change was extremely significant in the history of women's competitive international rowing because as DeFrantz noted, "*It just, one thing was remarkable and wonderful to have the women's races; on the other hand, we were still isolated and discriminated against.*"⁶⁹ Several of

the participants, Chuter, DeFrantz, DeAngelis, Lau, Otzetova, and Smith, agreed that they were happy to compete at the international level, but they recognised that the only reason they were racing 1000 metres was because it had been perceived as a more appropriate racing distance for the delicate nature of female participants.

The decision to change the women's racing distance to 2000 metres affected women's competitive international rowing entirely. Fenner explained, "*there were huge changes immediately between ... that time when the racing went to 2000 metres, just massive.*"⁷⁰ The majority of elite Eastern European oarswomen retired prior to the 1985 world championships and in the wake of the "*fat Russians*" came tall, lean, endurance trained oarswomen.

In her role as member of the FISA Women's Commission, Dieterle was involved in the discussions regarding the change in the women's racing distance. She indicated that prior to the change she, and other FISA Women's Commission members, spoke with oarswomen to ask their opinions regarding racing 2000 metres. Those with whom she spoke indicated that they agreed with the change and added that because women's rowing would no longer be a power event, the oarswomen could develop their racing strategy.⁷¹ Lau, who had retired from racing by 1985 but had begun coaching, commented that it was easier for women to race 2000 metres, "*No it was not difficult ... the rowers [who] were in the front at 1000 metres, they were also in the front at 2000 metres. It was not important [whether we raced] 1000 metres or 2000 metres.*"⁷² She did however note that there was a larger disparity between the crews at the finish line over 2000 metres, but this she explained eventually "*worked itself out.*"⁷³

Not all athletes were completely satisfied with the change in the women's racing distance. Smith was the only participant in this study whose career spanned both racing distances and commented on the difference:

...it was a significant shift. It was like telling a sprinter that she would now run the 400 or 800 metre[s], it was huge. And I guess one thing I found a little insulting, was just that they just did it. I do remember someone, who I now know was a member of the women's commission, talking to Betts and me after we were coming off the water in Lucerne just casually asking us, "so what do you think about changing to 2000 metres?" And I'm sure our response was "well I don't know. I haven't really thought about it." We were totally unaware of the context of the question. But, I guess that was their consulting. I remember thinking after it had been done, can you imagine telling a track athlete, "okay, just to let you know your races has been doubled in distance." As an athlete, that was the first time I ever felt that something was just imposed on me without an opportunity to respond. Ultimately I think the decision was the right one. It would have been nice if we had have been involved in the decision. The process was certainly not one we would follow today.⁷⁴

Clearly however this Canadian oarswoman was able to make the transition, as she helped her crew win bronze medals in the women's four with coxswain at both the 1985 and 1986 world championships.

At the same FISA congress in which the women's racing distance was doubled, lightweight women's events also came to be formally accepted on the international racing program, although the decision was not unanimous.⁷⁵ DeAngelis explained that prior to the FISA meeting and the formal congress vote, the Women's Commission voted on both the doubling of women's racing distance and the addition of lightweight women's events, *"the vote in the Women's Commission for [changing the women's racing distance to] 2000 metres was unanimous, but the vote for lightweights was three to two."*⁷⁶

At Risk of Elimination

During the same time that FISA discussed the introduction of lightweight women's rowing events at the Olympic Games, women's heavyweight international

rowing faced a potentially devastating obstacle, low participation levels. In a letter to Sarbochová, Sveica discussed her concern regarding the decreasing number of entries in the women's events at the world championships. She pointed out to the Women's Commission chair that only fifty-nine boats from twenty-three nations had taken part in the 1986 world championships, which was much less than the record number of seventy-eight boats that had competed at the 1979 championships.⁷⁷ What was even more alarming to Sveica was that sixty percent of the entries at the 1986 championships, or thirty-five boats, had been entered by only six countries, Canada, GDR, Romania, the United States, USSR (all with six boats each), and Bulgaria (five entries).⁷⁸ She argued that the decline in entries for heavyweight women's events was a direct "consequence of staging LW (lightweight) Ch-ps (championships) for women."⁷⁹ This statement was not out of the ordinary as there were several others on the Women's Commission who did not support lightweight women's rowing, "*there was never a consensus whether lightweight women [should be on the program], there were people on that Commission that didn't think women should be rowing lightweight.*"⁸⁰

Worried about the decreasing number of entries at the world championships, female rowing enthusiasts throughout the world began to discuss ways to promote heavyweight women's rowing. Rosie Mayglothling, women's national coach for Great Britain during the 1980s, proposed that a conference be held to allow for the exchange of ideas between heavyweight women's coaches in the international rowing community:

I am sure that it is in the interests of both eastern and Western nations to share their knowledge and recognise the problems that each group has in providing a good Heavyweight women's team. Unless some co-operation takes place it would appear that the number of women's Heavyweight events will certainly be cut and eventually the whole area may be in jeopardy.⁸¹

She worried that more nations supported lightweight women's rowing than heavyweight. Mayglothling was also concerned that the FISA delegates believed that they had "solved" the problem of heavyweight women's rowing by changing the women's racing distance to 2000 metres and changing the women's boat categories, four with coxswain to four without coxswain, when in actuality there was a far greater concern on the horizon.⁸² She argued, "we really need to swing the whole of FISA's might behind the problem, or women's Heavyweight rowing will not be a strong feature of International rowing in the near future."⁸³ Mayglothling and other female coaches and administrators were concerned that FISA might eliminate women's events from the international racing program if there were not enough entrants in world championship events.

Fearing that they would lose some of the ground that pioneering female rowing administrators had fought for prior to the inception of the women's European championships 1954, the FISA Women's Commission set out to encourage more countries to create opportunities for women in international rowing. The Commission organised a Women in Sport Conference and brought in experts from around the world to discuss ways in which they could promote women's participation not only in rowing, but also in elite international sport. The discussions that took place during the conference led the commission to develop further initiatives to promote women's international rowing, including: establishing a mentorship program for female coaches from developing nations; identifying female journalists and working with them for better coverage of women's events; funding emerging nations to develop a women's international rowing program; gathering medical evidence to support the notion that rowing is a healthy activity for females; and offering clinics for "women only" in both coaching and

officiating to increase the number of women qualified to work at the international level.⁸⁴ Although these initiatives were a positive step forward for promoting women's competitive international rowing, the benefits would not be apparent for several years and the Women's Commission had an immediate crisis on their hands.

In 1989, Keller made public his opinion regarding the limited number of countries entered in women's events at the world championships. The FISA president expressed his distress that there had been no elimination heats for either the women's quadruple sculls or the women's eight events.⁸⁵ Keller explained that the international rowing community needed to place a greater emphasis on the development of women's elite heavyweight rowing, or women's events faced the possibility of being removed from the international racing programs.⁸⁶ In 1990 a more definite threat was made. The president stated that unless ten or more women's eights started at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, the event would be removed from the program.⁸⁷ He urged all national rowing federations "to work towards a strong participation of women at the Olympic Games."⁸⁸

Questions surfaced regarding why it was so difficult to get entries in to women's eight and quadruple sculls. By the late 1980s, a number of countries had established federal legislation that prevented discrimination based on a person's gender. As indicated in chapter five, sex discrimination in sport was not a problem in Eastern Bloc countries; sport administrators from these countries were eager to promote women's participation. In the West there were several countries that did not prohibit women's participation in competitive international rowing, but neither did they actively promote or encourage women to become involved. Mayglothling argued that those countries that

had not created gender equity legislation had “free licence to discriminate against women and for that reason, in rowing.”⁸⁹ Many of these countries have had a tradition of elite heavyweight men’s rowing yet they have infrequently sent women’s crews to the world championships. For example, between 1954 and 1990, Italy had entered the men’s eight race at the European championship, world championships, and Olympic Games twenty-five times, but had failed to enter a women’s eight during this period. This lack of worldwide support for women’s international rowing was a concern for FISA; there were only a few countries that unfailingly entered the larger boat categories, such as the women’s eight, which put these events at risk for elimination.

Additionally, women continued to have several concerns about taking part in heavyweight rowing. Some women continued to be troubled about appearing ‘mannish’ given that rowing helped individuals to develop a large, strong body that can handle the training load associated with elite sport participation. As well, certain styles of rowing were considered more appropriate for women’s participation, Mayglothling argued that many Scandinavian countries considered sculling a more suitable form of rowing than sweep rowing, as it was considered more appropriate for the development of the female physique.⁹⁰

There was one other issue that the FISA Women’s Commission had to contend with, the fall of Communism. As previously mentioned, Eastern Bloc nations had dominated women’s competitive international rowing since its entrance onto the international racing program. Between 1954 and 1988, Communist women’s rowing teams won 177 of 184 gold medals at the European championships, world championships, and Olympic Games. As well, these countries routinely sent women’s

crews to compete in larger boat categories. For example, the USSR had entered a women's eight every year except for one, 1984 due to the boycott of the Los Angeles Olympic Games.

After the fall of Communism, Eastern European countries focussed their attention and finances on issues other than sport. Tina Fisher Forde wrote, "For the first time in 40 years, people of the East European nations are deciding for themselves what's important. With economies struggling and – in some countries – hunger and sickness to be addressed, elite sport may not be at the top of the list."⁹¹ Former United States National Technical Director Kris Korzeniowski also worried about the outcomes of the fall of Communism for competitive sport, but warned that people should not become overly concerned:

Their women will figure out, my gosh, I can travel, I can have a husband and live a regular life without sweating three times a day. They will be the same as in Western society. So for maybe one or two years they will still be going on the momentum of what they have. And then – we suspect – we are all afraid – it might affect women's rowing in the world when they go down. Right now before we jump the gun, we have to wait and see what happens.⁹²

Rowing coaches and administrators from around the world admitted that retention in elite women's rowing after the age of eighteen was difficult, for anyone, even those nations with "sophisticated programs, adequate funding and non-sexist orientation."⁹³ Italian coach Franco Parnigotto admitted that Italian "families don't like girls to build muscles."⁹⁴ British International Performance Director Bruce Grainger stated, "If there's any indication they (girls) might become 'macho' [they don't row]."⁹⁵ Mexican coach Pablo Span, who at the time was the FISA North American representative, argued that most male coaches in Latin America were unsure of how to work with girls and women, "You have to give straight answers to girls ... You normally don't have to give straight

answers to boys. But with [a girl], you answer exactly what she asks you. Men are not used to this.”⁹⁶ Fisher Forde speculated that Eastern European women would continue to row, partially because of their excellent facilities and tradition of dominance in rowing.⁹⁷ She was not entirely correct.

With the fall of Communism, the face of women’s international rowing was revolutionised. Smith indicated that when she came back to international rowing as an administrator in 1993, she noticed a significant change in women’s international racing; the traditionally dominant countries, Bulgaria, East German, Russia, and Poland, did not have competitive crews.⁹⁸ Countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia began to win races that had previously been unattainable because of the Eastern Bloc sporting machine.

Eastern European sport changed dramatically after the fall of Communism and everyone involved felt the impact. Hartmut Buschbacher, a former East German women’s rowing coach who became the American National Women’s Sweep Coach after the fall of Communism, indicated “Before, it was easy to go into sport [in Eastern Europe], but now, it’s difficult – there’s no money, no coaches, no time for the young athletes.”⁹⁹ Because of the lack of finances available to support elite sport, the majority of Eastern European coaches took positions elsewhere in the international rowing community. Many of the highly successful rowing coaches from the DDR moved to coach in other nations because as Dodd has indicated, “Only about twenty of the 200 coaches found work in the new united German rowing federation and half of those jobs were guaranteed up to the 1992 Olympic Games.”¹⁰⁰ One of the more controversial coach relocations was that of Jürgen Grobler, East Germany’s former women’s chief

coach to become Leander Club's first professional coach. The members of Leander Club had prided themselves on the club's continued 'amateur' status; they had never hired a coach to work with athletes nor had they ever paid their athletes to compete. Furthermore, Grobler had come from a system that systematically paid coaches, and supported the professionalisation of Olympic athletes during a time when athletes who competed in the Olympic Games were supposed to be 'amateurs.' Grobler was not the only professional coach who was recruited by Western national sport organisations after the fall of Communism and by 1991 there were former DDR rowing coaches working in numerous countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States.¹⁰¹

Lau herself also faced difficulties when the wall came down and the East German sport system changed. Under the united Germany, the West took control over sport and everything changed. Once a dominant country in international sport competition, especially women's rowing, the DDR was completely disbanded, leaving numerous coaches questioning their job security. They had good reason to worry. Dieterle explained that when the two Germanys united and the sporting systems came under the regulation of the west, there was resentment towards the Eastern coaches.¹⁰² Throughout the Cold War the FDR teams consistently finished behind their eastern counterparts in all sporting endeavours. They were "*never able to get the gold because the DDR was there.*"¹⁰³

Lau wanted to remain in the country in which she had become a very successful and famous competitive international rowing coach. She applied for the German women's sculling coach position after the 1990 world championships, a regatta in which

her crews had won gold and silver in the women's quadruple sculls and double sculls. Despite her credentials, officials of the new DRV informed her that she would not be Germany's women's sculling coach. She would now coach the juniors.¹⁰⁴ Lau was shocked, "*they have a problem with me, or with Potsdam, I don't know.*"¹⁰⁵ Dieterle argued that she believed that the West did not reject Lau as an international because she was a woman, but because she was a successful coach from the former East Germany and West Germans were resentful of the Communist sport system that had methodically dominated their Western counterpart for decades.¹⁰⁶

There is a contradiction in this statement. Although Dieterle argued that Lau was not rejected because she was a woman, she pointed out that the highly successful female coaches from the former East German were hired to coach the junior international crews, or rather, that they were "*pushed to the juniors' level.*"¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, she explained why she believed that the female coaches were forced to coach the junior athletes, "*because juniors, children, they are part of women.*"¹⁰⁸ She agreed that the German rowing program is "*all changing, changing more into the Western system, and we have much less [female] coaches and the men are then there.*"¹⁰⁹

Without the highly organised Eastern European rowing federations to send women's crews to the world championships, the FISA Women's Commission had to convince other national rowing federations to commit to enter crews in the larger boat categories, primarily the women's eight. The commission reported:

The beginning of 1990 was characterised by political changes in eastern [*sic*] Europe. Beside a positive impact, the changes have brought about negative consequences for sport in all its facets ... This indisputable reality threatened the situation in women's rowing particularly, not only concerning participation in World Championships, but importantly the preparation for the Olympics in 1992.¹¹⁰

A letter campaign ensued. The Women's Commission wrote to every FISA affiliated national rowing federation and requested that they consider sending a women's eight to the 1991 world championships. After months of extensive work, entries were submitted for the 1991 world championships and the members of the FISA Women's Commission were able to observe fully the fruit of their labour. A record number of twelve nations had entered women's eights for the up-coming championships; the women's eight was safe, for now.¹¹¹

The Last Component? The Introduction of Lightweight Women's Rowing on the Program of the 1996 Olympic Games

The popularity of lightweight rowing at the world championships prompted FISA to begin discussions about the introduction of events in the Olympic Games. At the 1985 FISA Extraordinary Congress, with IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch in attendance, the debate regarding Olympic lightweight racing ensued. Delegates were very supportive of their future proposal and Canada's Samuel Craig argued, "lightweight rowing was much older than many sports which were part of the Olympic programme ... [the] first world champion [Ned Hanlan] was a lightweight."¹¹² In particular, the West German sporting officials supported since the DRV had introduced lightweight rowing to their national championships racing program in 1925.¹¹³ Canada's Samuel Craig added:

... lightweight rowing was much older than many sports which were part of the Olympic programme, and which were based on classification by weight. He also pointed out the high quality of lightweight racing, a feature of which was the loyalty which it inspired, and in which technique played an important role. This form of racing conformed perfectly with the ideals of Baron Pierre de Coubertin."¹¹⁴

Delegates noted the potential to open "competition up for those in Asia, Africa, and South America," if lightweight rowing events were added to the Olympic program, thus encouraging for participants from all five continents to compete.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Borun Chanda of India argued that since over eighty percent of the world population fit into the definition of a lightweight, these races would improve the calibre of racing because they were highly competitive because there was little physical difference between athletes.¹¹⁶

Bob Wilson, representative from Hong Kong, concluded:

... rowing was certainly one of the purest and most amateur sports, and that an increase in the number of participants in rowing would result in an increase in the proportion of Olympic sportsmen who were truly faithful to the Olympic idea.¹¹⁷

Samaranch was intrigued by the discussion, but was curious about one thing. Why had the delegates only proposed the inclusion of lightweight men's events? "If FISA submitted a request," he said, "it should be a complete one ... involving both men and women ... [given that] It was the IOC's intention to avoid any discrimination against women."¹¹⁸ A little embarrassed and taken aback, FISA retreated to plan a new proposal for the IOC, one that included lightweight women. This discussion regarding the formal addition of lightweight women's rowing to the world championships program was not scheduled to take place until after the meeting with IOC President Samaranch.¹¹⁹ Thus, if FISA had yet to include formally lightweight women's events on the international racing program, the delegates had certainly not considered including lightweight women in their proposal to the IOC. After Samaranch indicated that the FISA proposal would not be accepted unless there were also events for women, a number of rowing administrators pressed the international rowing community to re-examine its proposal and negotiated a place for lightweight oarswomen.

The debate regarding lightweight women's Olympic racing started slowly. By the end of 1986, female and male rowing administrators throughout the world were well aware that FISA had undergone discussions about which lightweight events should be included on the Olympic schedule. In a letter to Sarbochová, DeAngelis indicated, "we should change the Olympic events to add at least one event each for men's and women's lightweights," and added, "the same event for men and women [be added to the program] whatever we do."¹²⁰ Others were less supportive of lightweight women gaining access to the Olympic Games. Sveica also wrote to Sarbochová and indicated that she discouraged the idea of including lightweight women's rowing in the Olympic Games because she was unsure if there would be enough participation throughout the world.¹²¹ Sveica urged the FISA Women's Commission and the entire FISA delegation to postpone their proposal to include lightweight women's rowing until after the federation had assessed whether or not there were enough elite lightweight oarswomen in the world to compete at the Olympic Games.¹²² Sveica's comments were even more curious because the FISA Women's Commission, created by Keller in 1969, was designed to help promote and develop women's competitive international rowing.

Sveica's concerns were widely held by many FISA members and others were anxious about the image that lightweight rowing presented to the world. At the annual FISA Ordinary Congress in 1987, Dr. Theodor Koerner of GDR argued:

To introduce [any] lightweight rowing events in the Olympic Games programme would be to break away from the motto of the Olympic movement: CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS, and from the principle of maximal performance. It would also bring about a chain reaction in which, for example, there would be a lightweight shot-putting event, a basketball competition for the under 1.80m, etc. The public, the media and sports men and women themselves wanted to be chosen according to absolute values. Hence, to eliminate boat classes without weight restriction in favour of lightweight events would be wrong.¹²³

Some delegates believed that lightweight rowers were inferior to heavyweights because of their smaller stature and slower racing times. This type of argument challenged the fundamental principles of Olympism. If the Olympic Games were intended to serve as a venue for the display of athletic excellence where world records are broken, then the introduction of lightweight rowing events was inappropriate. Yet, if the Olympic Games were designed to follow the fundamental principles of Olympism in which, "The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play;" then lightweight rowing events were in fact essential to the Olympic rowing regatta.¹²⁴ The discussions that ensued were heated, with no clear resolution in sight.

The situation became even more problematic when FISA came to realise that there was no possibility for new events to be added to the Olympic program without the removal of existing events. Dodd has quoted Samaranch as saying, "The Olympic bus is full. To take on one more passenger, someone else has to get off."¹²⁵ Because of the ever-increasing size of the Olympic Games, the IOC insisted that new events could be added to the program only if existing events were removed to make room.¹²⁶ The IOC refused to accept competition in the same boat categories for both the lightweight and heavyweight categories, thus, in order to introduce lightweight events, FISA had to decide which equivalent boat size heavyweight events would be eliminated. This set up a cascade of problems throughout the international rowing community. Women, men, coaches, athletes, and administrators were generally supportive of the proposal to introduce lightweight events onto the Olympic program, but not if it resulted in a loss of

events available to heavyweight rowers. At the 1988 Ordinary Congress, Keller indicated that he “fully appreciated the desire of lightweight rowers to be able to take part in the Olympic Games,” but, the president admitted that he “could not accept that this should be at the expense of the heavyweights.”¹²⁷

Arguments and discussions surrounding the introduction of lightweight rowing at the Olympic Games erupted throughout the elite international rowing community. Those who were in favour argued that lightweight rowers could not compete against heavy or open weight athletes who were taller and heavier; that more than two-thirds of the human race were in fact lightweights; and that the introduction of lightweight events enabled more individuals and more countries to row and compete at the Olympic Games. This, in turn, would encourage national Olympic committees from Africa and Asia to recruit rowers to compete at the Olympic Games.¹²⁸ Those who were against the introduction of lightweight Olympic events argued that there should be no restrictions placed on physical size or lightweight athletes would be considered second class; good lightweights were able to successfully compete against heavyweight rowers; Asian countries do in fact have tall and big athletes who could be trained to row. With the introduction of a quota system for qualification to compete in the Olympic Games, lightweight athletes from Third World, or developing nations would not place high enough to qualify for the Games, leaving the lightweight events as championships of the First World; and finally, “A class of super lightweight rowers would be created, and lightweight world championships would be unbalance in pre-Olympic years.”¹²⁹

There was also concern about potential problems with lightweight athletes “making weight.” Prior to competition, athletes must stand on a scale in front of a judge

and “weigh-in” to prove that they weighed less than the weight restriction. For example, lightweight women must weigh less than fifty-nine kilograms and lightweight men must weigh less than seventy-two and a half kilograms. Failure to “make weight” results in the athlete being immediately eliminated from the competition. Yet, most lightweight athletes feel empowered by their weight-making abilities, *“For me it’s a challenge. It was a challenge ... it was fun ... Like I said, it was a challenge, so in that respect I was able to challenge my body.”*¹³⁰ Miller indicated that making weight was not usually a concern:

*I would get down to maybe one hundred and twenty-seven [pounds], even the morning of and sweat off the last pound and a half. And I didn't find that was too much, I wouldn't want to do any more than that, but that was, I could do that enough and I would time it and know how much I could lose and how much I needed to drink and eat for me to be efficient in the race, because we had two hours from the weigh-in to the race.*¹³¹

Despite continual weight management, some lightweight rowers still find that with only days before racing, they weigh more than the lightweight maximum. This realization will often lead athletes to undergo severe weight making practices, including: fasting; the use of diuretics; restricting fluid intake; and intensive exercise in a short period of time to lose excess water weight, also called “sweating down.” There is a widespread belief among the international rowing community, *“if you choose to row lightweight, you bear the consequences.”*¹³² Participants admitted that they generally had little problem making weight, but there were times in which they did have difficulty:

*Ya when I was close to making weight, when I wasn't then it was pretty scary, pretty freaky because you've got a partner, like for me, especially in the last years with Wendy [Wiebe] and you don't want to let down your partner, so you're always, it's sort of like an unspoken word that you'll both do what you needed to do to make average.*¹³³

They also acknowledged that excessive weight loss immediately prior to competition did impact their performance, *"I was a lot more successful the years that, when I was closer to the goal I set. The years that I left the weight loss to the end, had disappointing results."*¹³⁴ Lightweight athletes do run the risk of "disappointing results" if they dehydrate their bodies to allow themselves to lose precious grams of weight before stepping on the weigh-in scale, but this dehydration can also come with severe consequences. In 2000, a German lightweight rower died while he was running to try to lose weight before weighing-in.¹³⁵

In an attempt to prevent rowers from using extreme methods of weight loss prior to competition, FISA Sports Medicine Commission recommended that a fixed weight classification for lightweights be implemented rather than averages for crews. The members of the Commission argued:

Our rationale for this proposal continues to be our Commission's strong feeling that lightweight rowing should be a competition for genuine lightweights and not for heavier athletes who must continue to fight against weight gain. Current research clearly shows that people who show extreme fluctuations in body weight are more susceptible to injuries and diseases, especially cardiovascular disease ... The risks of severe dehydration, malnutrition, and anorexia among both women and men are very real."¹³⁶

Miller recognized that many women do attempt to achieve success as lightweight rowers despite the fact that they are not "natural lightweights:"

*Well there are some people who really just shouldn't be in that class of lightweights. You know and it's hard for some girls because some are really strong at one hundred and forty-five, one hundred and forty [pounds] and they should just stay heavyweight and some of them try to do the lightweight thing.*¹³⁷

Smaller heavyweight athletes often believe that if they become lightweights they will be more successful than if they remain in the open weight category, not realising that they

may not be stronger at a lower weight and that extreme weight loss can be detrimental to their bodies in the long run.

When FISA proposed the inclusion of lightweight events on the Olympic program, the FISA Sports Medicine Commission again put their own concerns forward regarding weight management and weight making practices of lightweight rowers:

We also discussed the recent decision by FISA Congress recommending that lightweight rowing classes be added to the Olympic program. Although our Commission supports this decision, the national and international competition for representation will be fierce so our Commission once again wishes to emphasize the undesirable and potentially dangerous habits of some lightweights in losing significant amounts of body weight either by tissue or water loss or both in short periods of time and in some cases where some athletes can ill afford to practice these physical insults on the body.¹³⁸

Although these medical and social arguments were an important part of the discussion, there was one underlying tension that remained. The introduction of lightweight events meant the removal of heavyweight events from the Olympic program. Many were divided as to whether it was appropriate to penalize heavyweight rowers in order to include lightweights on the program. By 1992, it was clear to the FISA community that there was no possibility of introducing additional events to the Olympic program, despite their efforts to do so. In order for lightweights to be admitted, existing heavyweight events would have to be eliminated.¹³⁹ The question now became, which events would be eliminated?

While the debate ensued regarding the introduction of lightweight Olympic rowing, lightweight oarswomen moved to the water to challenge the international rowing discourse and prove that they indeed deserved a spot on the program. Some lightweight women made an effort to race in heavyweight events to prove their abilities and to have the opportunity to race at the Olympic Games despite obstacles:

I moved out to Victoria, as a lightweight, knowing that there weren't lightweights in the Olympics. We tried to eat a lot of cinnamon buns and try to look like we were heavyweights, [to] try to make the heavyweight team. As the winter went along we picked up speed, [but] we were on the bottom end of the heavyweight women training out here ... we were competitive, [but] we weren't gold medal stuff, [and] in '92 they had their gold medal boats. But we were definitely, we came sixth in Lucerne, leading up to the Olympics, but then we were not chosen to go to the Olympics. So, we were a good crew, we weren't a medal hopeful.¹⁴⁰

There were rowing administrators that acknowledged that lightweight rowers needed their own place in the Olympic Games because these athletes were unable to achieve international racing success against the stronger, heavier, and faster heavyweight crews. One American FISA official stated, *"I just figured it was an equality sort of issue. I really believed that for the sport of rowing that, for international development, that lightweight [Olympic rowing] is a really, really important part of our sport."*¹⁴¹

The debates and discussions regarding Olympic lightweight rowing remained controversial. Mr. Zhang, the (Chinese) delegate to FISA, proposed that the federation remove the men's four with coxswain and pair with coxswain and replace these events with the lightweight men's four without coxswain and double sculls.¹⁴² On the women's side, Zhang recommended that the women's four with coxswain and double sculls be replaced with the lightweight women's four without coxswain and double sculls.¹⁴³ The suggestions were controversial for a number of reasons, but primarily, heavyweight rowers were unwilling to sacrifice their own races for the sake of lightweight rowers. Heavyweight women were particularly concerned because they already had fewer events than their male counterparts. Removing additional women's boat categories would further limit their racing opportunities. Yet, some people in the lightweight community argued that the removal of a heavyweight event would have no effect on women's international rowing, *"I have no problem taking away heavyweight women's events*

*because I think too often they're all filtered down anyway. So personally [it wasn't a big deal], it was like taking away one event [from the heavyweight women], there were still a lot of events for [them]."*¹⁴⁴

After countless debates, it was decided that the men's pair with coxswain and four with coxswain would be removed from the Olympic program to be replaced by the lightweight men's four without coxswain and double sculls. On the women's side, the women's pair without coxswain was to be replaced with the lightweight women's double sculls. In a letter to British rower Miriam Batten, FISA's Women's Commission chair Magdalena Sarbochová explained why the congress had decided on the double sculls for lightweight athletes, "according to the physician wiew [*sic*], that sculling is much healthier for women – the future mothers, the descision [*sic*] was unanimous." In her formal report to FISA, Sarbochová explained that the decision to include the lightweight women's double sculls event on the Olympic program provided "an opportunity for two lightweight athletes to participate in the Olympic competition;" there was no further discussion.¹⁴⁵ Why had this decision been made? Why had FISA proposed only the inclusion of one event for lightweight women, but two events for men?

When the proposal to introduce lightweight events on the Olympic rowing program was presented to the IOC Executive Board in March of 1993, several IOC delegates voiced their concern. Richard Kevan Gosper, the IOC's representative to Australia, indicated that he was concerned with the "unrest amongst the athletes from the world of rowing."¹⁴⁶ Gosper was aware that many heavyweight international athletes did not want to sacrifice their own events in order to see lightweight events added to the Olympic racing program. He specified that he "needed convincing that the inclusion of

lightweight events was really a good idea.”¹⁴⁷ Vitaly Smirnov, IOC representative to Russia, was also concerned with the introduction of lightweight events. Smirnov argued that “it was dangerous to set a precedent of giving special consideration to lighter people as this could cause problems throughout the sports world, for example, taller basketball players could start asking for special categories for themselves.”¹⁴⁸

The committee looked to Vice President and IOC representative to the United States Anita DeFrantz to shed some light on this proposal. The former rower began by stating that “it was difficult for her to comment on rowing, as it was obviously a question that was close to her heart.”¹⁴⁹ She admitted:

*It had been true that until then lightweights had been competing pretty well in the open category. Now the key however was for the expansion of our noble sport, we need to be able to reach out to nations, more nations, and the thought was that only 10% of the world was the size of [heavyweight] rowers.*¹⁵⁰

She explained to the delegation that despite FISA’s arguments that the introduction of lightweight events on the Olympic program would open the sport to a greater pool of athletes, including those from Asia and Africa, it was highly unlikely that representatives from these continents were pushing for a lightweight category to be added to the program.¹⁵¹ DeFrantz also cautioned that athletes from developing national rowing federations in these continents were likely incapable of competing at the Olympic standard and “it would not be until the year 2000 that Asian or African competitors could possibly hope to make it event to the semi-finals of a lightweight rowing event.”¹⁵² Despite this, DeFrantz supported the proposal and encouraged the committee to allow time for these countries to develop.¹⁵³ She acknowledged during her interview that the only way that developing national rowing federations would be to support international lightweight rowing was if it was on the program of the Olympic Games.¹⁵⁴

Delegates from Asia and Africa agreed with DeFrantz. Ashwini Kumar of India and Un Yong Kim of Korea both agreed that a vote in favour of the proposal to include lightweight rowing would ultimately develop the sport in both Asian and African countries.¹⁵⁵ Zhenliang He, president of the Chinese national rowing federation and president of the Asian rowing federation indicated that his Continental federation had discussed the replacement of heavyweight by lightweight events and despite some resistance, the federation agreed that this was the best way to promote the sport throughout Asia.¹⁵⁶ Samaranch then asked the board to vote on the proposal and with eight votes in support, one vote against, and one abstention, the Executive Committee approved the inclusion of lightweight rowing events on the Olympic program and forwarded the proposal on to the general assembly to vote on.¹⁵⁷

Five months after the IOC's Executive Committee voted to include lightweight rowing on the Olympic program, FISA began to re-examine its proposal. The removal of the women's coxless pair from the Olympic program received an enormous amount of public scrutiny. By August of 1993, less than one month before FISA's proposal was to be voted on at the 101st IOC General Session, the international rowing federation discussed potential options for the reinstatement of the women's coxless pair race. FISA's President, Denis Oswald, explained that because of the newly formed fixed quota system established by the IOC, there was no possibility to retain the women's coxless pair event without removing another.¹⁵⁸ The Athletes' Commission, who did not support the inclusion of lightweights into the Olympic Games, proposed that the women's eight entries be changed from eight to six, therefore opening potential positions for eighteen additional athletes, or nine women's coxless pairs.¹⁵⁹ Oswald voiced his appreciation for

the suggestion, but reminded the congress, "the IOC is not prepared to admit more events and more medals in rowing."¹⁶⁰

Just days prior to the IOC's General Session, FISA delegates met again after the 1993 world championships in Indianapolis, United States of America, and the issue of the women's coxless pair was re-addressed. FISA's Executive Committee agreed that despite the fact that the women's eight entries had recently been "weak," they were not prepared to "drop" this event from the Olympic program.¹⁶¹ Therefore, the decision was made to reinstate the women's coxless pair and remove the women's coxless four from the Olympic program.¹⁶² Two weeks later the IOC met in Monaco for its 101st General Session and FISA's proposal to include lightweight rowing on the Olympic program was put to a vote. After a short debate, the proposal was officially accepted. The lightweight women's double as well as the lightweight men's double and four without coxswain were added to the program for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁶³

The international lightweight rowing community was overjoyed. Lightweights were admitted finally to the Olympic Games, yet with Olympic acceptance came increased pressure:

... I think we found out maybe before the worlds of '93. So it was a big announcement, it was kind of scary, it was like, there's going to be two spots in all of Canada to make this boat, four years for now. So it was kind of overwhelming, because I thought well do we want to do this, is this going to be a lot, do I want to do this, do I want to commit the next four years. You know there was a lot of girls trying out, it was kind of, drained me to think about it¹⁶⁴

The races in Atlanta saw the crowning of the first ever Olympic lightweight women's champions, Castanta Burcica and Camelia Macoviciuc of Romania, and the dethroning of Canada's three-time world champions in the event Colleen Miller and Wendy Wiebe.¹⁶⁵ The event was considered a success and has since garnered a

significant amount of interest from numerous countries throughout the world. Miller commented that she was happy to compete in the lightweight women's double at the Olympic Games, but she would have liked to have seen a second event included for lightweight women, similar to those that were included for the men:

*It would have been nice to have two boats, but whatever; it was cool there was one. It was more that I wasn't comparing us against the lightweight men as that I was happy for them that they had two events, they should have two events.*¹⁶⁶

However, DeAngelis argued, "*Unfortunately right now, the Olympic program is a major limiting program for women and lightweight women.*"¹⁶⁷ Because FISA decided to include only one sculling event for lightweight women, lightweight women's sweep rowing has virtually evaporated throughout the world. The reason for this is because national rowing federations are more willing to support the development of athletes who have the potential to compete in Olympic events. Because the only event at the Olympic Games that is open to lightweight women is the double sculls, rowing federations have put all of their effort into developing lightweight female scullers. This has resulted in the removal of the lightweight women's four without coxswain and pair without coxswain from the world championship racing program because of lack of entrants. DeFrantz argued that the loss of these events could have been avoided if FISA and the IOC had agreed to include both the lightweight women's double sculls and the lightweight women's four without coxswain on the Olympic program, the same events that were included for the men.

*Well my opinion was that it should have been the four [without coxswain] and the double, at least, or four [without coxswain] and the single at least. But, it's not ... The theory was that it would be much too hard to develop the four [without coxswain], WRONG.*¹⁶⁸

This is not the final obstacle that lightweight oarswomen and their supporters had to face. Recently, the IOC has begun discussions regarding the removal of all lightweight events from the Olympic rowing program. In 2002 the IOC Olympic Programme Commission submitted a report to the IOC Executive Board that indicated that "weight category events should not be allowed, except for combat sports and for weightlifting."¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, the IOC decided that the Olympic program would "not include events based on biometric criteria, with the exception of those already included in the Programme."¹⁷⁰ Although this wording signifies that lightweight rowing events will remain on the Olympic program, the potential for their removal is a concern for those within FISA.

Summary

The mid 1980s marked a significant period in the history of women's competitive international rowing. Concerned with the gender ambiguity of successful international female athletes, especially those from Eastern Bloc nations, women and men throughout the sporting world demanded that action be taken. Initially, the burden of proof lay with the female athletes themselves, as they were required to prove that they were actually women, not men masquerading as female athletes. The advancement of technology and the increased suspicion surrounding successful international female athletes led to deeper probing. Female athletes were not only required to prove that they were women, but also women with no abnormal chromosomal abnormalities. The perception was that any hint of manliness, however small, provided female athletes with an unfair advantage.

At the same time, sporting administrators, as well as athletes and coaches, questioned the legitimacy of female athletes' success on the international stage. Many speculated that Eastern Bloc oarswomen's incredible success was the result of the

systematic use of performance enhancing substances. The physical size and perceived unfeminine appearance of many elite Eastern European female athletes prompted international rowing administrators to change the women's racing distance from 1000 metres to 2000 metres. This change was speculated to have a two-fold effect. First, by doubling the women's racing distance, women's rowing was altered from a power event to an endurance event and thus, anabolic steroids were less effective in determining the outcome of races. Additionally, by establishing women's rowing as an endurance event, the physical appearance of international oarswomen would change from that of the "*fat Russian*" to a more lean and desirable feminine physique.

Although not initially accepted as legitimate rowers, lightweight women emerged onto the international racing program during the 1980s. Despite their perceived inferiority to oarsmen and heavyweight oarswomen, these women were the first to challenge the myth that women could not physically race 2000 metres in 1984 and proved to a body of disbelievers that women were capable of the same physical feats as their male counterparts. Furthermore, the success of the lightweight oarswomen at the 1984 lightweight championships signified that these women did deserve a spot on the international racing program, both at the world championships and the Olympic Games.

While the benefits to doubling the women's racing distance and adding lightweight rowing to the international racing program were seen throughout the international rowing community, women's rowing also faced some obstacles during the late twentieth century. Female and male rowing administrators had to struggle to keep the women's eight and quadruple sculls events from elimination. This, coupled with discussions about including lightweight women's events on the Olympic program caused

unrest within the international rowing community. Not only were heavyweight women's events in jeopardy of being removed from the racing program, but other events were at risk in order to include lightweight women's events in the Olympic Games. To this day, one could argue that many in the international rowing community still believe that a heavyweight women's event should not have been sacrificed for the addition of a lightweight women's event.

Notes

- ¹ Penny Chuter to FISA President Thomas Keller, March 1983. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.
- ² Meuret, *FISA*.
- ³ John Hoberman, "Sport and Ideology in the post-Communist Aged," in *The Changing Politics of Sport*, ed. L. Allison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 19.
- ⁴ Fenner, interview.
- ⁵ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 210.
- ⁶ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 207.
- ⁷ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 170.
- ⁸ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 211.
- ⁹ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 87.
- ¹⁰ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 87.
- ¹¹ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 207-208.
- ¹² Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 88.
- ¹³ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 222.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 222.
- ¹⁶ Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 89.
- ¹⁷ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 158.
- ¹⁸ Jøgen C. Madsen, President Dansk Forening for Rosport to Thomas Keller, FISA President, 8 December 1971. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.
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¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Dieterle, interview.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Lau, interview.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

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¹¹¹ In 2005 after an extensive debate, FISA agreed that all races for eights (heavyweight women's eight, heavyweight men's eight, and lightweight men's eight) would be safe from future elimination despite the number of entries at each world championship.

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¹⁶⁶ Participant interview.

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Chapter 8

Challenging the Professional Gender Roles: The Transition from International Oarswoman to Coaching and/or Administration

Introduction

Although many of the women interviewed for this project come from different backgrounds and their careers as coaches and administrators have spanned different eras, all of the women have experienced many of the same barriers during their transitions to become rowing coaches and/or administrators. Beset by the male dominance of decision-making positions in competitive rowing, these women sought to give voice back to the female rowing community. Female administrators and coaches were necessary to assist women in gaining equity in a competitive international rowing. Yet, the decision to become a competitive rowing coach and/or administrator was not easy for many women. Significant barriers that existed between 1954 and 2003 prevented women from gaining and maintaining positions of authority in international sport.

Acker has underscored how the socially constructed attributes that are associated with being a woman or a man form the basis of gender roles.¹ The perception of “gender roles” in sport is a potentially glaring example of societies’ interpretations of specific capabilities of women and men.² Despite the increase in women’s participation in rowing between 1954 and 2003, rowing has remained an arena in which the accepted ideas and norms regarding gender and the differences between the genders are openly expressed and widely accepted.³ Sport emphasizes traditionally valued qualities in a man’s development (dominance, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and risk taking), casting the link to masculinity.⁴ International coaching and sport administration are professions that

continue to be gendered as a male preserves, where there exists an underlying assumption that sport expertise and leadership are directly associated with men and masculinity.⁵

This chapter examines the hurdles that international oarswomen faced when choosing to become coaches and/or rowing administrators. I argue that despite the differences in time and place all of the women interviewed have negotiated similar kinds of obstacles, such as sexist treatment from male sporting administrators and minimalization of their accomplishments, in their transition from international oarswoman to international coach and/or administrator. To begin, I examine the barriers that have prevented women from obtaining international coaching positions, including social, institutional, organisational, and especially family responsibilities. This is followed by a discussion of the obstacles that female rowing administrators faced and the reasons why sport administration tended to be a more “family friendly” career than coaching. Additionally, I examine the ways in which female administrators and international coaches have negotiated their roles in these traditionally defined masculine arenas.

Ending an Athletic Career and Beginning a New Career in Sport as a Coach and/or Sport Administrator

Like other sports, those who become rowing coaches have typically been rowers themselves, for it is a sport that “breeds its own gurus and teachers.”⁶ Chuter, Lau and Canadian rowing coach Laryssa Biesenthal all explained that they turned to coaching during and/or after their athletic careers because they felt they understood the needs of athletes due to their own experiences in the sport. Dodd quoted the legendary Norwegian born FISA’s International Head Rowing Coach Thor Nilsen, “Coaching always came

from within rowing, [and it] was based on personal experience and coxing.”⁷ Furthermore, individuals often feel as though they can use their athletic experiences to help younger athletes. Biesenthal commented on the exhilaration she felt when she observed athletes who were able to take her feedback and make changes to their rowing stroke, “*It was so fun and to see how excited they got too when they got it.*”⁸

Krüger has defined coaching as “the process of preparing athletes, especially high-performance athletes, to compete, and of supervising them during competition.”⁹ Due to the inherent nature of the profession, coaching has traditionally been perceived as a male occupation because men have been considered the logical choice to take the lead, make decisions, and are instrumental in a team’s success.¹⁰ Feminist sport sociologist Nancy Theberge has explained that coaching is perhaps the position in sport that “captures the central features of stereotypical view of sport as masculine.”¹¹ Coaching is a technical activity that requires superior knowledge of the skills and techniques associated with the specific sport. Moreover, compared with women, men are assumed to be naturally superior athletes. They are therefore naturally considered to be superior coaches.¹² Pfister has suggested that because “sport is a stage where masculinity is produced and demonstrated ... many people take for granted that a top-level coach is a man.”¹³ An underlying ideology exists that the image of the ideal coach is associated with masculinity and the gendering of coaching as a male preserve has led to men dominating the realm of professional coaching.¹⁴

Theberge has also indicated that “there are differences among sports in the proportion of women coaches.”¹⁵ Synchronized swimming and field hockey for example, have historically been organised separately for females, and women have predominantly

been hired to fill the coaching positions of these teams.¹⁶ The historical segregation of these sports, along with figure skating, is one of the greatest indicators of gendering in the sporting world. Aesthetic sports that emphasize grace and form are considered to be “feminine,” in contrast to those sports that stress strength and power and are considered “masculine” activities.¹⁷ It would therefore seem “natural” that women become the coaches of aesthetic sports activities and men coach “masculine” sports. Yet, with help from gender equity initiatives in sport, such as Title IX, more girls and women are participating in traditionally perceived “masculine” sports at all levels. This has led to more women gaining experience competing at the international level, which theoretically should lead to more women becoming involved in competitive international coaching. However, historically this has not been the case.

The initial reason for hiring men to coach the first women’s international crews during the 1950s was because “*they were the ones, the coaches that had the experience.*”¹⁸ Prior to women’s entrance into the 1954 European championships, men were the only athletes who raced at the international level and were always coached by men who had been former rowers themselves. There had been no previous opportunity for women to gain valuable experience participating at international competitions and as Messner has explained, “it subsequently appear[ed] rational for adult men to serve in positions of knowledgeable authority.”¹⁹ A 1956 letter from a British female rower that was published in the ARA’s bulletin *The Oarswoman* concurred with this argument, “Women coaches seem to have very haphazard ideas of training a crew, and little knowledge of any training programmes.”²⁰ Arguing against this statement, a British oarswoman commented, “To suggest that any member of a men’s rowing club who is

prepared to coach a women's crew can necessarily produce a crew of really high racing ability is little short of rash optimism."²¹ The argument was clear that to succeed, a crew required the help of a good coach. Because a "good coach" was traditionally interpreted as a male coach, women found themselves under-represented in the international coaching arena.

Over the years, academics have formulated several explanations as to why women continue to have difficulty gaining access to coaching positions domestically and internationally despite the increase in sporting opportunities for female athletes. West and Brackenridge highlighted a number of barriers that female coaches have faced, including social, economic, legal, institutional, and organisational.²² Sport management scholars have also suggested obstacles including perceptions of the success of the old boys' network and a lack of support systems for women;²³ administrators' perceptions of the lack of qualified female coaches;²⁴ burnout;²⁵ preferences of male and female athletes for a male coach;²⁶ and male coaches becoming increasingly interested in coaching women's teams.²⁷ Arguably all of these reasons have resulted in women avoiding pursuing a career in coaching.

The overwhelming dominance of men in decision-making positions within sport organisations has arguably resulted in fewer women being hired for head coaching roles.²⁸ Some academics have argued that sport organisations are an optimal place for homologous reproduction.²⁹ For example, if male rowing administrators are hiring a new coach, they are more likely to hire a man that reflects their own image, thus sustaining an "old boys' network."³⁰ Sport sociologist Annelies Knoppers has identified this "old boys' network" as a structural deterrent that has prevented women from entering the

profession of coaching.³¹ Former Canadian and German lightweight oarswoman Michelle Darvill confirmed the existence of this tendency in the sport of rowing, *"I mean women still don't traditionally have a position ... it's always men. So I think maybe the next step is women entering the organisation. You know traditionally it's an old boys' network, all around the world."*³² Ellis was adamant that rowing organisations need women in positions of influence to help future female international coaches gain access. *"You actually need somebody there to make it happen."*³³ Some women need to know that they will not be the first female to work as a coach with the international rowing program; they need reassurance that others before them have been able to gain access and therefore the door is not completely shut to them. Yet Darvill argued, *"I just assume it's like being an athlete, if you want something you have to go and get it. And I think that's kind of the personality you want,"*³⁴ coaching your national team. Whether or not the old boys' network actually exists, many women perceive that this system is ever-present and believe that they will therefore not gain a position in such an environment.

One result of homologous reproduction in sport organisations is the lack of same gender role models and mentors for future interested female coaches. White, Mayglothling, and Carr have argued that this lack of female role models is a major concern for sport organisations.³⁵ Role models can act as mentors to less experienced coaches, providing guidance and support.³⁶ Mentoring is a key element in the upward mobility of individuals within sport organisations and also has the benefit of increasing the protégé's job satisfaction.³⁷ Fenner explained that she *"had no real mentor"* during the formative years of her coaching career in the 1980s, which made her job more difficult.³⁸ She spoke about how she had no *"sounding board"* to talk about training

programs with, someone to give her guidance and reassure her that she was doing the right things or inform her about what she was doing wrong.³⁹

In their examination of the personal barriers that women face in choosing coaching as a career, Everhart and Chelladurai have argued that when selecting a profession, women and men evaluate their skills and talents to determine whether they will be successful in that occupation.⁴⁰ Women often under-evaluate their skills and accomplishments and feel as if they are not qualified for advancement in the coaching ranks. Chuter articulated this point during her interview:

Part of that I think was that you know, the average woman will often think less of her abilities, she will always think she is not as good as she is, ... this is very general. ... The average man will always think he is better or have the potential, the men are always more positive about their own ability. And if, if you get going to criticise, they'll often people think they're better than they often are, and women are the opposite.⁴¹

Tammy Leigh Nolan and Simon Priest have also pinpointed lack of confidence and poor self-esteem as barriers that women face when seeking leadership positions.⁴²

Even though women face numerous hurdles to gain access to international coaching positions, some do obtain these coveted positions. Because of the limited number of women who hold positions as international coaches, those who do become coaches are keenly aware of their isolated status.⁴³ Although rowing is a sport that is relatively accessible to both genders, men hold the majority of international coaching positions throughout the world. Biesenthal, who currently coaches at the international level for Canada, explained that female international rowing coaches “are an anomaly. It's kind of, you do stick out, [and] it's like ‘what? There's a girl here?’”⁴⁴ During her tenure as an international rowing coach throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Chuter was conscious that she was one of only a few female coaches at international regattas, “well

there was, one or two female coaches from Eastern [European] countries, particularly Germany."⁴⁵ Little has changed since Chuter worked as an international coach, as is evident in Biesenthal's reflection on her isolated status in the international coaching community:

*Suzanne from the Dutch team, Jutta [Lau] from the German team, Chris Wilson from the US team, me, and there's a woman from France, but I think she was team manager, so what's that four, five? You notice it in the peloton, on the bikes [when you're coaching]. Oh, and the Chinese, the Chinese lightweight women's double coach is a woman, from their double and quad from 1996. You know, that's it.*⁴⁶

Through the everyday process of coaching at the international level, the female coaches are challenging dominant coaching discourse that argues that international coaching is a profession for men.⁴⁷ Furthermore, their accomplishments, including crews winning medals at the world championships and Olympic Games, provide evidence that women can successfully work as international coaches.

While there are a limited number of women working as international rowing coaches, many in the international rowing community are unaffected by the reality that there are significantly fewer women coaching than men. Regardless the gender of the crew, there is the belief that it does not matter whether a coach is a man or a woman, as long as that person can motivate their crew to achieve success on the water. Yet, as Messner has argued:

Though many men have shown that they can be effective, competent, and even inspiring coaches for girls and women, it is a curious "gender equity" process that pushes women out of leadership positions. And it is a clear sign of the continued structural asymmetries in sport that women coaches are almost never given the opportunity to break the sex bar that keeps coaching in boys' and men's sport an almost entirely male occupation.⁴⁸

In her current role working with coach education in Australia, Fenner noted that at the lower levels, recreational and introductory, many women are involved in coaching rowing, but these participation levels decrease as the competition levels increase.⁴⁹ Lyle, Allison, and Taylor's findings support Fenner's assessment, and indicate that while the numbers of women coaches at the initial stages of certification are "appropriate," sport federations must address the dearth of coaches at the higher end of the competitive spectrum.⁵⁰ Contrary to Fenner's statement and Lyle et al.'s findings, in many countries there is not an "appropriate" number of women certified to coach at any levels. For example, in Canada, female coaches comprise less than thirty-one percent of those certified at the levels one and two in the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP),⁵¹ while female athletes below the elite or national team level consist of more than forty percent of the athletic population.⁵²

Over the years, some national rowing federations have recognised the need to hire more women to fill their international coaching roster and some have even implemented gender equity initiatives.⁵³ Although these gender equity initiatives have helped women gain access to coaching positions, there is often the perception, within the international rowing community that, when a national rowing federation hires a woman as part of the coaching staff, they are doing so to fill a quota not because she is qualified for the position:

I think there was again that idea in the back of my head, that everybody thinks I'm the token female. So I don't look at me in that sense. I think okay, I want to be hired because I'm good, and whether that was the reason behind it or not we're never going to know, I hope it's because I was perceived to be good.⁵⁴

This token status that Biesenthal referred to is a result of female coaches being more highly visible and arguably increases the pressure to perform.⁵⁵ Both Ellis and Chuter

indicated that “*you have got to prove yourself*,”⁵⁶ and that success at international regattas was the only way for female coaches to prove that they deserve their positions. Biesenthal stated, “*And as a coach, you are based off your results. So at the end of the day, you are responsible*,” for the success of your crew.⁵⁷ Chuter argued “*you can’t bullshit it. You either know what you’re talking about or you don’t*.”⁵⁸

Chuter was able to shed her token status after she became a successful men’s international coach. After working for six years with the British women’s international program, Chuter was asked to make the transition to the men’s side. Rather than hire her to coach the elite men’s international rowing program, Chuter became the chief junior boys’ coach for Great Britain:

*I was made the junior chief coach, not an Olympic [event], only world championships, so you could say it was going down [the hierarchy scale]. But, the reason it was seen by, ya know my “olders and betters,” as a promotion was because I’d moved from women to men.*⁵⁹

In Great Britain, women’s crews were considered significantly less important than men’s; even junior men were of higher significance than elite women.

One way that participants dealt with their heightened visibility was adherence to the dominant culture.⁶⁰ For example, some of the women indicated that they attempted to fit in by becoming “one of the boys.” Fenner noted that this characteristic helped her during her coaching career, “*I, it didn’t really worry me. I’ve always been a bit of a boy at heart I suppose*.”⁶¹ A few of the participants acknowledged that it was easier to fit in if you avoided overtly challenging the dominant culture. It has been recognised that patriarchal sport organisations which associate coaching competency with masculine discourse may be hesitant to hire a woman who exhibits traditional femininities. As such, some female coaches may feel pressure to adopt masculine coaching styles. For example,

some coaches will adopt a confrontational style or utilise intimidation or humiliation to “control” athletes.⁶² Although peers and superiors can accept these displays of masculinity by female coaches, women take the risk of being accused of “acting like men” and not necessarily taken seriously in their role.⁶³

Furthermore, Chuter was adamant that female coaches not make a public scene about the inequities women faced, *“I said ‘look, don’t stand on pyramid, don’t wave flags, [work] hard and let your performance speak for itself because nobody [will] take any notice [off] anybody trying to be a women’s liberation type.’”*⁶⁴ During her career as an international oarswoman throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Smith appreciated working with a female coach who took a similar tactic in her approach to coaching, *“[I] felt sort of proud of her as well because she was a successful coach ... she was opening doors and creating opportunities, but in a subtle way, because she was just doing it. It wasn’t an issue that she was a woman.”*⁶⁵ This notion of “subtle” feminist activism was articulated in a number of the interviews with participants.

Not all of the participants began their coaching career under the pressure of being the token female. As Chuter mentioned, Eastern Bloc countries had several female international rowing coaches throughout the Cold War. For example, in 1988, 37% of all the full-time coaches in the USSR were women.⁶⁶ Lau explained that it was normal for women to become international coaches; the East German sport system supported the development of women coaches through their structured elite athletics’ program.⁶⁷ Within the former Eastern Bloc countries, women and men were seen as equals and were hired on their coaching abilities, *“it’s no problem if I’m a woman or I’m a man, it’s the performance of the coach was crucial, not whether you were male or female.”*⁶⁸ Dieterle

explained that it was the “*communist/socialist way, or philosophy, that everybody is equal ... All persons are equal and you all have to get the same chance.*”⁶⁹

The former DDR had a superb coach education system. The Deutscher Sportbund (DSB), which later became the Deutsche Turn- und Sportbund (DTSB), believed in order to coach, individuals needed to have a certain level of academic proficiency, not only with respect to theory and practice of their own sport, but also Marxist theory, sport pedagogy, statistics, sports medicine, biomechanics, sport psychology, and history.⁷⁰ All coaches attended the Deutsche Hochschule für Körperkultur (DHfK) that gave them “a thorough knowledge of performance training for rowing.”⁷¹ Within this system, Lau was able to advance rapidly through the German coaching ranks and within two years of graduating from the DHfK became a senior international coach working under Jürgen Grobler during the 1980s.⁷² She said that it was “*the best perspective for ... [her] development as a famous coach.*”⁷³

Similarly, the Bulgarian socialist system had a well-established coach education program for both male and female coaches during the Cold War. Otzetova spoke about her first club coach being a woman and explained that it was not uncommon for women to hold national team coaching positions, although the majority were men.⁷⁴ She stated that it did not make “*any difference as long as [they were] ... a good coach.*”⁷⁵

Despite the insistence of Dieterle, Lau, and Otzetova that women and men were equal in the socialist regime, there is evidence that suggests otherwise. Pfister has argued that even in Eastern Europe, “a hierarchy of the sexes can be seen.”⁷⁶ She has explained that there was a typical arrangement of the sexes directly linked to the sexual division of labour.⁷⁷ Despite the high employment rate of women in the former Eastern Bloc, “the

truism held that the higher the position, the lower the proportion of women."⁷⁸ For example, only two of the twenty-three members of the USSR Sports Committee and one of the eighteen members of the USSR Olympic Committee were women.⁷⁹

Of all the barriers that women have faced in gaining and maintaining competitive international coaching positions, all of the participants in this study highlighted family responsibilities as the greatest inhibitor. In a patriarchal society, women are expected to be the primary caregivers, having commitments that include child-care and domestic responsibilities.⁸⁰ The long hours and intense workload associated with team leading puts increased pressure on both female and male coaches, but arguably, men are better able than women to avoid the consequent familial stresses.⁸¹ During her interview, Fenner simply stated, "*we will always ... have this age old problem with ... women, they're having the babies.*"⁸² Ellis admitted that this is the primary reason why women have difficulty following their career aspirations in coaching.⁸³

Messner has argued that coaching is an arena that reinforces "the historically constituted division of labor and power in sport."⁸⁴ Men are expected to leave the home and work, while women are expected to stay at home and raise the family. Feminist scholar Nancy Hartsock shows how "women's lives are institutionally defined by their production of use-values in the home."⁸⁵ Women are the only child bearers and have been socialised to believe that they are "naturally" programmed for childrearing; as a result, all of the domestic labour in the home becomes the responsibility of wives and mothers. Women's role in the home is understood historically with the relationship between gender, femininity, reproductive functions, and domesticity.⁸⁶ A woman's nature is assumed to be more suitable for child rearing and this socially constructed

ideology has been in existence for a long time. Women who do have careers outside of the home have begun to assume the responsibility of the “double day,” working outside of the home and then returning home to assume the role of the domestic servant. Even more insulting, throughout most of the industrialized world, paid work outside of the home is often considered “real work,” while unpaid family in the home is considered non-work.⁸⁷ Women often feel pressure to stay at home and raise their families and as if they cannot hold a career outside of the home. Ellis provided an example of one woman who had long been involved in women’s competitive rowing in the United Kingdom between 1970 and 1990, who helped in the development of the Henley Women’s Regatta, and was unable to be involved as a coach with the British women’s international rowing program:

*...she would have loved to have been an international coach, but she has three children, her lifestyle just didn’t lend itself to seven days a week of international coaching. She’s employed by us. She’s our [ARA] technical [lead] person, but as to being frontline coaching, life didn’t deal her that card.*⁸⁸

Lau noted that even today, “*as a woman you don’t have a choice, either you do a really hard job or you go home and stand in the kitchen taking care of your family.*”⁸⁹

Men have traditionally been considered more appropriate for coaching because their responsibilities in the home are less taxing than women’s. Lau pointed out that many male coaches are able to have both a family and a career, yet she argued that “*as a woman, this [is] very difficult.*”⁹⁰ Women face the challenge to try and balance the responsibilities of a career with the responsibilities of being a wife and mother. Even if a woman does have a career, social discourse still dictates that her primary responsibility is that of a wife and mother. Dieterle recalled that in the 1970s while she was actively

coaching, some people in her life questioned her dedication to her family, "*what about your children? They will miss their mother.*"⁹¹ She commented that:

*This is why women have more problems working as a ... [coach], especially married ones. If they are single, of course, it's normal like a man. But if they had a family, the family, they have to be so busy with the family that it couldn't be, impossible to [coach] ..., besides they will do something wrong in the family.*⁹²

Although this was considered the major barrier for female international coaches, several of the participants, including Dieterle, Fenner, and Darvill, have negotiated this barrier. Fenner pointed out, "*I did not stop coaching at all with one baby; baby just came down with me.*"⁹³ As Fenner's child aged, she hired nannies to come into the house to help. Dieterle enlisted the help of her family to care for her children after school while she was coaching on the water, "*there was my mother, my grandmother, very fit, and my father and there were many persons who were caring for them.*"⁹⁴ At the time of her interview Biesenthal had not yet had children, she stated that when she and her husband, a competitive international rower himself, decide to have children, "*we get help.*"⁹⁵ With the help of nannies, babysitters, and family, Biesenthal believed that she would be able to continue coaching at the international level.⁹⁶ In recent years, several international athletes have been known to bring their children along to world cup regattas, the world championships, and even the Olympic Games, so she asked "*why can't the kids go ... when the women are coaching?*"⁹⁷ Biesenthal envisions herself carrying her baby in a baby back pack at regattas bobbing around happily on her back as she coaches, carries blades, and cleans boats.⁹⁸

Because family responsibilities can be so overwhelmingly demanding for female coaches, some women make the transition to administration of the sport. Although female administrators still face the challenge of negotiating their time between family and

work, sport administration involves different time commitments. While rowing coaches are required to be on the water working with crews typically before daycare facilities open, usually prior to seven in the morning, administrative work usually involves working during regular office hours. Furthermore, if evening or weekend meetings are scheduled, female administrators are able to hire nannies, babysitters, “enlist the help” of a spouse or family member.⁹⁹ Fenner indicated that she was able to juggle these responsibilities more easily:

I'm wondering in the administration I think, there could be a little bit easier because the administration now is giving childcare, quite easily. I mean I personally managed ...[it], the job that I recently [got], I've worked from home and I pay for nannies, so ... instead of ... having childcare, because I knew we were going to have two children, I chose to go along the nanny lines and I have a nanny come into the house, while I worked at home. So I've managed to marry, but what I have done is I've ... managed to keep full-time work while having the children and I suppose the only thing I have sacrificed there is, is salary, but I really love my job ... I'm able to manage having the two children as well, so it's been great.¹⁰⁰

Ellis also had a family while she was working and have family and friends that were supportive:

When I moved to administration [in the 1970s], I had a small daughter, but my husband is a very nice man, and he was very happy to have our daughter on weekends and I went off ... [and I went off to follow other interests during the week]. I had friends and neighbours who'd have my daughter in the evening if I was rushing off to meetings. It just happens that for me, there were people around me who were happy to accommodate me being part of the sport.¹⁰¹

The participants recognised that not all women have support networks to help them during their careers and those were the women that were forced to abandon their career aspirations. Smith provided an example of a colleague who “retired [from rowing administration] because she just had a baby and she was finding it too much”¹⁰² and Otzetova agreed that having a young family “made it much more difficult to do” her job

with FISA.¹⁰³ Fenner pointed out that national rowing federations could quite easily help female administrators by providing childcare or helping to offset the cost of childcare, thus, enabling women with children to remain working for sport organisations.¹⁰⁴

In addition to female administrators' concerns with familial responsibilities, other obstacles exist that prevent women from regaining the control they once had over women's sport. Mia Hultin and Ryszard Szulkin have argued that historically access to influential positions is gendered and frequently favours men while women have had difficulty gaining access to power networks.¹⁰⁵ By access to power networks, I refer to the ability for women to become part of influential groups, for example executive committees, within a sport organisation. Within the IOC, FISA, and national rowing federations, men have always held the majority of decision-making and influential positions. As a former IOC Vice-President DeFrantz recognised, prior to the 1980s "*there was no access for women*" into the IOC or other sport organisations, national and international.¹⁰⁶

The progress made by the second-wave feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, encouraged some sport organisations to change the traditional under-representation of women in decision-making positions.¹⁰⁷ Women were identified as a target population; therefore, some national sport federations established specialised commission to focus on the needs of their female members. While former FISA President Thomas Keller did not create the FISA Women's Commission in 1969 for the purpose of gender equity, the commission was established in part to help promote women's competitive rowing throughout the world and did create new opportunities for

female rowing administrators in an arena that had previously been inaccessible.¹⁰⁸

Dieterle recalled how she was asked to be a part of this commission:

*For me it was a big surprise. It was '69 when I got the call from our president [of the Federal Republic of Germany rowing federation] ... he was one of the best we had, and he was vice president of FISA too. And he asked me if I would like to be a member [of FISA], he said "you are now a member of the new female commission."*¹⁰⁹

Like other commissions in FISA, the Women's Commission met annually to discuss the issues that they deemed necessary for FISA to address. Unlike the other commissions, the FISA Women's Commission served as a support network for the women involved:

*I think we had one of the most pleasant Commissions to be on. We really took an interest in each other, it was very supportive, but we also took the opportunity to experience the culture of sport of the place where we happened to be meeting. I think we had to be aware of these things because our overriding goal was promoting women in rowing and the tactics might vary from culture to culture.*¹¹⁰

Smith also noted that the women's commission largely worked in isolation from the rest of FISA:

*Well what happened was, the women's commission worked somewhat in isolation on the "women's issues." Because they were seen by the rest of FISA as women's issues you get the sense that other parts of FISA just turned off when we spoke because the issues weren't something that concerned them, were not part of their mandate. So I don't think the completely separate Commission was as effective as it could have been and it therefore didn't have much influence.*¹¹¹

She was quick to note that important initiatives were not "squashed by the men," but often:

*... you'd come up with something and it wouldn't be something that anyone else had a feel for or sense of ownership for it, because it was the Women's Commission. It was frustrating at times when even the somewhat supportive males would make a suggestion on one of the "women's issues" [and accepted by the congress]. The frustrating part was that the same suggestion had been proposed long before by the [Women's] Commission. It became obvious the Commission's voice had not been heard.*¹¹²

Chuter recognised that during her tenure with the ARA, in order to make advancements, you needed “*males speaking up for women’s rowing [and] then people would switch on and listen again.*”¹¹³ Sport sociologist Jim McKay has argued that when sport organisations create opportunities to increase the number of women in administrative roles, these positions actually tend to hold little power and responsibility.¹¹⁴ These remain possessions of the male administrators.¹¹⁵

If and when women do advance into leadership positions within a sport organisation, few expect to see a female holding the position of chair or president:

*And certainly in the beginning, when I first became chairman [of the ARA], because it was an unusual thing to happen within our sport [that a woman would hold this position of power] and probably many others. I don’t see too many women, in my country as chairman of governing bodies, I think I’m one of the few, if not the only chairman of the governing body in Great Britain.*¹¹⁶

As a result of her novel status, Ellis was often treated differently when attending meetings:

*We all have ... [a situation where I walk in the door with a man] and immediately everything is addressed to the male. You sit and smile sweetly and let them carry on and then the situation, the male says “it’s Di you should be addressing.”*¹¹⁷

Although some men were reluctant to see women hold positions of authority in sport governing organisations, others were very helpful in women gaining access. As McKay has argued, “men should use their relatively privileged positions to study and promote gender justice.”¹¹⁸ Several of the participants, such as Chuter, DeFrantz, Ellis, and Smith, discussed their relationships with male administrators who supported their aspirations to become administrators and helped them throughout their careers. Ellis recognised that it was supportive male administrators who helped her during her progression to become the chair of the ARA and that women need these men to help further their careers:

*...there were lots of men, lots of men who have helped me. And certainly in the beginning when I first became chairman because it was an unusual thing to happen within our sport and probably many others. I don't see too many women, in my country as chairman of governing bodies; I think I'm one of the few, if not the only chairman of the governing body in Great Britain. And, so, I needed their support and perhaps as they've needed mine at times, but it's very much trying to get a level playing field and be grateful to those who have helped me.*¹¹⁹

DeFrantz also received support from male administrators who recognised her desire to be involved with the Olympic movement. In 1981, Peter Ueberroth hired DeFrantz to be responsible to plan and run one of the athletes' villages for the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California. This, coupled with her activist work against the United States boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, Russia, launched her career with the IOC. She stated "*I think the IOC elected me because I am an Olympian and a medallist, I'm a lawyer, an African-American and most importantly – a woman.*"¹²⁰ During her interview she indicated that these factors were essential to her selection to the IOC:

*Otherwise, I was seven in a bronze medal eight, seven seat in a bronze medal eight; I was responsible for planning and running one of the three villages ... But otherwise I was one of forty million US citizens, what were the chances? So I believed that truly it had to do with my stand in 1980.*¹²¹

This raises the question of which women are male administrators willing to help, or more specifically, which type of woman.

In DeFrantz's example, the IOC was more than willing to accept a woman who had sued the United States government because they boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games. She acknowledged that members of the IOC knew who she was because, "*I had been the black woman rower who had stood up against the president of the United States on the behalf of the Olympic Movement.*"¹²² The IOC was willing to bring in a woman who was a political activist, not an activist for women's rights, or African American's rights, but

one who fought for the right to participate in the Olympic Games; a promoter of the Olympic Movement.

Smith challenged the idea that FISA was unwilling to accept women who actively push the feminist agenda, *"it's not like they don't appreciate someone pushing the envelope, because Thor Nilsen is there pushing the envelope all the time. I don't think they would easily embrace someone who was offensive to them. But it's like any organisation I think. It takes some time to turn the ship."*¹²³ Yet, Nilsen is not a feminist demanding equal opportunities for women; he is a middle aged, white, European man, challenging FISA delegates to re-evaluate their discursive practices regarding men's rowing.

Participants pointed out that in order to succeed, you must be able to work well with men and not cause a disruption. Ellis acknowledged that her male counterparts accepted her when she became a rowing administrator in the 1970s because she has *"been able to work with good men."*¹²⁴ She pointed out that:

*I understand tradition, I understand men's clubs. The one thing [male rowing administrators have] always said ... about me, "don't worry about Di, she's one of us." ... [When with a group of men] I understand men want to be on their own, I will have a drink, I will have a chat, but at the point of time of leaving, I'll say "all right chaps, time I went" and let them get on with whatever their jokes, their conversations about whatever it is they want to talk about. I don't have any hang-ups over that.*¹²⁵

Dieterle had a similar experience with the German national rowing federation during the 1980s and 1990s, *"In the German federation, our former president, if he introduced me, or when he introduced me [he would say], 'sometimes she is the only man in the group.' It was a compliment."*¹²⁶ During her interview, Ellis was adamant about the fact that in order for more women to gain access to administrative positions in sport organisations,

they must be able to work with the male administrators, *"So, but equally, when I say, best woman [for the job], yes, professional, good at what you do, but also not carrying that chip that is immediately going to aggravate the men. I'm afraid that some of our women are quite good at doing that."*¹²⁷

R. W. Connell has argued, "in a gender order where men are advantaged and women are disadvantaged, major structural reform is, on the face of it, against men's interests."¹²⁸ The acceptance of the "right" women does little to challenge the gender power relations within the sport organisation. Ellis commented that women become more accepted after a few women have proved that *"we're not going to be waving our bras in their faces"* to prove a point.¹²⁹

Arguably, the feminist movement and feminist work can make men uncomfortable and wonder "now what are they up to?"¹³⁰ Similar to McKay's findings, many of the participants of this study distanced themselves from association with any feminist practices that were not within a liberal framework.¹³¹ The women were more eager to be judged on merit and were often reluctant to discuss the patriarchal "battles" that they overcame:

*I think that's been my approach. I guess people could say "oh Tricia, she's not really pushing the feminist agenda." My approach has been you just do it and identify where there are prejudices and deal with them by showing why those prejudices are wrong. Not just screaming about the inequities, but just try and move ahead and just reveal it by showing how competent you are."*¹³²

As Smith noted previously, she admired other women who took a similar approach to working within competitive international rowing, *"she was sort of opening, creating opportunities, but more in a subtle way, because she was just doing it, you know? It wasn't an issue that she was a woman."*¹³³ Darvill openly acknowledged that women

have to negotiate their positions as administrators differently than men, “*women sort of have to infiltrate, [take] a different tactic or a different approach.*”¹³⁴ Ellis understood that men are reluctant to include women who are openly feminist and as she pointed out, “*Well I think, either [you] become so feminist you become an irritant and that’s the battle [that some] find difficult to deal with, that they (women) become an irritant and men sour in the end.*”¹³⁵

This raises the question, what do male sporting administrators constitute as being a nuisance? As Shaw and Hoerber argued, the inappropriate display of masculinities renders a woman a nuisance; “A strong man is direct and a direct woman is a bitch.”¹³⁶ Men are expected to be aggressive, assertive, and able to take control; these are considered paramount to success in sport administration. Women by contrast are to be nurturing, caring, and understanding. Arguably female administrators are not allowed to fully express the masculinities that have been deemed appropriate for male administrators. A woman may choose to change these gendered discourses of masculinity and femininity and adopt a male interactional style of managing.¹³⁷ In doing so, female administrators face the risk of being labelled a “feminist,” a “bitch,” or a “lesbian.”¹³⁸ As feminist scholars Laurene Rehman and Wendy Frisby have argued, despite the fact that women feel pressure to express femininities, they risk not being taken seriously by their male colleagues.¹³⁹ If this is the case, how can women legitimately hold positions of power “that are strongly influenced by discourses of masculinity”?¹⁴⁰

One way that the participants of this study negotiated this dichotomy was to deny association with the feminist movement and embrace the patriarchal structure of the organisation. This is not to say that these female administrators neglected the plight of

women in competitive international rowing. On the contrary, throughout their careers these women have diligently worked for the advancement of women in rowing, at the national and international level, but have done so more subtly. British journalist Rachel Quarrell recognised the impact that Ellis has had on British rowing during her tenure, “*I mean it certainly addressed the balance ... you’ve still got a very male aura about British rowing, but having Di as the figure head has helped.*”¹⁴¹ Quarrell admitted that Ellis “*may not [appear to] be proactive,*” but she has definitely helped to improve women’s position in competitive international rowing throughout the United Kingdom.¹⁴² Most of the women indicated that the best way to ensure that their agenda regarding women’s rowing was accepted was to ensure the support of male delegates and have the men make the formal proposal.

Summary

Despite the introduction of gender equity legislation throughout a large percentage of the world, women remain under-represented in the roles of coaching and sport administration. Few female athletes consider a career in either of these professions because of the real and perceived barriers that exist and the lack of female role models available to encourage young women to choose these careers. Some women do work towards reaching their goals of becoming an international coach and/or sport administrator. Those who have gained access to these arenas have worked towards achieving gender equity in women’s competitive international rowing and acknowledge that there is still more to do to help other women become international coaches and rowing administrators.

Notes

- ¹ Joan Acker, "The Future of 'Gender and Organizations': Connections and Boundaries," *Gender, Work and Organization* 5, no.4 (October 1998), 195-206.
- ² Shaw, "The Construction of Gender Relations."
- ³ Theberge, "The Construction of Gender in Sport," 301.
- ⁴ Staurowsky, "Women Coaching Male Athletes," 163.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 126.
- ⁷ Thor Nilsen, quoted in Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 126.
- ⁸ Laryssa Biesenthal, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 17 April 2005, Victoria, Canada.
- ⁹ Arnd Krüger, "Coach Education and Training," in *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, ed. Roland Naul and Ken Hardman (London: Routledge, 2002), 113.
- ¹⁰ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 200.
- ¹¹ Theberge, "The Construction of Gender in Sport," 305.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Kari Fasting and Gertrud Pfister, "Female and Male Coaches in the Eyes of Female Elite Soccer Players," *European Physical Education Review* 6, no.1 (2000), 92.
- ¹⁴ Annelies Knoppers and Anton Anthonissen, "Meanings Given to Performance in Dutch Sport Organizations: Gender and Racial/Ethnic Subtexts," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 18(2001), 305.
- ¹⁵ Theberge, "The Construction of Gender in Sport," 302.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Fenner, interview.
- ¹⁹ Michael Messner, *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 11.
- ²⁰ Pamela M. Body, "Improve the Standards of Women's Rowing," *The Oarswoman: Official Bulletin of The Women's Amateur Rowing Association*, no.15(October 1956), 18.
- ²¹ H. B. Freestone, "Correspondence," *The Oarswoman: Official Bulletin of The Women's Amateur Rowing Association*, no.16(May 1957), 11. ARA Historical Archives, ARA Head Office, London, England.
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- ²³ Vivian Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter, "Status of Women in Athletics – Changes and Causes," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 56, no.6 (1988), 35-37.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ T. W. Caccese and C. K. Mayerberg, "Gender Differences in Perceived Burnout of College Coaches," *Journal of Sport Psychology* 6(1984), 279-288.
- ²⁶ Bonnie L. Parkhouse and Jean M. Williams, "Differential Effects of Sex and Status on Evaluation of Coaching Ability," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 57(1986), 1; Robert Weinberg, M. Revels, and Allen Jackson, "Attitudes of Male and Female Athletes Toward Male and Female Coaches," *Journal of Sport Psychology* 6(1984), 448-553.
- ²⁷ Acosta and Carpenter, "Status of Women in Athletics," 1988; C. Bonnie Everhart and Packianathan Chelladurai, "Gender Differences in Preferences for Coaching as an Occupation: The Role of Self-Efficacy, Valence, and Perceived Barriers," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 69, no.2 (1998), 188.
- ²⁸ Dorothy J. Lovett and Carla D. Lowry, "'Good Old Boys' and 'Good Old Girls' Clubs: Myth or Reality?" *Journal of Sport Management* 8, no.1 (1994), 27-28.
- ²⁹ See Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Jane Marie Stangl and Mary Jo Kane, "Structural Variables that Offer Explanatory Power for the Underrepresentation of Women Coaches Since Title IX: The Case of Homologous Reproduction," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991), 47-60.
- ³⁰ Lovett and Lowry, "Good Old Boys/Girls," 28.
- ³¹ Knoppers, "Coaching: An equal opportunity occupation?" 38-43.
- ³² Michelle Darvill, interview by Amanda N. Schweinbenz, 24 March 2005, London, Canada.
- ³³ Ellis, interview.

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- ³⁴ Darvill, interview.
- ³⁵ A. White, R. Mayglothling, and C. Carr, "The Dedicated Few: The Social World of Women Coaches in Britain in 1980s," *Sport and Leisure* 30, no.3 (1989), 52-53.
- ³⁶ Margie A. Weaver and Packianathan Chelladurai, "Mentoring in Intercollegiate Athletic Administration," *Journal of Sport Management* 16(2002), 98.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 97-98.
- ³⁸ Fenner, interview.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Everhart and Chelladurai, "Gender Differences in Preferences for Coaching as an Occupation," 189-190.
- ⁴¹ Chuter, interview.
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- ⁴³ Theberge, "The Construction of Gender in Sport."
- ⁴⁴ Biesenthal, interview.
- ⁴⁵ Chuter, interview.
- ⁴⁶ Biesenthal, interview.
- ⁴⁷ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.
- ⁴⁸ Messner, *Taking the Field*, 72.
- ⁴⁹ Fenner, interview.
- ⁵⁰ John Lyle, Marie Allison, and John Taylor, *Factors affecting the motivations of Sports Coaches* (Edinburgh: Scottish Sports Council, 1997).
- ⁵¹ According to the Coaching Association of Canada, "The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) is a coach training and certification program [in Canada]... NCCP workshops are designed to meet the needs of all types of coaches, from the first-time coach to the head coach of a national team. The NCCP is the recognized national standard for coach training and certification in Canada. As part of the program, all coaches are trained in ethical decision-making and sport safety." Coaching Association of Canada, "What is the NCCP?" http://www.coach.ca/eng/certification/nccp_for_coaches/what_is_nccp.cfm retrieved 11 May 2006.
- ⁵² Coaching Association of Canada, "Women in Coaching," http://www.coach.ca/eng/women/documents/Women_in_Coaching_2005_presentation.ppt retrieved 10 January 2006.
- ⁵³ For example, Rowing Canada Aviron, Canada's national sport governing body for rowing, has mandated through their Women's Committee that they work to increase the number of women in coaching from twenty-nine percent in 2005 to thirty-three percent in 2009.
- ⁵⁴ Biesenthal, interview.
- ⁵⁵ Theberge, "The Construction of Gender in Sport," 303.
- ⁵⁶ Ellis, interview.
- ⁵⁷ Biesenthal, interview.
- ⁵⁸ Chuter, interview.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ Theberge, "The Construction of Gender in Sport," 303.
- ⁶¹ Fenner, interview.
- ⁶² Deborah Kerfoot and Stephen Whitehead, "Boys Own Stuff: Masculinity and the Management of Oppression/Men's Repression," *Sociological Review* 46:3 (1998), 447.
- ⁶³ Martin, "Gendering and Evaluating Dynamics."
- ⁶⁴ Chuter, interview.
- ⁶⁵ Smith, interview.
- ⁶⁶ James Riordan, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Sporting Women in Russia and the USSR," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), 198.
- ⁶⁷ Lau, interview.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ Dieterle, interview.
- ⁷⁰ Krüger, "Coach Education and Training," 124.
- ⁷¹ Dodd, *The Story of World Rowing*, 141.

- ⁷² Grobler was the former East German head women's rowing coach between 1976 and 1988. He has been noted as one of the most successful East German rowing coach in history.
- ⁷³ Lau, interview.
- ⁷⁴ Otzetova, interview.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ Pfister, "Sport for women," 171.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁹ James Riordan, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Sporting Women in Russia and the USSR," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), 198.
- ⁸⁰ Shaw and Hoerber, "'A Strong Man is Direct and a Direct Woman is a Bitch,'" 384.
- ⁸¹ Acker, "The Future of 'Gender and Organizations,'" 197.
- ⁸² Fenner, interview.
- ⁸³ Ellis, interview.
- ⁸⁴ Messner, *Taking the Field*, 11.
- ⁸⁵ Nancy C. M. Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," in *Feminism and Methodology*, ed. Sandra Harding, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), 164.
- ⁸⁶ Michèle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today* (London: NLB, 1980), 28.
- ⁸⁷ Acker, "The Future of 'Gender and Organizations,'" 196.
- ⁸⁸ Ellis, interview.
- ⁸⁹ Lau, interview.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁹¹ Dieterle, interview.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*
- ⁹³ Fenner, interview.
- ⁹⁴ Dieterle, interview.
- ⁹⁵ Biesenthal, interview.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.* In December of 2006 Laryssa Biesenthal and her husband Ian Brambell welcomed their first born child into the world, Avery Biesenthal Brambell. In a recent e-mail Biesenthal indicated that she plans to continue to coach and bring her daughter with her to regattas.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁹ Ellis, interview.
- ¹⁰⁰ Fenner, interview.
- ¹⁰¹ Ellis, interview.
- ¹⁰² Smith, interview.
- ¹⁰³ Otzetova, interview.
- ¹⁰⁴ Fenner, interview.
- ¹⁰⁵ Mia Hultin and Ryszard Szulkin, "Wages and Unequal Access to Organizational Power: An Empirical Test of Gender Discrimination," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44(1999), 453-472.
- ¹⁰⁶ DeFrantz, interview.
- ¹⁰⁷ Sally Shaw and Trevor Slack, "'It's Been Like that for Donkey's Years'" The Construction of gender Relations and the Cultures of Sports Organizations," *Culture, Sport, Society* 5, no.1 (Spring 2002), 86.
- ¹⁰⁸ See Chapter Six for information regarding the introduction of the FISA Women's Commission.
- ¹⁰⁹ Dieterle, interview.
- ¹¹⁰ Smith, interview.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹¹³ Chuter, interview.
- ¹¹⁴ McKay, *Managing Gender*.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁶ Ellis, interview.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁸ McKay, *Managing Gender*, 5.

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- ¹¹⁹ Ellis, interview.
¹²⁰ Lena Baden, "Anita DeFrantz: Pulling Power," *World Rowing* (December 1998), 12.
¹²¹ DeFrantz, interview.
¹²² *Ibid.*
¹²³ Smith, interview.
¹²⁴ Ellis, interview.
¹²⁵ *Ibid.*
¹²⁶ Dieterle, interview.
¹²⁷ Ellis, interview.
¹²⁸ Connell, *Gender and Power*, 286.
¹²⁹ Ellis, interview.
¹³⁰ McKay, *Managing Gender*, 5.
¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 95.
¹³² Smith, interview.
¹³³ *Ibid.*
¹³⁴ Darvill, interview.
¹³⁵ Ellis, interview.
¹³⁶ Shaw and Hoeber, "Gendered Discourses," 366.
¹³⁷ Martin, "Gendering and Evaluating Dynamics," 191.
¹³⁸ *Ibid.*
¹³⁹ Laurene Rehman and Wendy Frisby, "Is Self-Employment Liberating or Marginalizing? The case of Women Consultants in the Fitness and Sport Industry," *Journal of Sport Management* 14, no.1 (2000), 41-63.
¹⁴⁰ Shaw and Hoeber, "Gendered Discourses," 367.
¹⁴¹ Quarrell, interview.
¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Chapter 9

Looking to the Future of Women's Competitive International Rowing

In many respect we can see that the history of women's competitive international rowing is similar to the history of women's participation in other modern sports. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, women were largely discouraged from any form of physical activity for fear of reproductive damage, for example uterine displacement.¹ Women's primary role was to be that of a wife and mother and it was feared that the destruction of her essential reproductive organs might render her useless. Women were encouraged to participate in activities that promoted grace and elegance, and which helped to develop the body physically and mentally for the responsibilities of being a wife and mother, such as brisk walking. Style rowing was introduced as a way for middle and upper-class women to enjoy leisure time on the water without the physical strain required from competitive rowing.

Working-class women however participated actively in strenuous physical activities, primarily for their livelihood and not for leisure purposes. Their lower social class and physical capabilities allowed them some leniency with regards to sport participation. Fisherwomen, for example, were granted entrance to local regattas prior to the turn of the nineteenth century. While their involvement served primarily as entertainment for male spectators, it also gave participants an opportunity to prove that women were indeed capable of the physical feats that were reserved for men.

While the early stages of women's involvement in the sport of rowing were very different from the sport we know today, they did portend the beginnings of women's competitive international rowing. It was from these early beginnings that interest grew

around women's participation in a sport that had largely been reserved for men from the middle and upper-classes and which eventually led to the introduction of women's events at the European championships, world championships and Olympic Games and the development of women's competitive rowing.

This development of women's competitive international rowing was slow and at times difficult. Some female and male rowing administrators argued that competitive international rowing should remain a male preserve, citing the perceived delicate physicality of women and their moral sensitivities as reasons to ban them from the sport. However, it was the tireless work of female rowers, coaches and administrators themselves in conjunction with some supportive male rowing administrators that ultimately led to oarswomen, both heavyweight and lightweight, gaining access to competitive international rowing.

The Current Situation of Women's Competitive International Rowing

In 1997, the FISA Statutes were ratified to prohibit discrimination based on gender, a far cry from the struggles of early female rowing pioneers.² Women such as Amy Gentry and Antoinette Rocheux negotiated with their national rowing federations for the inclusion of women on the international racing program and under FISA's mandate and it was the work of these pioneers that established a precedent for future female rowing activists.

We must acknowledge that while female rowers, coaches, and administrators, have been accepted by FISA, the IOC, and numerous national rowing federations, women involved in competitive international rowing have yet to gain equality in the full sense of the word. Oarswomen have fewer international events open for their participation at both

the world championships and the Olympic Games; nine women's events compared with fourteen men's events at the world championships, and six women's events compared with eight men's events at the Olympic Games (see Appendix 7). As DeAngelis has argued:

*... the Olympic program discriminates against women, period. And until we take a hard stand and the logic I get back is the people that row in the world, reflect the number of people we have, the proportion that we have in the Olympics. My American gender equity says to me, until you give us the opportunity, we won't fill it.*³

FISA, she points out, has not created equal number of events for women and men, rationalizing that internationally there are fewer women competing than men. This is evident in the number of women's crews that enter the world championships. In 2003, one hundred and thirty-seven women's crews from thirty-nine nations raced at the world championships; by contrast, two hundred and forty-nine men's crews from fifty-five nations competed at this championship regatta in Milan, Italy.⁴ Furthermore, events for lightweight women previously existed in the four without coxswain and the pair without coxswain, but both of these events were discontinued in 1997 and 2004 respectively, after fewer than seven crews were entered to races in these events three years in a row.⁵ Yet, this argument draws on the discussion from Chapter 7 that suggests that because the only event available for lightweight women at the Olympic Games is the double sculls event, lightweight women's sweep rowing throughout the world has virtually been annihilated.

Additionally, women continue to hold fewer decision making positions at the national and international levels and full-time international rowing coach positions than men in all of the national rowing federations. In 2003, two women served on FISA's Executive Board, Anita DeFrantz and Tricia Smith, and only two women served as chair

of the twelve FISA Commissions, Ingrid Dieterle with the Youth Rowing Commission and Tricia Smith with the Women's Rowing Commission.⁶

Furthermore, the overwhelming dominance of men in administrative roles has resulted in many organisations neglecting to remove the gendered language that appears in documents. Gendered language is used in "organisational documents to identify the intended sex of post holders."⁷ Within FISA, the people who have traditionally held the positions of Chair of commissions have been men. This changed in 1969 when the FISA Women's Commission was founded and Keller selected the international federation's first female Chair, Nely Gambon-de-Vos. Despite the fact that a woman now held a Chair position in the organisation, she was referred to as the Chairman of the FISA Women's Commission. Since 1969, three other women have served as Chair for any FISA commission, Magdalena Sarbochová (Women's Commission), Dieterle (Youth Rowing Commission), and most recently Smith (Women's Commission). Several of the participants of this study indicated that the gendered language used by FISA was absurd and argued that the federation should simply change the language. Dieterle stated that she felt ridiculous when she handed out her FISA business card because the title read "Chairman," and furthermore, the fact that many people around the world did not know that Ingrid was a woman's name further added to her discomfort.⁸ Arguably the use of "he" or "Chairman" is related to the understanding that men 'naturally' belong within influential positions in sport governing bodies.⁹ Some are unable to understand that the sexist language that appeared in the federation's official documents had an impact on the "meanings people ascribe to" them.¹⁰ These meanings can affect "women's and men's views of reality and, ultimately, their personal and professional aspirations."¹¹ As Shaw

has argued, "this lack of awareness of inclusive/exclusive language within the organisations may indicate that individuals were uninformed of its potentially discriminatory nature."¹²

Additionally, the use of "he" or "Chairman" suggests the association of discourses of masculinity to leadership roles and can therefore strengthen the assumption that incumbents of these roles will be men.¹³ Shaw and Hoeber further argued that, "the signifier "man" is as important in constructing the same dominant/subordinate power relationships. The use of the title Chairman very clearly implies that a man is expected to hold this influential organizational position."¹⁴ When women challenge or resist forms of discrimination, there may be resistance to resistance. Shaw noted that:

... some men who may often be unwilling to challenge the discourses that have made, and continue to make, them powerful. It would appear that, despite efforts by [sport organizations] to embrace equitable discourses, resistance to this, in the expression of gendered language, can be seen as inevitable.¹⁵

Chuter also discussed male administrators' potential concerns regarding women who challenged dominant discourses and accepted positions as national and/or international rowing administrators and coaches, *"Every time you saw the situation ... where the woman ... got the foot in the door, the men [thought they] might be losing out."*¹⁶ Yet, Chuter indicated, *"Now I think it seems there's room for all."*¹⁷

Despite the apparent inequalities that have and still exist in the sport of rowing, women have retained certain aspects of agency. In her interview, Ellis was adamant that we not focus on the restrictions of the past because *"you can't move the clock back."*¹⁸ She preferred that female administrators look to the future and address the changes that they can make to benefit women's involvement in sport. To remind herself of this point she keeps a memento from the first European championships in which she was a

competitor, *"I keep that USSR pin from 1966, to remind me how we've managed to move women forward in our country because of experiences that ... some of us contended with."*¹⁹

There are some female rowers, coaches, and administrators today who are aware of the struggles of their predecessors and of the changes that have resulted since the first women's European rowing championships in 1954. These women are not focussed on inequalities of the past, but rather their attention is placed on how they can maintain the current position of women's competitive international rowing and how they can further develop the sport for the benefit of all women involved.

The Future of Women's Competitive International Rowing

The participants of this study spoke about the changes that they envisioned would benefit the development of women's competitive international rowing and the ways in which each of them hoped to evoke change in the sport. For example, Lau spoke about the importance of increasing the profile of women's competitive international rowing in various forms of media.²⁰ And while there were several points raised about how to further develop women's competitive international rowing, two specific goals were noted by each participant; one was to increase the number of women in coaching and another to increase the number of women in rowing administration.

Smith especially spoke about the importance of increasing the number of women involved in international coaching and how she and the FISA Women's Commission have established development camps to encourage women to become involved:

So that's what we've tried to do, in a small way with the FISA development camps, for example invite Laryssa [Biesenthal] to work along side Penny Chuter and then identify other coaches like Laryssa and bring them to the camp. The idea is that this group of coaches now knows one another, so it's a supportive

*atmosphere. Now you go to the events and it's not just you and sixty male coaches, it's you and ten other female coaches and sixty male coaches. It just changes the dynamics of the experience and it changes how women might view coaching as a career. There is only so much you can do from the FISA level. We're not in control of how rowing is developed in each country, but we can have an influence. I believe in starting with small projects and doing them well and going from there.*²¹

One point that she further emphasized was the importance of identifying and encouraging women individually to become coaches and administrators at the international level.²²

Yet, she recognized her limitations, *"It is the coaching and administration we have to focus on, figuring out how to open opportunities for women as much as we can do from the FISA end, because we can't dictate to the national federations what they do."*²³

Smith also pointed out the importance of recruiting women to be involved in administration, especially at the international level. She indicated that if she had not been recruited to be a member of the FISA Women's Commission, she would never have even considered it as an option:

*Sometimes there are the opportunities but the women haven't identified themselves as being interested or haven't been identified by others. I wouldn't have gotten involved with FISA if Ingrid [Dieterle] hadn't contacted me. So there have to be other women in similar situations who I could contact to encourage to be involved and I do that as much as I can. It is also something the current Women's Commission is mandated with and which has been taken up by many other FISA members.*²⁴

In her work with the ARA, Ellis indicated that she was also searching for the right women to work in the organisation:

*So continue, when I walk out the door in a couple years time, so there's a succession plan ... bring some women into the equations. We now have two male officers and two female officers [in the ARA]. Our board has grown in its number of women, percentage of female to males. I like to think that, not only have we ... got the best people for the jobs, we've [also] increased or given opportunities to women who were in the sport to reach the highest level.*²⁵

The participants agreed that they, along with other women involved in the sport of rowing, must work together to create opportunities for future oarswomen, female coaches, and administrators.

Implications for Further Research

This is not a complete history of women's involvement in the sport of rowing. I chose to focus on what I considered to be the defining moments in the history of women's competitive international rowing, i.e. the introduction of women's events at the European championships in 1954, the world championships in 1974, the Olympic Games in 1976, the change of the women's racing distance in 1985, the introduction of lightweight women's events at the world championships in 1985 and the Olympic Games 1996. Much research remains to be done in this field and I encourage others to continue this work. The research does not have to be limited to the international level, for the histories of women's participation in rowing at the national and local levels all need to be told.

Research is needed on women's participation in the sport of rowing in developing nations, including China, Egypt, India, México, Thailand, and Tunisia. For example, the success of the Chinese female rowers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries indicates that Chinese rowing administrators have learned from the most successful rowing programs in the history of women's competitive international rowing and have adapted them to achieve victory today. Despite the Chinese's focus on women's international rowing success, there are oarswomen in other developing nations who do not receive similar support in their quest for elite competitive experiences and their stories need to be heard.

Although adaptive rowing, rowing for individuals with physical and mental disabilities, is new to the international racing program, it is important to understand how these athletes view their participation in competitive international rowing. Feminist historians have sought to excavate women's sporting experiences, but we have neglected disabled female athletes' experiences and this must be corrected.

Just as M. Ann Hall's *The Girl and the Game*, I have painted a broad picture and I hope that "others will fill in the missing details through regional and local stories, more specific studies in depth and tracking down [other] former athletes and competitors."²⁶ Furthermore, I was encouraged by Ellis, as well as other women I spoke with, to "*not dwell on the past,*" but look to the future.²⁷ DeFrantz indicated that she believed that the greatest moments in the history of women's competitive international rowing are still to come.²⁸

Notes

¹ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*.

² 1997 FISA ordinary congress Centre Manège de Chambéry, France Saturday, August 30, 1997, 09:00hrs. FISA Historical Archives, FISA Head Office, Lausanne Switzerland.

³ DeAngelis, interview.

⁴ FISA, "2003 World Rowing Championships, Milan,"

http://80.83.47.230/a_result.fwx?p_idcompet=59&p_text=WCH%202003%20Milan-Idroscalo/ITA%20WCH&p_sexe=all&p_class=finalists&p_boat=oui&p_auto=1 retrieved 10 May 2006.

⁵ *Ibid.* With regards to the removal of events from the international racing program Rule 29 of the "FISA Rules of Racing" stipulates, "If, in any of the above events, excluding the events designated below for the Olympic Games and all other 8+ events, there are less than seven starters in three consecutive World Championships, then that event shall be automatically removed from the programme of the World Championships for the following years." FISA, "FISA Rules of Racing," (Lausanne: FISA, February 2005), 61 http://www.worldrowing.com/medias/docs/media_350586.pdf retrieved 28 September 2006.

⁶ Smith indicated that in 2000 the FISA delegates decided that the Women's Commission was acting in isolation within the federation and should be absorbed by the other commissions. This did not result in the annihilation of the Women's Commission, but rather they became a cross commission in which the women who were members had to be members of one of the other FISA commissions, such as the Events Commission, Umpiring Commission, Materials Commission, Competitive Rowing Commission, Youth Rowing Commission, Master's Rowing Commission, Rowing for All Commission, Sports Medicine Commission, Athletes Commission, Adaptive Rowing Commission, or the Media, Marketing and Promotions Commission (Smith, interview).

⁷ Shaw, "The Construction of Gender Relations in Sport Organisations," 80.

⁸ Dieterle, interview.

⁹ J. Martin, "The Organization of Exclusion: Institutionalization of sex inequality, gendered faculty jobs and gendered knowledge in organizational theory and research," *Organization* 1:2(1990), 401-431.

¹⁰ Janet B. Parks and Mary Ann Robertson, "The Gender Gap in Attitudes Toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language: Implications for Sport Management Education," *Journal of Sport Management* 16(2002), 192.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Shaw, "The Construction of Gender Relations in Sport Organisations," 82.

¹³ Martin, 1994.

¹⁴ Shaw and Hoerber, "Gender Discourses," 263-264

¹⁵ Shaw, "Gender Relations," 84

¹⁶ Chuter, interview.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Ellis, interview.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Lau, interview.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ellis, interview.

²⁶ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 215.

²⁷ Ellis, interview.

²⁸ DeFrantz, interview.

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Appendix 1: Participant Biographies

Laryssa Biesenthal

In the fall of 1990, while studying at the University of British Columbia, Laryssa Biesenthal was encouraged to join the school's novice rowing program. She quickly realised that this was a sport she enjoyed and believed she could excel at. By 1993, Biesenthal had decided to make her first attempt at the Canadian national rowing team and headed across the country to compete at her first Speed Order Regatta in London, Ontario.¹ Although this young rower was not invited to continue rowing with the national team, even though her pair partner was, she went back to Burnaby, British Columbia to continue training at home.

After switching to sculling, Biesenthal returned to London in the spring of 1995 and made another attempt at the national team. This time she was victorious and was selected as a member of the women's quadruple sculls boat along with Diane O'Grady, and two-times Olympic gold medalists Marnie McBean and Kathleen Heddle. The combination of these four women was very successful and they won a silver medal at the 1995 world championships and bronze at the 1996 Olympic Games. It was after these Olympic Games that Biesenthal began her coaching career and worked with high school athletes in Victoria, British Columbia, while she continued to train with the national team.

At the completion of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, where Biesenthal and her team-mates won a bronze medal in the women's eight, she decided to give up rowing altogether and work as an interior designer. Within a year she realised that this was not her dream job and she returned to coaching and applied for admittance into the National

Coaching Institute (NCI) in Victoria. She quickly proved her skill for coaching competitive rowing and in 2002 was selected by Rowing Canada (RCA) to coach crews that competed at the FISU Games and Commonwealth championships and won numerous gold medals at both regattas.² The next year Biesenthal coached Canada's Under-23 World Regatta four without coxswain, as well as the Pan American Games crew winning gold in the lightweight and heavyweight women's double sculls and silver medals in both the lightweight and heavyweight women's singles sculls events.

In January of 2004, Biesenthal was hired as RCA's assistant women's rowing coach, specifically to work with the Olympic lightweight women's double. It was after these Games that RCA offered her a contract to be the assistant women's coach and in 2005 she officially became the head lightweight women's rowing coach for Canada.

Penny Chuter

Penelope Ann Chuter of the United Kingdom was an active oarswoman prior to and during the introduction of women's races at the European championships. At the early age of seven, Chuter won her first rowing event at the Under-16 Girls Dingby Race, and thus began her life-long involvement with rowing.³ Despite her small stature for competitive rowing, five feet, eight inches tall, Chuter developed into an impressive international sculler and placed fourth at the 1960, 1961, 1963, and 1964 European championships.⁴ Her best performance came at the 1962 European championships in Berlin-Grünau, Germany, where she won a silver medal in the single sculls event.⁵

In 1964, Chuter made the decision to retire and returned to school, the Bedford College of Physical Education, where she trained to become a physical education teacher.⁶ She continued to be involved with the sport of rowing as a coach at private

schools that had employed her and in 1973 was hired by the ARA to be the head coach for the British women's crews.⁷

The ARA was impressed with her coaching abilities and in 1978 promoted her to work with the British men's program and serve as the head coach of the junior men's international team.⁸ Chuter coached the British junior men's eight to a fourth place finish, the best performance ever by a British junior crew. When she returned from the junior championships, she was asked by the husband of a former woman she coached if she would coach his pair without coxswain during their preparation for the national team trials. Intrigued by the opportunity, Chuter agreed. After the crew won the national selection trials, she remained as their coach and helped them win a silver medal at the 1978 world championships. Again Chuter was able to prove her abilities and the ARA promoted her to work with the senior men's international program, specifically, to coach the senior men's eight. Chuter became the first British woman to coach international men's crews.

During her tenure with the British national rowing team, Chuter became aware of the lack of education available for coaches. She moved away from professional coaching and became the first female Director of Coaching in the United Kingdom in 1982 and worked to develop the country's coach education program for rowing.⁹ It was during this time that FISA approached Chuter to become a member of the Women's Commission in 1983 and then in 1985 she became a member of the Competitive Rowing Commission.

In 1986 the ARA asked Chuter to return to the international program and she became the Director of International Rowing (DIR). In her curriculum vitae she stated:

This appointment, for the first time, put the whole of British International Rowing under the leadership of one employed professional and included the

implementation of an entirely new performance, selection and management structure - one which many NGB's (national sport governing bodies) are still striving to achieve.¹⁰

It has been argued:

As DIR she introduced revolutionary, and long overdue, changes to the structure, management, training methodology, and selection procedures of the British National Rowing Teams ... The result was the first Olympic Gold Medal for British Rowing for over 35 years.¹¹

This was a position she held until 1990 when she was hired as the British Principal National Coach. Chuter's successful coaching career was also not lost on those in Britain outside of the rowing community. In 1987 she was awarded the UK (the National Coaching Foundation) Coach of the Year Award for Great Britain and in 1989 she was also awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) by the Queen of England for her services to rowing in the country.¹² In November of 2002, Chuter was inducted into the Hall of Fame of Sports Coach UK.¹³

After a long and sometimes difficult time as the head of British international crews, Chuter left the ARA to work with Oxford University Boat club as the chief coach/development coach. In 1997 she left this position to become the Senior Executive Officer of the English Sports Council – South Region. Although she has retired from coaching, Chuter continues to be actively involved in the international rowing community, leading the FISA Seeding Panel for international regattas. As well, she remains an international coaching consultant for FISA and runs coach development courses and mentorship programs for those in developing rowing countries; most notably, the FISA International Coaches Academy and the FISA Women's Training Camp for Developing Countries.¹⁴

Michelle Darvill

In the fall of 1985, University of Toronto student Michelle Darvill signed up for the school's novice women's rowing program. A former paddler herself, Darvill had a keen sense of the water and picked up the sport of rowing quickly. After several years rowing at the club and university level, she decided to tryout for the national team in 1990. Although she was unsuccessful, she made the decision to move to Victoria in January of 1991 to train full-time. Darvill was selected for the 1991 Canadian rowing team and was matched up with Wendy Wiebe to race the lightweight women's double sculls event. Her first world championship medal came in 1992 after she and then double sculls partner Colleen Miller were unable to win a spot on the 1992 Olympic heavyweight team. Darvill and Miller managed to drop their excess weight and captured a silver medal at the championships in Montréal, Canada. While her former partners were teamed together to race the lightweight women's double sculls, Darvill took to racing in the lightweight women's single sculls and won gold in this event at the world championships in 1993 and 1994.¹⁵

In 1994, Darvill moved to Germany to obtain a diploma in naturopathy. She returned to Canada to race for the 1995 national team and maintained her position in the single sculls event. After she placed fifth at the world championships, she decided to try a different approach. Fortunately because of her dual citizenship she was able to compete for the German national rowing team, a change that helped her to continue her rowing career. Darvill continued to row and was selected to compete at the 1996 Olympic Games in the first every lightweight women's Olympic rowing event. Interestingly, she

and her double sculls partner, Ruth Kaps, did not qualify for the "A" final and they ended up racing her former team-mates Miller and Wiebe.

Darvill is the only women to have won medals in all of the lightweight international sculling events, the single scull, the double sculls, and the quadruple sculls.¹⁶ Currently, she is working with RCA as the administrative assistant at the London Training Centre in London, Canada.

Debby DeAngelis (née Ayars)

While studying sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Debby DeAngelis became involved in university rowing through the school's "Shell and Oar" sorority. Originally designed as the social committee for the men's rowing program, she convinced the men's assistant coach to help start a women's program. DeAngelis had been an active oarswoman in her home of San Diego, California, a member of the historical ZLAC Rowing Club.¹⁷

She continued to row after her graduation in 1970, and attempted to qualify for a position on the American women's rowing team. Unfortunately, due to extensive injury to her knees, DeAngelis was unsuccessful. Despite the set-back she was selected to serve as the assistant manager for the 1976 and 1980 Olympic rowing teams, and thus began her career in sport administration.

DeAngelis served as team manager for the American women's rowing team from 1977 to 1979, during which time she had decided to return to school to get her Master of Science degree in Sports Management/Physical Education at the University of Massachusetts, which she completed in 1979.¹⁸ She soon began working with the United States Rowing Association (USRowing) and has served terms as Executive Vice

President, Women's Vice President, Parliamentarian, and as the International and Events Division Co-chair.¹⁹

In 1978 the FISA Women's Commission selected her to be a member and in 1999 she became a member of the FISA Youth Commission, responsible for the development of international rowing for athletes under the age of eighteen. DeAngelis continues to be involved in national and international rowing, working as an administrator and as an umpire at a number of regattas.

Anita DeFrantz

While working towards her Bachelor of Arts degree at Connecticut College, DeFrantz was recruited to join the school's novice women's rowing program. As a woman who had been heavily involved in sport during her childhood, DeFrantz adapted easily to rowing and soon raced with the varsity women's program. At the completion of her undergraduate degree in 1974, DeFrantz decided to attend law school at the University of Pennsylvania, all the while she continued to row.

In 1976, with the first women's Olympic rowing events schedule for the Games in Montréal, Canada, DeFrantz tried out for the American national rowing team. She was successful at these trials and was selected not only to row in seven seat of the women's eight, but to serve as team captain at these Games. Unsure of what to expect at the Olympic Games, the Americans raced hard and were able to capture the bronze medal in a tough field of Eastern European crews.

DeFrantz continued her rowing career, won a silver medal at the 1978 world championships, and worked towards competing at the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, Russia. Yet, her life was not solely about rowing; after she graduated from law school in

1997, she became an attorney at the Juvenile Law Centre of Philadelphia. Upon the completion of her position in Philadelphia, she moved to Princeton to work as an administrator at Princeton University from 1979 until 1981.

However, her rowing career was abruptly brought to a halt when the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the federal government made the decision to boycott the 1980 Games in Moscow, Russia. Determined to compete at the Games, DeFrantz started a letter campaign, petitioned congress, and even testified before congress and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.²⁰ Eventually she filed a lawsuit against the USOC in an effort to force the sport governing body to send athletes to Moscow, although the courts later dismissed the case.²¹

DeFrantz's efforts to ensure that American athletes could compete at the Games of the XXII Olympiad did not go unnoticed. In 1980, the IOC awarded her the Olympic Order in bronze and at home, Peter Ueberroth, chief executive officer of the Los Angeles organising committee for the 1984 Olympic Games hired her to serve as a vice-president for the organising committee, responsible for the management of one of the athletes' villages.²² In 1986, DeFrantz was selected to serve as an IOC representative to the United States of America, the first African American woman to be part of this organisation. Between 1992 and 2001, she was a member of the IOC Executive Board and worked as an IOC Vice-President between 1997 and 2001. Although she is no longer a member of the Executive Board, DeFrantz holds many other Commissions within the IOC, including Juridical, Sport and Law, Finances, Coordination for the Games of the XXX Olympiad, London 2012, and Chairperson of the IOC Athletes' Commission Election Committee.²³

Ingrid Dieterle

At the age of sixteen, Ingrid Dieterle was introduced to the sport of rowing by her mother. During her seven years as a competitive rower she won the German national champions in the double sculls event, in addition to her involvement in a variety of other sport. When she realised that she did not have the talent to develop into an elite oarswoman and race for the German national team, Dieterle decided to become a physical education teacher and an avid coach in a number of sports, but specialising in rowing.

Dieterle's involvement with coaching at the high school and club level eventually led to her involvement with administration. Originally, she began as an administrator at her local club in Frankfurt, then with the West German national rowing federation. In 1969, FISA President Thomas Keller and the West German national rowing federation nominated Dieterle to be part of the newly founded FISA Women's Commission and has since worked to introduce women's events, for both heavyweight and lightweight oarswomen, on the programs of the world championships and Olympic Games, and worked to double the women's racing distance from 1000 metres to 2000 metres. Dieterle also became the first female chair of one of FISA's commission, other than the women's, when she was voted to head the Youth Rowing Commission from 1999 until 2003. Although she is no longer an active member of FISA, due to her retirement from the organisation in 2004, Dieterle remains involved with the sport of rowing at home in Germany.

Diane Ellis

Having become disenchanted with Girl Guide, Diana Ellis' joined the Sea Rangers. By 1960, her interest in water drove her to register as a member of a local

women's only rowing club, St. George's Ladies Rowing Club. It was here that she found her niche as a rower, qualifying to compete for Great Britain in her club women's eight, a boat that she stroked, at the 1966 European championships. Because of her smaller stature, Ellis not only rowed, but became a coxswain as well and coxed several of her crews to national championship medals during the 1970s.

Despite her achievements as a rower and coxswain, Ellis is known less for her skill on the water than her abilities in the boardrooms as an administrator of British Rowing. After the completion of her career as an athlete, Ellis turned her attention to volunteer work within rowing and worked as team manager, chair of several national rowing committees and in 1978 became a qualified umpire, one of only few women in Britain at the time who had done so. One of her proudest moments came in 1988 when she and several other female rowing administrators founded the Henley Women's Regatta. In 1989, Ellis was elected to serve as the chair of the ARA Executive Committee, a position she continues to hold today. In 1997, Ellis also achieved two other firsts for British women in competitive rowing. She was admitted as a member to the Leander Club and was elected the first woman Steward of Henley Royal Regatta. Additionally, Ellis serves as a director on the British Olympic Association, Sports Dispute Resolution Panel and is Deputy Chair of the CCPR. In 2004 she was awarded the Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for her services to the sport of rowing in Great Britain.

Barbara Fenner

Having been introduced to the sport of rowing at the University of Melbourne, Barbara Fenner became an avid oarswoman. In 1978 she joined the Australian national

team, but the crew did not qualify for the world championships in New Zealand. After the completion of her career as a lightweight rower in 1982, Fenner worked with the Australian women's rowing program as both a coach and administrator. In 1987, Fenner was selected to be the first female coach to represent Australia at the world championships.²⁴ When she was not coaching, she drove the development and implementation of the National Coach Education Scheme in rowing, and was one of the key people involved in the development of coaching resources, including audiovisual support materials and assessment procedures and tools.²⁵

Currently a member of FISA's Youth Commission and the head of coach education in Australia, Fenner continues to work tirelessly to encourage more women to become qualified coaches throughout her country and the world.

Jutta Lau

In 1972, fourteen year old Jutta Lau began her rowing career in Brandenburg, Germany. Originally a track and field athlete, Lau turned to the rowing program at the German sport school after she failed to prosper in this discipline. Luckily for the sport of rowing, this young woman quickly adapted to rowing and by 1974 raced at her first world championships, and the first ever women's world rowing championships for women, in Lucerne, Switzerland. Part of the dominant women's elite rowing program in the DDR, Lau won five world championships and two Olympic gold medals in the women's quadruple sculls boat with coxswain between 1974 and 1980.

After her retirement from competitive rowing, Lau made the transition to competitive coaching and began her senior national team career working under Jorgen Grobler. In 1984, she became the head coach of the DDR's women's sculling program

and by 2001 had helped the crews she had coached win a staggering eighteen world championship titles and five Olympic gold medals. This success prompted FISA to give her the "FISA Coach of the Year" award in 2001, a well deserved international acknowledgment. Lau continues to coach the German women's sculling program out of her local club in Potsdam. In recent years this famous elite women's rowing coach has added the German lightweight women's sculling program to the list of crews that she works with.

Colleen Miller

Originally a competitive swimmer, Colleen Miller joined the University of Manitoba women's rowing team while she was studying at that university. After competing at numerous local and national regattas, Miller made the transition onto the Canadian national rowing team in 1990, and raced at the world championships in the lightweight women's four without coxswain.

In 1992 Miller converted from sweep rowing to sculling and was partnered with Michelle Darvill. The women made a valiant effort to win a spot on the 1992 Canadian Olympic team as the heavyweight women's double, but were unable to make the time standard required. Despite their disappointment, Miller and Darvill made the decision to lose their excess weight and compete at the 1992 Non-Olympic world championships in Montréal, Canada, where they won a silver medal.

The following year Miller was partnered with Wendy Wiebe and they successfully captured three consecutive world championships titles, 1993-1995, in the women's lightweight double. The decision to add a lightweight women's race to the 1996 Olympic program introduced a new goal for every lightweight rowing woman and

Canada's dynamic lightweight duo felt as if they were up for the challenge. Miller and Wiebe were expected to bring home a gold medal for Canada, but unfortunately, Wiebe became ill and they were unable to qualify for the final. They did in fact win the "B" final, which placed them seventh overall. Miller has since retired from competitive rowing, but remains involved in the Canadian rowing community. In 1998 she was inducted in the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame.

Svetla Otzetova

At the age of sixteen, Svetla Otzetova had already become an elite competitive swimmer, but due to problems with her ears, she was forced to retire from the sport at an early age. When a Bulgarian rowing coach came to her school to recruit young athletes, Otzetova and approximately twenty other young girls signed up, yet she was the only one to continue with the sport. Within three years this young Bulgarian woman found a place on the national rowing team and competed at her first European championships in Klagenfurt, Austria, where she placed fifth in the women's quadruple sculls with coxswain. In 1972, Otzetova was moved to the women's double sculls and partnered with a woman who was nine years her senior. The two were unable to win a medal at the European championships and in 1975 her partner was replaced with Zdravka Yordanova, who had previously stroked the quadruple sculls with coxswain crew. The two worked well together from the beginning and they won bronze at the 1975 world championships in Nottingham; the first ever medal for a Bulgarian women's rowing team. Otzetova and Yordanova continued to excel, winning gold at the 1976 Olympic Games; the first ever Olympic gold medal for a Bulgarian woman; and winning two gold medals, two silver,

and one bronze medal at the world championship and Olympic Games through until 1981.

Her international rowing success and charismatic personality garnered the attention of the IOC and her fellow Olympic athletes. She was selected to serve on the IOC's Athletes' Commission, but due to the Bulgarian boycott of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Otzetova was removed from this commission only to be replaced by Nadia Comaneci.

This experience with the IOC was not the first time she had dealt with bureaucratic adversity. During her rowing career Otzetova continued her studies, not at a state-run sport school, rather, at a school that provided her the opportunity to earn her Master's Degree in architecture. This caused significant problems for her because coaches demanded that she choose between her education and rowing. Ultimately, Otzetova was able to negotiate both fields, which has helped competitive international rowing in the long-run. Currently, this Bulgarian woman is the Technical Director of FISA, responsible for helping regatta organising committees to meet the international rowing course requirements. Additionally, Otzetova serves as the Chair of the Bulgarian Rowing Federation and was recently elected to serve as the President of the Bulgarian Olympic Committee

Rachel Quarrell

Frustrated with the lack of media attention focussed on women's rowing, Dr. Rachel Quarrell, a research scientist at the University of Oxford, designed *The Rowing Service* website in 1994, which is arguably the largest and most comprehensive rowing website in the world. A former coxswain herself for Oxford University Boat Club,

Molesey Boat Club, and Oxford Brookes University Boat Club, Quarrell has won the Britannia Challenge Cup at the Henley Royal Regatta, medalled at the Commonwealth Rowing Championships, several national championships, along with numerous other regattas.²⁶ After her coxing career had come to a conclusion, Quarrell established a coxswain identification system whereby coxswains are given a certain ranking based on their experience and capabilities, Novice, Experienced, and Senior.²⁷ This system allows coaches to identify which coxswains are permitted to steer college crews on the Isis River.²⁸

While still active as a coxswain, this young British woman came to realise that local and national regatta organisers did not publish their results on the World Wide Web for interested parties to view. Because she had access to the World Wide Web through her university, Quarrell informed regatta organisers that they could submit results to her and she would post them on her web page, free of charge; this became the stepping stone to her creation of *The Rowing Service* website. She also became interested in freelance writing for local and national newspapers that provided little information about rowing results, especially women's. A frequent journalist for *The Daily Telegraph*, Quarrell has negotiated with this newspaper, along with others, to ensure that results of women's crews are included in the press releases and she continues to push for equitable news coverage of all women's sporting events.

Tricia Smith

Formerly an elite swimmer, Tricia Smith decided to take up the sport of rowing when a friend invited her to an early morning practice with the joint University of British Columbia/Vancouver Rowing Club (VRC) in 1974. Although she was not yet a

university student, Smith became a member of the unofficial University of British Columbia VRC women's novice rowing program. At the age of eighteen, she and her fellow team-mates won the national championships which permitted them an opportunity to be chosen for the Canadian national rowing team that was to compete at the world championships in Nottingham, England. Unfortunately, Smith and her crew did not make the time standard. Years later a friend on the men's crew thanked Smith for letting his crew go to the world championships instead of her crew. He indicated that the coaches had informed them that the women's crew had decided to step aside and let his crew attend in their place. He said he was surprised as his crew was not as talented as the women's crew. Despite the disappointment, Smith returned the next year and won a spot on the 1976 Canadian Olympic rowing team with her pair partner Elisabeth Craig. The pair had a disappointing finish to their first Olympic experience after winning early season races in Duisburg and Lucerne. The Olympic Games were their third international race together as a team. Undeterred, Smith returned to the national team in 1977 and remained a member until 1988. During this time, not only did Smith win an impressive seven world championships medals, gold at the Commonwealth games in 1986, and a silver medal at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, but she graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1981 and a law degree in 1985. She is the only athlete from the University of British Columbia to have ever been selected to represent Canada at four Olympic Games, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988, and the school recognised her achievements in May of 2001 and inducted her into the Hall of Fame.²⁹ In 2001, Smith received an Honorary Doctorate of Law from the

University of British Columbia in recognition of her achievements and continued work in international sport, as well as sport and the law.

During her rowing career, Smith became involved in sport administration. After the completion of the international season, Smith would write detailed reports for the Canadian national rowing federation to provide them with information about the competition, the accommodation, transportation, food, support services, including surveys from fellow athletes that discussed their experiences at these regattas. It was these reports that led her to co-found and co-chair Rowing Canada's first Athletes' Advisory Council. The goal of this Council was to provide all athletes the opportunity to give input into the decision-making of RCA, including athletes who might otherwise be afraid to speak up.³⁰ Her role as an athletes' advisor for RCA eventually led to her being named to the first Athletes' Advisory Council of the Canadian Olympic Committee in 1980.³¹

Her retirement from competitive international rowing did not lead to her retirement from sport as a whole. In 1988 she became a member of the Board of Rowing British Columbia. She was elected the first female chair of Sport British Columbia, and was a board member of the Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development (now Pacific Sport), a Board Member of the 2010 Bid Committee and is currently a Board Member of 2010 Legacies Now and the Executive Committee of the Canadian Olympic Committee.³²

Smith's volunteer role in sport administration has not been limited to Canada. In 1993 FISA Women's Commission Chair, Magdalena Sarbochová, asked Smith to become a member of this commission and in 2000 she became the chair of the

commission after Sarbochová retired. She is also a member of the International Council of Arbitration for Sport and an Arbitrator with the ADR SPORT RED program within Canada. Recently she was named the Chef de Mission for the Canadian Team at the 2007 Pan American Games and in April of 2006 was awarded the Carol Anne Letheren Award which honours individuals for excellence in sport leadership.³³

Notes

¹ The Speed Order Regatta is the annual regatta that the Canadian national rowing team hosts for athletes wishing to tryout for the national team.

² Coaching Association of Canada, "Profile," <http://www.coach.ca/eng/bios.cfm?ID=11> retrieved 10 May 2006.

³ Mike Rosewell, "Penny Chuter, OBE: A Pen Portrait," *British Rowing Almanack and ARA Year Book*, ed. Keith Osborne (London: ARA, 1990), 252.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Meuret, *FISA*, 127.

⁶ Penny Chuter, e-mail message to author, 25 July 2004.

⁷ Rosewell, "Penny Chuter, OBE," 251.

⁸ Rosewell, "Penny Chuter, OBE," 251.

⁹ UK Sports Coach, "Penny Chuter,"

<http://www.sportscoachuk.org/awards/hof/winners%20citations%202002.htm> retrieved 24 June 2004.

¹⁰ Penny Chuter, e-mail message to author, 25 July 2004.

¹¹ PAC, "Bibliography: Penny Chuter,"

¹² PAC, "Bibliography: Penny Chuter,"

¹³ PAC, "Bibliography: Penny Chuter,"

¹⁴ PAC, "Bibliography: Penny Chuter,"

¹⁵ Michelle Darvill, e-mail message to author, 5 July 2004.

¹⁶ CRC Sculling Camps, "Coaches: Michelle Darvill," <http://www.rowingcamps.com/coaches.html> retrieved 25 August 2005.

¹⁷ See Wetzell Wallace, *A History of the ZLAC Rowing Club*.

¹⁸ Cal State University, "Debby DeAngelis,"

<http://www.edschool.csueastbay.edu/departments/kpe/athletics/deangelis.html> retrieved 14 August 2005.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Seaton Huntington, "Women on the Water," 117.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

²² International Olympic Committee, "Members: Anita DeFrantz,"

http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/ioc/members/bio_uk.asp?id=35 retrieved 20 August 2004.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Australian Government, "Australian Sports Commission – Events,"

<http://www.ausport.gov.au/events/ausportawards2004/eunice.asp> retrieved 13 September 2005.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Cambridge Rowing, "Rachel Quarrell," http://www.cambridge.rowing.org.uk/wiki/Rachel_Quarrell retrieved 12 October 2004.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ UBC Sports Hall of Fame, "Highlights: Tricia Smith," http://www.ubcsportshalloffame.com/cgi-bin/search.cgi?person_id=31&searchall=1 retrieved 11 May 2004.

³⁰ Canadian Olympic Committee, "Tricia Smith Receives Carol Ann Lethern Award,"

http://www.olympic.ca/EN/organization/news/2006/0428_2.shtml retrieved 8 June 2006.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

Appendix 2: Rowing Term Glossary

Blade: Flattened or spoon-shaped end of oar or scull; often used as term for oar

Bow: forward end of boat

Classes of Boats: international classes of racing boats for women are eight (8+), four without coxswain (4-), pair (2-), quadruple sculls (4x), double sculls (2x), singles sculls (1x); international classes of racing boats for lightweight women are quadruple sculls (4x), double sculls (2x), singles sculls (1x)

Coxless: Rowing shell with no coxswain

Coxswain (cox): individual who steers the boat from a seat in the stern or a lying position in the bow; for women's international crews a coxswain must weight a minimum of fifty-two kilograms

Crew: a team of rowers; American college term for rowing

Double Sculls: a sculling boat with two rowers; also known as a double

Four with Coxswain: a four-oared shell steered by a coxswain; also known as a coxed four

Four without Coxswain: a four-oared shell that is steered by one rower using a mechanism attached to the toe of their right foot; also known as a straight four

Heat: A single division of a race, with the top finishers advancing to the finals or semi-finals of a competition

Lightweight: for women, maximum weight for a sculler is 59 kilograms with a crew average weight of 57 kilograms; for men, maximum weight for a rower or sculler is 72.5 kilograms with a crew average weight of 70 kilograms

Oar: a lever approximately 12 feet long by which the rower pulls against the oarlock to move the boat through the water

Oarlock: a bracket which swivels on the end of the rigger to support the oar

Oarswoman/oarsman: A rower

Pair without coxswain: a two-oared shell steered by one rower using a mechanism attached to the toe of their right foot; also known as a pair

Quadruple Sculls: a sculling boat involving a four-person crew; also known as a quad

Regatta: A boat race; a competitive event in which boats are raced

Rigger: a metal framework or a carbon-fibre-reinforced arm to support the oarlock which is placed approximately 76 centimetres from the centre of the boat

Sculls: short oars used in pairs for singles, doubles, and quads

Shell: smooth-bottomed racing boat

Single sculls: shell for one rower; also known as a single

Slide: a seat which moves on wheels on parallel rails

Sculler: an individual who rows in a shell with two sculling oars

Sculls: short oars paired together to be used in singles, doubles, and quads

Stroke: 1. a complete rowing motion, made up of a catch, drive, finish, release, feather and recovery. 2. the rower nearest the stern who sets the rhythm and cadence for the crew.

Sweep-oar rowing: Rowing with one oar held in both hands.

**Paddling Against the Current:
An Analysis of the History of Women's Competitive International Rowing Between
1954 and 2003**

CONSENT FORM

I have read the attached *Information Sheet* and understand the nature of the study. I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and I may withdraw from participation at any time. I also understand that in signing this consent form, I am not signing away any of my legal rights.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of the *Information Sheet* for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of the Participant signing above.

Witness: _____ Date: _____

I consent to having my responses tape-recorded.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I consent to having my name acknowledge in this project and understand that my name and statements may be published.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I wish to have my name remain confidential in this project.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Sample Interview Questions

- 1) When and how did you first become involved in rowing?
- 2) Tell me about your transition to the national team.
- 3) Tell me about your first international competition.
- 4) Tell me about your experiences at the first European championships/world championships/Olympic Games that you competed at.
- 5) When and why did you decide to retire?
- 6) Why did you decide to become a rowing coaching/administrator?
- 7) Do you feel as if you have been treated differently by other coaches/administrators because you are a woman?
- 8) If you could do your rowing career all over again, what would you change, what would you keep the same?
- 9) What do you think lies in the future for women's competitive international rowing?

Appendix 7: Rowing Events for Both Women and Men

World Championship Rowing Events

<u>Heavyweight Men</u>		<u>Heavyweight Women</u>	
Single Sculls	1x	Single Sculls	1x
Double Sculls	2x	Double Sculls	2x
Quadruple Sculls	4x	Quadruple Sculls	4x
Pair without Coxswain	2-	Pair without Coxswain	2-
Pair with Coxswain	2+	Four without Coxswain	4-
Four without Coxswain	4-	Eight	8+
Four with Coxswain	4+		
Eight	8+		

<u>Lightweight Men</u>		<u>Lightweight Women</u>	
Single Sculls	1x	Single Sculls	1x
Double Sculls	2x	Double Sculls	2x
Quadruple Sculls	4x	Quadruple Sculls	4x
Pair without Coxswain	2-		
Four without Coxswain	4-		
Eight	8+		

Olympic Games Rowing Events

<u>Heavyweight Men</u>		<u>Heavyweight Women</u>	
Single Sculls	1x	Single Sculls	1x
Double Sculls	2x	Double Sculls	2x
Quadruple Sculls	4x	Quadruple Sculls	4x
Pair without Coxswain	2-	Pair without Coxswain	2-
Four without Coxswain	4-	Eight	8+
Eight	8+		

<u>Lightweight Men</u>		<u>Lightweight Women</u>	
Double Sculls	2x	Double Sculls	2x
Four without Coxswain	4-		