"IT'S A LONG HARD ROAD TO THE TOP": THE CAREER PATHS AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN CANADIAN SPORT ADMINISTRATION

by

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ABSTRACT

The under-representation of women in the higher echelons of sporting organizations has been examined since the 1970's. It is well documented, with the Olympic Movement being the target of much of this criticism (Bischoff and Rintala, 1994, 1996, 1997; Cameron 1996, Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; ISLP and IOC, 2004; McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al, 2005). Research shows a paucity of female leaders at all levels of sporting organizations. This study explored the career paths and leadership experiences of women who have accessed high level leadership positions in Canadian high performance sporting organizations. Semi-structured, open ended interviews were conducted with ten of these women to elicit their personal narratives, and information concerning their career experiences in sport administration was obtained. These stories provide important insights into our current understandings of female experiences in sport administration and the factors that continue to contribute to the under-representation of women in high level sporting leadership. The research questions guiding the study were: (1) Who are the women that have reached high level leadership positions in Canadian sporting organizations? (2) How have they achieved these positions? (3) What have been the circumstances and extent of their leadership involvement? (4) What factors still hinder women's full involvement and progression in sport administration?

Accordingly, I will address four specific areas of investigation. First, quantitative data will be presented to demonstrate the lower levels of women participating at the Olympic Games. Second, the study will trace the career paths of women who have accessed high level sport management positions and highlights women's entry and progression in sport administration. Third, the women's level of leadership involvement will be assessed including the personal skills that led to their success and their accomplishments in these executive roles. Fourth, barriers hindering women's opportunities to advance into high level leadership positions will be examined. The implications of these findings will then be discussed and recommendations will be made for policy makers and current sporting leaders who can influence change within their sporting organizations. It is hoped that this study can contribute to a better understanding of female under-representation in high level sporting leadership.

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1.0 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The Canadian sporting system is an excellent example demonstrating the ways in which women have been excluded from many social, political and economic contexts simply because of their gender. It has been a long road for women attempting to actively participate in the coveted 'male preserves'. In Canada, the persistent exclusion of women from the public labour force (Armstrong, 1978; Landsberg, 1982) such as high level government (Gigantes, 1989), business and economics (Belcourt et. al., 1992; Peach, 1992; Shack, 1977), politics (Brodie and Vickers, 1982; Kealy and Sangster, 1989; Kome, 1985), academia (Brooks, 1997), and sporting organizations (Barney, 1999; Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1982; Hall, 1978; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; Inglis, 1997; Macdonald, 1992; McKay, 1997; Mercier and Werthner, 2001; Sport Canada, 1991; White and Young, 1999) has been studied extensively and the findings are similar in that they show the extent to which women have been unwelcome in high level sporting leadership positions.   Similarly, this study has examined the issue of female under-representation in sport administration by highlighting the career paths and leadership skills of successful female leaders while simultaneously considering the existing barriers that continue to limit women's opportunities to enter and progress in sport administration. I believe that this information is necessary if we are to better understand the ways in which women access or are excluded from high level leadership positions.

1.1.1 Importance of sport to Canada

It is important to point out that modern sport in Canada and worldwide is shaped by cultural, social, economic and political influences. Not only has sport evolved

into an important component of the Canadian identity (Gruneau and Whitson, 1993; Gruneau, 1988; Albinson and Gruneau, 1976) but more importantly, the financial aspects of both Olympic and professional sport have taken on vast global importance. Sporting organizations have thus become powerful institutions that are closely tied to business and politics. With the aid of the media, their influence reaches beyond the majority of the Canadian population and correspondingly shapes attitudes and experiences of both sports fans and non-sports fans.

Sport Canada (2004) reported that:

"in 1991, 53,000 Canadians worked in sports-related jobs, an increase of 14% since 1986. Women held 42% of the jobs" (Sport Canada(a) website, 2004).

Though this statistic for women in particular is high, we must be careful in assuming that they were making significant inroads into male dominated governing bodies of high level sporting organizations. Numerous studies have demonstrated the ways in which women are usually employed in the 'soft' areas of sporting organization, typically in the secretarial, educational and public relations domains (Acker, 1990; Armstrong, 1978; Chase, 1992; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, 1995; McKay, 1997, Rintala and Bischoff, 1994, 1996; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990). In addition, women have been less visible in leadership positions at all levels of sport administration and if in charge, it is usually in the smaller organizations.

Interestingly, there are more women in paid sport administration positions than there are in volunteer positions for a number of reasons related to the gendered labour market. The issue of volunteerism as a barrier will be reviewed in Chapter 4 however it is important to note that this is particularly problematic as most sporting organizations at

the very top of the sport governance hierarchy belong to the Olympic Movement whose organizational foundation is based on volunteerism. These organizations control the direction and management of thousands of athletes worldwide, which makes them influential, and thus confers their leaders a significant amount of power. Statistics have shown that women in these organizations are severely under-represented in the governing bodies, especially at the executive level and in the top leadership positions. Nevertheless, sport administration evidently presents an important employment sector for women in Canada therefore it is important to understand how and why there are so few female leaders thus supporting the need for an examination of the ways in which women enter and progress in high level Canadian sport administration.

Finally, Canadian sporting organizations and their leaders have tremendous cultural, economic and political power, especially those at the elite level such as Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and many large sport federations. For this reason, it is also upon their governing bodies that sporting organizations at the grassroots level model their administrative structure and operational management. If these organizations have a lack of female leaders because of existing barriers at the structural, cultural, relational and societal level then it is likely that these will also be enacted in the governing bodies of grassroots sporting organizations. Because high level Canadian sporting organizations have such an incredible amount of influence and control over sport in Canada, their policies and procedures affect the entire Canadian sporting system.

> "Choice of activity, talent identification, motivation to participate, selection procedures, coaching techniques, allocation of funds, simple day-to-day administration, are all influenced by the criteria set by sports people to select and justify their own and other people's actions" (Schwartz, 1992 quoted in Aplin, Soucie, Quek and Oon 1996, p.253).

Since sport has been characterized as an instrumental tool in the development of all Canadians, it is important that sporting organizations ensure that everyone have access to sport and its administration. In addition, high level sporting organizations need not only promote equality among male and female athletes and administration but they themselves display such egalitarianism in their governance structures. For these reasons, this study will focus on women's experiences with regard to their entry and progression in Canadian sport administration at various levels.

1.1.2 Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games

The IOC's awarding of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games to Vancouver had an immense and immediate impact on the Canadian sporting system. Canada's hosting of the 2010 Games will place the country's public image at the forefront. Directly tied to the Vancouver Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games is an extensive recruitment of athletes and administrators in addition to the implementation of advanced development programs which are all possible as a result of federal government funding. Having said that, women make up approximately 52% of the Canadian population and greatly contribute to the federal tax revenue being used to fund these Games thereby warranting their appropriate representation at the decision-making table.

Both the government of Canada and high level sporting organizations have always taken the country's athletic performance at Olympic Games seriously, thus providing significant funding for the establishment of organizations and programs with the aim of improving the number of medals won by Canadian athletes. Though some sporting organizations have been established since the early 1900s, focus on high performance sport is relatively recent. McKay (1997) reported that:

"...the Canadian Olympic Association and the federal and provincial governments [have] instituted high performance programs. ...in 1971 Sport Canada and Recreation Canada were established...and in 1976 the first federal minister with responsibilities for fitness and amateur sport was appointed" (p.31).

This emphasis has intensified as very recently, high level sporting organizations have taken assertive measures to increase the number of podium finishes by Canadian athletes and place Canada at the front of the medal standings with programs such as 'Own the Podium' and 'Playground to Podium'. In fact,

"the COC envisions Canada's Olympic Winter team in 2010 being first in the World, ...in 2012 being among the top 8 nations in the World, ...envisions Canada as a country where sport is central to its culture...[and] the Olympic Movement being at the core of this sporting culture..." (COC website, 2005).

There has thus been an extensive push to recruit and develop high performance athletes by implementing a series of advanced programs, most of which are funded by government. Women not only represent a number of potential recipients for such programs but should also be involved in their creation and dissemination. For these reasons, women are entitled to appropriate representation in these high level sporting organizations who are involved in the development and implementation of such initiatives. This also demonstrates the extent to which podium success is the underpinning value for high level Canadian sporting organizations thereby promoting the ethos of competitiveness, aggressiveness and personal achievement; attitudes traditionally associated with a masculine management paradigm (Cameron 1996, Hovden 2000a, Hovden 2000b, McKay 1997). Though there are some women involved at this level of sporting leadership, they are not in significant numbers therefore have little voice

and influence at the boardroom table. This study will address the ways in which organizations can increase the number of female leaders involved in sport administration.

1.1.3 Research Gaps

Leadership positions in sporting organizations are often associated with significant power and influence and more importantly, have traditionally been held by men. As this study explored various aspects of women's involvement in high level Canadian sporting leadership, it was possible to compare these findings against those of other important studies conducted in the Canadian context (Fitness and Amateur Sport, 1982; Hall, 1978; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; McKay, 1997; Mercier, 2001, 2002; Sport Canada, 1991). However, it is important to remember that most of these studies were carried out in the 1980s and early 1990s and have not since been pursued. These research findings did show that the gender structure of senior administrative positions in Canadian sport administration had remained virtually unchanged since around the mid 1950s. As early as 1985, Sport Canada was stressing the need to regularly gather data on the status of women in sport leadership and in 1991, speculated that changing the gender imbalance in sport administration involved a three stage process:

> "(1) the problem must be visible, (2) the problem must claim legitimacy and that (3) awareness achieves nothing without commitment on the part of those who influence events" (Sport Canada, 1991, p.24).

Despite these statements, no research has specifically focused on female leaders in the Canadian sporting system since then. Because this research is relatively dated, my study brings knowledge regarding the access and progression made by women in sport administration since efforts have been made to increase the representation of female leaders at all levels of the sporting system. Correspondingly, this study's intention is to

update these findings and analyze the extent and effects of change for female leaders in Canadian sport administration, particularly with regard to career paths, leadership skills and barriers influencing their entry and progression. In this way, this study will add to the body of literature on women in sporting leadership in the context of the new millennium.

Also of great significance is the fact that this study differs from other Canadian research concerning women in sporting leadership in terms of methodology. This initial groundwork relied heavily on survey methodology in order to obtain statistical data on the number of women volunteer administrators and executive members (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; Sport Canada, 1991). Though Sport Canada (1991) used focus groups and McKay (1997) interviewed some Canadian sporting leaders, no study specifically looked at providing a voice to female sport administrators in Canada to elicit their perceptions and experiences in sport administration. For this reason, the information used for this thesis derives from the personal interviews conducted with women involved in high level of sport administration in Canada. Though no methodology is all encompassing, quantitative research has been criticized for limiting the results that can be found as an answer key based on the researcher's perspectives and understanding, is usually provided for respondents therefore the participants' viewpoints are not always fully represented in the results (Bischoff and Rintala, 1994, 1996; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; McKay 1997).

With respect to the theoretical frameworks used in these previous analyses, most studies were based on a liberal feminist perspective where the aim of the research was to increase the number of women in sport administration without fundamentally problematizing the structures and practices of these same organizations. For this reason,

this study will incorporate a feminist theoretical paradigm as well as organizational theory to examine high level sporting leadership. Such a perspective will help account for the multiple complexities that affect women's entry and careers in sport administration.

Finally, Inglis (1997) has proposed that:

"Future research within the boards of directors of amateur sport organizations...continue to probe factors that may affect perceptions on various aspects of board work, and continue to explore the ways men and women consider their involvement with various roles at the governance level" (p.170).

In conjunction, Cameron (1996) points to the paucity of research on women at the top levels of sporting organizations. I believe that this study's investigation of the perceptions and experiences of past and current Canadian female sporting leaders will not only inform these research gaps but also contribute a deeper understanding of the gendered processes of entry and progression in Canadian sporting administration.

1.2 WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES AND IN CANADIAN SPORT

The Olympic Movement is an excellent example of the ways in which women were slowly accepted into sporting organizations, first and foremost as athletes. There are significantly more women participating in Olympic sport since the first women took part in the Paris Games of 1900 where they made up only 2% (19 women) of the 1225 athletes. By 1936 in Berlin, women accounted for 8% of all athletes and this number had increased to 12% by the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome.

"By the Games in 1980, women's participation had leaped to represent close to 22% and at the Sydney Games in 2000, the number of female athletes reached 4,069, of a total of 10,651 participants, over 38%" (Olympic Review, 2004).

Though it is clear that there has been a general increase of female athletes allowed to participate at the Games, it has taken over 100 years for women to increase their participation rates from 2% of total athletes in 1900 to 38% in 2000 and have yet to come close to achieving gender equality. This under representation of female athletes goes a long way in explaining the lack of women in its governing bodies. Indeed, the fact that the IOC has very few women in their administrative structures also provides national sporting organizations with a male model of governance that reproduces the inequalities already existing. The acknowledgement of a 'gender issue' and the consequent efforts to increase the number of women in Olympic sport and its administration led to an increase of Canadian female athletes attending Olympic Games.

At all levels of the Canadian sporting system, women's opportunities to participate in sport have grown immensely yet male athletes continue to outnumber female athletes at every level in Canada. In 1998, Statistics Canada (2004) found that, of the 8.3 million Canadians that participated regularly in one or more sports 15 years or older, 43% were men while only 26% were women. This evident paucity of women · involved in sport ultimately affects the number of women who might eventually seek positions in sporting organizations. Cameron (1996) affirms that participation numbers are relevant because most female administrators emerge from the pool of athletes and former athletes (p.11). For this reason, it is useful to first acknowledge the historical under representation of women at the Olympic Games as well as Canadian female athletes and administrators in the Olympic Movement.

Statistics concerning the number of Canadian female athletes participating at the Games as well as the number of medals they won were collected. They show the

significant contribution women have made to maintaining Canada's proud sporting image, which also positively impacts its overall sporting system. Women's opportunities to participate as athletes in both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games have not always been equal to those of their male counterparts. Hall and Richardson (1982) studied the number of Olympic sports offered to both male and female athletes and reported that as of the late 1970's:

> "Women cannot compete in as many sports or events at any of these international competitions. In fact, if you compare the number of sports open to men and women at the 1976 Summer Olympics, the 1980 Winter Olympics, the 1978 Commonwealth Games, and the 1979 Pan-American Games, you find that the men had the opportunity to compete in exactly twice as many sport as the women (62 to 31). In terms of the number of events, the ration is even higher. In other words, male athletes, at least on the basis of these international competitions, have more than twice as many opportunities as female athletes to win a medal." (p.43)

This undoubtedly influenced the number of female athletes participating at the elite level and therefore the number of 'qualified' women available for leadership positions in sporting organizations. Data on Canadian Olympic male and female athlete participation rates and medal winnings for both Summer (see Appendix 1) and Winter (see Appendix 2) Olympic Games from 1984 to 2006 clearly shows that recently, the number of male and female athletes representing Canada at the Olympic Games has slowly reached relative equality, though men still participate in more events than do women.

1.2.1 <u>Summer Olympic Games</u>

As mentioned, prior to 1984, women were severely under represented on Canada's Olympic teams. This continued at the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles where Canada sent 413 athletes, its largest athlete delegation to date. At this time, women represented only 37% of the Canadian delegation while bringing in 36% of

the country's medal tally. At the Summer Games in Seoul (1988), Canada's delegation was drastically reduced to a total of 315 athletes, though its gender composition had not changed much. Women represented 35% of the team in 1988 and won 41% of the country's medals. In Barcelona 1992, the team was again cut back to 303 athletes while the percentage of female athletes was slightly increased to 39% and brought in this exact share of the medals. By 1996, women comprised a stunning 50% of the Olympic team and won 50% of the medals. Since then, Canadian women's participation has remained relatively stable representing 49% of athletes at the Sydney (2000) and Athens (2004) Olympic Games. At each of these games, Canadian women brought home 50% of the medals for the country. Clearly, women have been an inextricable part of Canada's international sporting success and therefore deserve similar representation at the decision-making level.

1.2.2 <u>Winter Olympic Games</u>

Given that the Winter Olympic Games were established in 1924 and the fact that many nations belonging to the Olympic Movement do not experience winter-like conditions, the participation numbers in terms of nations and athletes are significantly smaller than those of the Summer Olympic Games. Unlike these Games, the data collected shows that equality for Canadian female athletes at the Winter Olympic Games has not yet been achieved. At the 1984 Sarajevo Olympic Games, Canada sent a total of 69 athletes, a mere 29% of them women. That year, none of the 20 female athletes brought home a medal though only two male athletes won a total of four medals for Canada. The following Winter Olympic Games were held on Canadian soil in Calgary, Alberta. Comprising only 26% of Canada's athlete's delegation, women won 67% of the

medals at those Games saving what some have claimed, would have been the embarrassment of the host nation for their poor showing. Women formed 27% of the Canadian team in Albertville (1992) and 33% of the delegation in Lillehammer (1994). Despite their under representation at both of these Winter Olympic Games, they contributed 44% of the medals in 1992 and 43% in 1994. Already, female athletes were demonstrating their importance to the high performance sport program in Canada. The most recent Winter Olympic Games have shown a slight increase in Canadian female participation representing 42% of the Olympic team at the Nagano Games (1998) and 45% in Salt Lake City (2002). Again, women brought home 47% (1998) and 56% (2002) of the Canadian medals respectively. Finally, in Torino (2006), Canadian female athletes marked their greatest accomplishment yet winning a whopping 67% of the medal tally for Canada while representing only 44% of the Canadian team. For the first time it seems, more female athletic performances were lauded by fans and media alike than were the successes of Canadian male athletes.

1.2.3 <u>What does this data tell us?</u>

It is evident that over time, the number of Canadian athletes sent to Olympic Games has fluctuated and at times, was significantly reduced in numbers. What has not changed however is the proportion of male and female athletes on Olympic teams which demonstrates a lack of progression towards equality. It is also clear that women succeeded at international competitions given their representation and at times, outperformed their male counterparts. In many instances, there were almost twice as many Canadian male athletes and thus, twice as many opportunities for them to win medals, attesting that women were performing successfully despite their limited

opportunities. It should also be noted that the Summer Olympic Games have provided Canadian women with greater opportunities for participation at the Olympics than those of the Winter Games. This data therefore demonstrates the value of women to the Olympic Movement in Canada and worldwide as well as the international recognition of the country in sporting competitions. The insubstantial increase in the number of Canadian female participants does not acknowledge the fact that women are a major provider of the national medal recognition; a value which has been a prominent part of the country's athlete preparation leading up to the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Canadian female athletic performances in Olympic competitions unquestionably warrant increased representation not only as athletes but in coaching, managerial and administrative positions. Unfortunately, Canadian women are provided much greater opportunities to participate as athletes than as coaches and administrators, as is the situation worldwide. As Bischoff and Rintala (1994) state succinctly:

> "when women's opportunities to serve in leadership roles do not keep
> pace with their opportunities as athletes or sport participants, the
> traditional gendered power differentials in society are reinforced" (p.86).

This is a crucial point as it is necessary that women gain influential positions within the sporting system if they are going to reduce the barriers preventing them from accessing senior administrative posts. For this reason, it is important to review what the literature tells us about women in sport administration in various contexts.

1.3 **AREAS OF STUDY**

My overarching research question sought to identify and explore the career paths and experiences of women in Canadian sporting leadership. Given the substantive White,

middle to upper class, able-bodied masculine environment of most sporting organizations and the consequent under-representation of women in leadership positions, it begs the question: Who are the women that have reached high level leadership positions in the administration of sport in Canada, how and why did they become involved in these positions? What obstacles, if any, have they had to overcome throughout their career paths?

Similarly, it is also important to understand the experiences of women who have not been involved in sport leadership at its highest level for whatever reason. Both of these groups were consulted because each of them has unique perspectives concerning high level sporting leadership and women's involvement within it. In this way, it is also possible to highlight factors that impact women's decisions to avoid executive positions in sport administration as well as highlighting those barriers that hinder their opportunities to access such positions. As Cameron (1996) argues:

> "[t]o fully understand what keeps women (or men) out of senior volunteer sport management one would need to ask people who are eligible on the criteria already outlined, but who have declined" (Cameron, 1996, p.131).

In this way, the combination of perspectives allows for a broader analysis of women's perceived experiences in Canadian sport administration.

The interviews delved into the women's personal backgrounds and explored their career path in sporting leadership. Questions pertained to women's experiences as high level female leaders throughout their career, obstacles they may have faced during their progression and some of the attributes and circumstances they perceived to have influenced their experiences and success in sporting leadership. Finally, connecting this study's findings with that of the current literature concerning women in sport

administration, a general profile of high level female leaders emerges and allows for an examination of their entry and progression in sport administration. Simultaneously, it highlights the various determinants that sustain the under-representation of women in sporting leadership hence some modest recommendations will be made with the objective of creating more opportunities for future female leaders attempting to forge a career in Canadian sport administration.

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1, the introductory chapter, provides the basic foundation of the study and the information that it hoped to generate. The second chapter (Chapter 2) is a general literature review about women in sport administration and the theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain their under-representation. Based on themes that have emerged in this previous literature, the following two chapters are a comprehensive analysis of the female respondents' background and experiences in sporting leadership. Chapter 3 considers women's career paths in sport administration and the skills that allowed them to enter and progress into leadership positions. Furthermore, Chapter 4 discusses the barriers that women believe continued to hinder their opportunities to lead in high level sporting organizations. Finally, the last chapter (Chapter 5) summarizes these findings and provides some conclusions to the issues discussed in the thesis, in addition to suggesting modest approaches that sporting organizations might undertake to increase their female representation at the governance level.

1.3.1 Career Paths

Though every woman's experience is unique and can never be fully understood, some patterns can be found in many of the female leaders' career path in sport

administration. For this reason, this section examines the circumstances and experiences that have enabled women to access leadership positions in sport administration. Research studies conducted in North America and Europe have clearly shown that certain characteristics are often found in high level female sporting leaders and that most possess a similar skill set (Cameron, 1996; Pfister et. al., 2005; McKay, 1997; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; Hovden, 2000a, 2000b, 2005; ISLP and IOC, 2004). For this reason, personal characteristics such as level of education and years of experience were discussed in terms of their capacity to help women enter and progress in sport leadership. For example, some demographic information was collected regarding women's age at entry into sport administration as well as years of experience in their career. This information can be crucial, particularly in terms of the age of the respondents as well as their level of experience in sport administration. For example, the age of respondents can be very useful because it allows for an interpretation of the historical and social context in which this person has entered and experienced sport and/or sports administration. Likewise, the years of experience this member brings could indicate the extent to which she has established social networks; another topic that was addressed in the interviews.

Research questions also addressed the specific career paths women took to reach their current positions as well as their initial experiences in accessing high level leadership positions in sport. Did they share similar stories and backgrounds? Was there a prototypical route to successful sporting leadership for women? This knowledge provides us with a better understanding of the exclusivity of high level sporting organizations and the ways in which 'specific' women are recruited to serve while others are deterred.

While identifying these processes of inclusion, it is hoped to simultaneously highlight the processes of exclusion that exist in sport administration.

Throughout the discussion of their career paths, participants were asked to focus on the key characteristics that they believed were essential to become a high level sporting leader. The interviews also probed the participants' perceptions regarding attributes they perceived as necessary to be influential on Executive boards. Since much research has shown that 'masculine' attributes such as aggressiveness, independence and rationalization are valued in sporting organizations (Hovden 2000a, Hovden 2000b), women were asked to describe their leadership style and the techniques that had made them successful or had turned them away from this career. This is important and has been discussed in the literature which has established that women must often adapt in positions of leadership where they had to essentially 'fit in' to the organization. Through the women's stories about their experiences in sport leadership, it was possible to highlight the perceived necessary attributes for sports leadership. In addition, this has also provided insight into the culture of the organization where several barriers were believed to exist for women attempting to progress into leadership roles.

For this reason, this chapter also addresses the ways in which female leaders perceived their leadership styles and the characteristics they felt distinguished them from other leaders who have not held or even aspired to attain top leadership positions. The study also examined the degree to which these female participants' felt any kind of pressure to represent or advocate for women's issues. Did they feel they were expected to promote and participate in women and sport initiatives? As a result of their minority status in sporting organizations, it is often assumed that female leaders are more likely to

assist other women reach leadership positions within the organization. However, Cameron's (1996) study showed that many women preferred to work with men rather than other women "... which poses a problem if they are being expected to pave the way for other women to join them at the top" (p.211). This area of study will therefore discuss the women's perceptions of mentoring and their beliefs regarding women's opportunities in sport.

Finally, this study also analyzed women's thoughts regarding the role of social networks in accessing high level sporting leadership positions. As Cameron (1996) advances:

> "...one important possibility is whether or not women can use male networks as a point of resistance: by infiltrating all-male networks will women in fact access information, ...influence men, show that women are as capable, as committed, as skilled as men? Will they in fact find a way to change the culture of the organization this way?" (Cameron, 1996, p.202-203).

For this reason, this study also examined the ways in which social networks were important, advantageous or even necessary in attaining executive level positions and if they were an avenue of change for female leaders.

1.3.2 <u>Female administrators' perceptions of their role in sporting leadership</u>

Leadership positions in sporting organizations are associated with significant power and influence; positions which have been generally held by men. That being said, women who do attain this level of administration have been reported to be undervalued and to lack influence at the boardroom table (McKay 1997, Cameron 1996). In order to assess the perceived influence of these female leaders, they were asked to convey their experiences about how they had been slotted into their roles as well as their experiences in these leadership positions. Did they feel they had influenced policy or made a

significant contribution to sport in Canada? Were they actively involved in the decision making processes and were they given opportunities to demonstrate success in these leadership positions? These questions can lead to a better understanding of women feeling isolated or ineffective in their positions (Cameron 1996, McKay 1997) which can be a barrier to advancing in sporting organizations.

1.3.3 Barriers to women's entry and progression in sport administration

This study also sought to examine the various factors which were perceived to hinder women's opportunities to enter and progress into high level sporting leadership. Did the stories of successful women administrators point to a specific type of female leader? Through the participants' personal histories, it was possible to highlight a number of barriers that were believed to exist for female leaders in Canadian sporting organizations. In fact, these stories highlighted the different experiences of female leaders and pointed to a number of factors that led to the marginalization of female sport administrators. It has been argued that each individual's reality is shaped by their particular social location; a social location markedly determined by demographic factors such as class, race, gender and physical ability. Consequently, it is assumed that women not only experience various levels of access to sport and sport leadership but also have very different experiences as leaders. The study therefore examined the ways in which the female respondents believed they had been impeded, if at all, in their attempt to enter and progress in sport administration. This analysis can then be compared to data provided by a number of other studies both in Canada and internationally. These findings will thus highlight where female administrators perceived they were held back and the reasons that made them feel this way.

1.3.4 <u>Recommendations</u>

Undoubtedly, female sports administrators and their experiences can provide a valuable knowledge base if we are to understand gender relations in Canadian sporting organizations. The conclusion will address the implications of this study and its findings on both theory and practice. How do these women's experiences and perspectives further our understandings of gender practices in high level sporting leadership? Indeed, how can we utilize women's success stories to help us better understand the career paths of women who have entered sport administration while highlighting the barriers that remain for various groups of women? My findings therefore will be relevant for aspiring leaders, current leaders as well as policy makers in sport. In addition, some modest recommendations will be made concerning the identified barriers. This in turn may facilitate and encourage the implementation of more inclusive policies working to change the androcentric practices that work subtly to exclude women and other minorities from high level decision-making positions.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 <u>Ethics</u>

Ethics approval for this study was received by the University of British Columbia on January 30th, 2006. Considering the nature of the study and the fact that questions investigated personal and therefore sensitive issues for the women, confidentiality was of utmost concern. On the consent forms (see Appendix 3) signed by the participants, a confidentiality clause assured participants that their names would not be used in any publication of this study. For this reason, the participants are identified only by number in this document and therefore, some of the appendixes have been censored. It should also

be noted that the participants' names were omitted from the study documents and replaced by reference numbers. As a final precaution, all study documents have been kept in a locked filing cabinet and all computer files are password protected.

1.4.2 Recruitment procedures and participant selection

In order to examine the personal experiences of highly qualified Canadian female sporting leaders, it is necessary to speak to them in the form of interviews. For this reason, I recruited women in similar high level sporting leadership positions all serving in the same high level Canadian sporting organization. Other female respondents in various sporting leadership positions were approached with an offer to participate in the study. Many of these women were identified from CAAWS' (Canadian Association for Advancement of Women and Sport) yearly *List of Most Influential Women in Sport and Physical Activity* for the years 2000, 2003, 2004 and 2005; a list of highly qualified women who have achieved great success in their sport administration careers (CAAWS, January 16, 2007). Though these women had perhaps not served in the highest echelons of sport administration, they possessed the necessary skills to succeed in sporting leadership nonetheless and had to potential to advance if they wished. Potential respondents were encouraged to participate in this study as it was their knowledge that is essential if we are to better understand the role women have played and do play in the administration of Canadian sport. They were also aware that this research is part of a Master's thesis which will allow me to graduate from the program.

A total of 13 participants were contacted through a formal letter mailed to their home or office as well as by e-mail. Successfully, 12 of these 13 women responded and 10 women took part in the interviewing process. Two of the respondents were not able to

be interviewed as there was a conflict in scheduling and was unsuccessful in rescheduling an interview. The female leaders who took part in this study had held regional, provincial, national and/or international level sport administration positions with many of the women having held positions at each. All of the respondent's names and contact information (e-mail and home/office addresses) were accessed from internet search engines, personal contacts as well as sporting organizations. Once this information was organized, each of the potential participants was contacted via an e-mail in which I introduced myself and briefly explained the context of the study. In addition, it indicated that a more detailed letter had also been mailed which would contain the specific details of the study as well as the procedure to take if they wanted to be involved. This formal letter described the study procedures and provided the researcher's contact information accompanied by a consent form to be returned to me.

Once they had been contacted, all of the women responded quickly and showed a great degree of interest in the study. The participants seemed receptive to meeting me and telling me about their experiences in sport administration as evidenced by the e-mail responses and return of signed consent forms. Many of the women forwarded me their CV in order to demonstrate their career paths in sporting leadership. A few female respondents also passed along information which they believed were relevant to the study. In addition, many of them also provided me with the names of other female leaders they thought might be useful for this study.

Once a majority of the out-of-town participants had agreed to be interviewed, I began scheduling and confirming interviews according to the city in which the women lived, going west to east from Vancouver to Calgary, Regina and Toronto.

1.4.3. Interviewing process and data analysis

In order to solicit information on the career paths and experiences of all participants, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were used. I conducted a total of ten interviews lasting approximately 1 ½ hours each with on lasting 3 hours for a total of 17 hours and 4 minutes of interview material. The interviews were conducted in various settings. Most were held at the participants' office while others were at their home and one took place at a coffee shop. It is believed that holding the interviews in a setting of the female respondents' choice allowed them to be in an environment in which they felt comfortable. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) explain:

> "The aim of the interviewer is to derive, as objectively as possible, the respondent's *own* opinions of the subject matter in question, information that the respondent will readily offer and elaborate when the circumstances are conducive..." (p.26).

This methodology thus allowed me to answer some of the research questions using high level female leaders' stories to investigate the issue of under-representation hoping that highlighting the career paths and skills of women who had reached these positions would lead to a better understanding of those who are excluded. Interestingly, one woman commented that participating in this study had given her the opportunity to reflect on her life and career in sport administration and that this had made her realize that she had made a positive impact. She says:

> "...we don't want to lose the stories, the stories are important. And, and I even find it interesting when I look back on it, like I was reflecting on it you know, before you came...because at first I thought, oh I don't know why she wants to talk to me, like I still think of myself as you know, a little [administrator] who did all these things but I don't really think of those things, they're just part, they became a part of me" (Participant 006).

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Interview questions were informed by the work of Cameron (1996), McKay (1997), the ISLP and IOC (2004) and Hall, Cullen and Slack (1990). It was believed that respondents should feel comfortable to speak freely about contentious issues while ensuring that the study's themes and specific points were discussed. To this end, a general interview guide was developed for all of the women (see Appendix 4) although the interview questions were then individually tailored for each participant in order to elicit important information about particular aspects of their career. Probes were also used to clarify some responses or to drive the conversation into more detail.

I began the interviews by providing the participant with a brief introduction of the study and its purpose while reminding them that they could withdraw from the interview at any time without castigation. In addition, they were reminded that their identities and responses were confidential and that they would remain anonymous in the write up of the thesis. Finally, I obtained permission to tape-record the session at which time I turned on the device. The interview was started with some general questions about the participant's initial involvement in sport and then more specifically about positions they had held. This was meant to keep the conversation light so that some rapport could be established between the researcher and the respondent while the specific questions provided me with some credibility with regards to my understanding of their career in sport administration. As the interview progressed, questions pertained to the women's socio-demographic information as well as their perceptions of the leadership skills necessary to succeed in sport administration. In addition, the interview also probed the participant's opinions of women's roles in sport administration as well some factors that hinder their opportunities to advance into the highest levels of sporting leadership.

The interviews were transcribed soon after the meeting and provided an initial

reading of the data. Pamela Cawthorne (2001) has argued that:

> "...seeking to understand, interpret and report honestly the things people
> say and the things people do in all their 'messy complexity' enables deep
> and rich knowledge claims to be made. However, for the full richness of
> such claims to emerge, they must be mediated reflexively and self-
> consciously through the purposes - and associated theoretical frameworks
> - researchers bring to their work" (p.67).

For this reason, I took some field notes during the interview though the detailed notes

were written immediately following the meeting. In this way, I was able to reflect on the

positives and negatives of the interview and consider some of the discussion. This

reflexive process allowed me to take away lessons from each interview and improve my

interviewing skills in the process. In addition, I was able to remain aware of my shifting

comprehension of the issues and measure my learning throughout the entire process.

After the interview had been conducted, I mailed each participant a thank you card

acknowledging their contributions to this study.

Once all of the interviews had been transcribed, each was read and re-read in

order to ensure that all of the relevant information had been selected and coded from each

of them. As the purpose of the study was to give a voice to women in sporting leadership,

this was also reflected in the data analysis. All of the data was first coded by hand where

a total of approximately 70 codes and sub-codes emerged. Content analysis was used to

identify the most common topics as well as the themes emerging from the transcripts.

Using Atlas Ti, this information was more formally coded which made it much easier to

analyze the data. At this point, the themes were divided into chapters at which point I

began to write up my findings. When choosing participant quotes, I focused on those that

were most demonstrative of the participant's responses overall while ensuring that each

woman's experiences were evenly represented. Furthermore, when there were two opposing viewpoints concerning a particular issue, I selected quotes that were illustrative of each perspective to demonstrate the complexity of this issue.

1.5 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the study procedures were an overall success, there are particular aspects of the methodology that might have affected the findings. First, the fact that only one interview was conducted with each woman means that there was very little time for the researcher to establish rapport with the interviewee. This could have influenced the findings as some of the respondents might not have trusted me enough to really open up about contentious issues that exist in high level sporting leadership. In addition, the respondents were all women holding a high level leadership position which means that some of the participants might have felt they had to be careful about what information they could divulge to me and therefore, might not have censored their answers or completely avoided some of the questions, particularly those about contentious issues. The fact that they were all in leadership positions also means that they have not been excluded from this domain and may not provide the same insight as a woman who has not reached this level of leadership. For this reason, future studies should include such participants to gain a broader understanding of women's under-representation in high level sporting leadership.

Finally, it is also important that I situate myself as a researcher investigating the under-representation of women in sport administration. My perspectives on this issue are inevitably shaped by my middle-class, French Canadian background in addition to my education, upbringing and life experiences inside and outside of sport. Likewise, my

inexperience as an interviewer also influenced my interviewer's responses, particularly during the first few interviews. For example, at times I did not follow up on responses that might have needed additional clarification. However, my interviewing skills did improve throughout this process and I believe that overall, the study was a success in generating a wealth of information on the careers and experiences of women in Canadian sport administration.

2.0 CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In order to better understand the under representation of women in sporting leadership, it is essential to first review the participation of women in Canadian sport because it has been established that women often enter sport administration as a result of their involvement in sport as athletes. To this end, the Olympic Movement also provides an interesting area of analysis because of its far-reaching influence given its multi-billion dollar budget, in addition to its worldwide athlete base and television audience. For this reason, the Olympic Games have been an obvious topic of critical research where important findings have enabled us to better understand the under-representation of women in coaching, officiating and sport administration. There have been many studies conducted in a variety of contexts that provide valuable insight to this research study. In an international context, six studies in particular inform this thesis (ISLP and IOC, 2004; Pfister et. al., 2005; Cameron, 1996; Hovden, 2000a, 2000b, 2005; Bischoff and Rintala, 1994, 1996; McKay, 1997). On the other hand, three major Canadian studies (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; Sport Canada, 1991; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990) provide critical comparative data to assess the positive and negative transformations in the Canadian sporting system and above all, its governance structures. Moreover, each of these investigations is based on various theoretical frameworks; many of which were pertinent to the findings of this study.

2.1 WOMEN IN SPORT ADMINISTRATION

The under-representation of women in sporting leadership has been well documented in both the national and international contexts (Bischoff and Rintala, 1994, 1996; Cameron, 1996; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; Hovden, 2000a, 2000b, 2005; ISLP

and IOC, 2004; McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al., 2005; Sport Canada, 1991; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990). For this reason, the literature review will first address studies conducted in the international context and subsequently examine studies concerning the situation of female sporting leaders in Canada. To this end, the studies will be described as to their general research questions and some of their important findings. These particular studies also inform some of the specific arguments made throughout the thesis and will therefore be revisited in later chapters.

2.1.1 Studies conducted in the international context

At the international level, it is first important to examine what can be considered the biggest and most complex governing structure in sport administration: the International Olympic Committee. The Olympic Movement, represented and managed by the IOC, has been heavily criticized for its efforts at gender equity and until recently, there had been no significant changes in the gender composition of their organizational membership. At its inception, the IOC existed as a 'male-only' sporting organization: an organization for men and controlled by men. With the rise of the women's movement in sport which then led to the establishment of important gender equity policies in sport such as Title IX in the United States and the Brighton Declaration on an international basis, the IOC was under great pressure to increase the number of female athletes and leaders in its organization. As a result, it instituted a rule change in 1973 which, for the first time, allowed women to become eligible for membership in the organization; an important step in opening opportunities for women to participate in Olympic governance and setting the fundamental standards of gender equity for National Olympic

Committees, International Federations and every other sporting organization related to

the Olympic Movement. In his analysis, Lucas (1992) reports that:

> "At the close of the Moscow Olympic Games of 1980, ...there were no
> female members on the Olympic committee, ...women in positions of
> power were nearly nonexistent in NOCs and international federations, and
> ...only 3% of all officials were women" (p.133).

The IOC would not elect its first female members until 1981 and progress since has been

very slow, their numbers increasing from two in 1981 to 6 in 1990. In 1996, 7 of the 94

IOC members (7%) were women which grew to nine of 111 IOC members (8%) in 1997.

As recently as 2002, this IOC could only boast of having 15 women out of their 113 IOC

memberships (13%). This number was again reduced in 2005. There are currently 10

female IOC members serving and only 1 of them on the Executive Committee. Over its

109 year history, only two women have ever held a Vice-Presidency within the IOC's

Executive Board: Anita DeFrantz from 1997-2001 and Gunilla Lindberg, newly elected

in 2004, supporting claims that high level female sport administrators rarely gain

powerful and influential positions in large sporting organizations (Cameron, 1996;

McKay, 1999; Pfister et. al., 2005; Hovden, 2000a; MacIntosh and Beamish, 1990).

Though the number of IOC members has fluctuated during this time, the general

membership has never been less than 100 members and there have never been more than

15 female members showing that female participation in high level international sport

administration is still very limited.

2.1.1.1 The ISLP and IOC (2004) report on Women, Leadership and the Olympic Movement

Research conducted and published by the IOC and the Institute of Sport and

Leisure Policy in 2004 aimed to collect information and statistics concerning women's

roles in Olympic governance, particularly following the implementation of gender equity

targets. The policy stated that at least 10% of decision-making positions should be held

by women. The report estimated that there were only 251 female NOC Executive

Committee members throughout the Olympic Movement (p.17). Given that NOC

Executive Committees are typically made up of approximately 20 members and that there

are over 202 nations in the Olympic Movement, this means women only hold about 16%

of the estimated 4040 leadership positions at the national level. Indeed, they reported that

71% of these women had been appointed after 1996. Though these statistics clearly

reflect the flagrant marginalization of women in a powerful sport governing body, the

report does not analyze the point that the IOC itself has failed to meet this policy by not

having the 20% it called for by 2005 in the targets. In contrast, the report points to the

absence of female leaders in the NOCs as well as the International Federations as the

feeder organizations fundamentally responsible for the gender imbalance within the IOC

stating:

> "...there is a hierarchy from clubs at the base to regional, national and
> international federations, and to NOCs, Continental Olympic Associations
> and the IOC. ...the NOCs are failing to recommend women for
> consideration as potential candidates and thus the IOC itself has restricted
> room for manoeuvre in terms of appointing more female members" (ISLP
> and IOC, 2004, p.88).

Without a doubt, NOC's and IF's play an important role in the under-representation of

women in sporting leadership. On the other hand, it is also important that the IOC as

leader of the Olympic Movement, take an active role in increasing female representation

in its governing bodies and ensure that its own organization embodies the very principles

and policies it creates and promotes. They have yet to achieve this 10% minimum target

with respect to women on its Executive Committee (ISLP and IOC, 2004, p.64).

2.1.1.2 **The German study on women in leadership by Pfister et. al (2005)**

Pfister et. al (2005) examined the number of German female sport administrators holding any of the 290 honorary executive positions and the 155 paid positions in German Sports Federations. They found that only 19.7 % of women held executive positions while they comprised 46% of members holding paid positions. (p.3) At the Olympic level, they concluded that:

> "[t]op-level competitive sports and the Olympics are quite clearly male domains, with only one in five positions being held by women in the Olympic training centres" (Pfister et. al., 2005, p.3).

Their analyses of the women involved and their careers in sport administration yielded some interesting data which will be referred to throughout this thesis. More importantly, the situation described in Germany mimics the circumstances under which many other studies described women's limited participation in high level sport administration.

2.1.1.3 **Cameron's (1996) study of women in New Zealand voluntary sport management**

Similarly, Cameron (1996) studied women who held positions on the national Boards and Executives in the volunteer sector of sport management in New Zealand. She found that only 20% of 610 volunteer national administrators were female. These findings clearly reflect the data provided on female executives in the German study. Survey data indicated that 63% of the 113 paid staff were women working as clerical and administrative staff with very few of them holding coaching positions (Cameron, 1996, p.16). Conversely, statistics pertaining to the gender of chairpersons on the Board of Directors illustrated a very different situation. She found that 89% of national directors were men and of the seven females in these positions, six were in women-only

organizations (p.16). This is significant as women's sports tend to be less powerful as they have lower budgets and fewer athletes.

2.1.1.4 Hovden's (2000a, 2000b, 2005) Norwegian studies of women in high level sport leadership

Hovden (2005) studied women in Norwegian sport administration and found that only 7% of the top leadership positions are held by women while she estimates that they populate 28% of the national executive boards of Norwegian sport federations (p.122-123). Furthermore, she asserts that there has been no significant increase of women holding high level leadership positions since the middle of the 1990's (p.19). In 2000, she published findings that related to the selection processes of leaders in the Norwegian Confederation of Sports (NCS), an umbrella organization for organized sport in Norway. Her analysis yielded crucial data which greatly informs the literature on career paths and leadership skills section of this thesis.

2.1.1.5 Bischoff and Rintala's (1994, 1996) studies of women in Executive positions in the United States

In the United States, Bischoff and Rintala (1994, 1996) examined women's involvement in decision-making roles, more specifically as Presidents and Executive Directors, in US Olympic sporting organizations. They found that progress has been sporadic since the institution of Title IX in 1972. In particular, they pointed out that during the period of 1970 to 1990, only 10.7% of Executive Directors and 10% of Presidents were women in the United States national governing bodies (p.85). More importantly, between 1970-1995, women made up 11.6% of Executive Directors and a mere 8.2% of Presidents in the USOC (p.82). In addition, they found that most of these

opportunities for women came in a few selected sports. Finally, they showed that although over this 25 year period, the total number of leadership positions did increase, very few organizations also increased their overall percentage of women in high level sporting leadership.

2.1.1.6 Gender studies in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand sport by McKay (1997)

In his 1997 study of gender in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand sporting organizations, McKay (1997) used interviews to examine the androcentric practices that existed and highlight the hegemonic masculine culture that it reproduces. His study provides an important analysis of the professionalization of sporting organizations as well as first hand accounts of male and female managers' perceptions of organizational culture. McKay's (1997) findings are especially relevant to the section discussing barriers to women's access and progression in sporting leadership.

2.1.2 Studies conducted in the Canadian context

In the Canadian context, several studies have investigated the number of female leaders in national level sporting organizations and suggested various reasons for their under-representation in sport administration (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; Sport Canada, 1991; McKay, 1997; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990). In addition, most also considered the status and role of women in Canadian sporting organizations.

2.1.2.1 Hall, Cullen and Slack's (1990) study of women in Canadian national sporting organizations

First, Hall, Cullen and Slack's (1990) study entitled *The Gender Structure of National Sporting Organizations* examined the under representation of women in Canadian sporting leadership. Using questionnaires sent to male and female volunteer

administrators and executives, they collected information on the influence of the

environment, structure, culture, and resource allocation on the opportunities for women in

Canadian sporting organizations. They found that women consisted of approximately one

third of the volunteer sector in Canadian amateur sport and that more importantly, the

men outnumber the women three to one in most NSOs. They also pointed out that

although organizations continued to increase the number of professional and occupational

opportunities for both men and women, the dominant gender structure remained the same

(p.1).

2.1.2.2 Sport Canada's (1991) survey of women in sport leadership

Sport Canada (1991) conducted a national survey in order to assess the status of

women in leadership positions in Canadian sporting organizations, the third since 1981

addressing this issue. The first report found that women were severely under-represented

in the technical and administrative side of sport administration and some steps were put

in place to increase the number of women in leadership positions. By 1985, Sport Canada

reported that the status of women had been improved. The increase of female leaders

however had come only in specific leadership positions, particularly as program co-

ordinators and leaders of the smaller sporting organizations. Indeed, women remained

virtually invisible in technical and coaching positions. Finally, Sport Canada's 1988

report presented data on the number of women in different leadership positions while

considering their salary as well as the organizational budgets and policies in place.

Interestingly, they showed that women accounted for 29% of all senior executive

members (CEO, Director General, Management Director), 25% of Technical Directors,

23% of High Performance Directors, 40% of Marketing Directors, 13% of National team

Head coaches and 68% of National Program Coordinators (p.1). In addition, the report

showed that among volunteer administrators, women comprised 25% of Board members

and 24% of Executive Committee members in national sporting organizations (p.4)

therefore the report concluded that the findings:

> "...point to differential opportunities for women leaders and suggest[s]
> underlying blocked opportunities for women. These blocked opportunities
> affect the efficiency and overall performance of national sport and fitness
> organizations and restrict the pool of human resources from which they
> can draw" (Sport Canada, 1991, p.27).

These statistics are illustrative of the ways in which organizations have controlled the

entry of women in sport administration and thus, the roles they have within the

organization.

2.1.2.3 MacIntosh and Whitson's (1990) study of Canada's sporting system

Another important Canadian study conducted by MacIntosh and Whitson (1990)

focused on policy making in Canadian national sporting organizations and highlighted

the persistent exclusion of women from sporting leadership even after the implementation

of gender equity policies. They elicited the perspectives of sporting leaders in leadership

positions to better understand the decision-making processes and the factors influencing

those making the decisions. In the six national sporting organizations they studied, these

authors found that:

> "Males occupied all of the six chief executive officer positions, 88% of the
> technical director...jobs, all of the posts as head national coach, and 81%
> of the make-up of the board of directors. In the powerful executive
> committees of these associations, males comprised 96% [of members]"
> (MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990, p.61).

In addition, they provide valuable insight into female administrators' careers in Canadian

sporting organizations.

It is therefore evident in all of these studies that few women have held high level leadership positions in sport administration both in Canada and worldwide and have thus little influence and power over women's sporting experiences. Despite all of the efforts on behalf of women, there have only been slight changes of the gender composition in the overall management of sporting organizations. These studies however provide context to the present study as well as comparative data for the findings presented in the following chapters.

2.2 CAREER PATHS AND LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

2.2.1 The background of women in sporting leadership: What the literature tells us about female leaders who become involved in sport administration

As mentioned, there have been a number of studies examining the under-representation of women in sport administration at various levels of the sporting system; most investigating the entry and consequent career path of many male and female leaders. Research was thus able to profile the people who are involved in sport and the many characteristics and attributes typical of men and women in high level sporting leadership. Specifically, work by McKay (1997), Cameron (1996), Hall, Cullen and Slack(1990), MacIntosh and Beamish (1990), ISLP and IOC (2004) as well as Pfister et. al (2005) examined women in national and/or international level sport administration and all found that these female leaders sometimes possessed similar personal backgrounds and qualities which afforded them the opportunities to participate at this level of governance.

First, the age of female leaders is an important detail because it highlights the length of experience needed to reach high level leadership positions and provides an idea of the expected progression of women's career paths in sport administration. Generally

speaking, the average age for female leaders involved in these studies ranged from the late 30s to mid 50s. More specifically, in Cameron's (1996) study, the average age of female respondents was 48 years old (p.21) while McKay (1997) confirmed that the majority of female administrators who participated in his study were in their thirties and forties (p.48). Likewise, the ISLP and IOC (2004) study reported that respondents had a mean age of 49.4 years and remarked that though the age range of female leaders spanned from 25 to 85 years old, there were only 12 respondents under the age of 35 (p.18). This is indicative of the vast experience needed by those administrators at the international level. Indeed, MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) reported that male administrators, who comprised 75% of the professional NSO staff, were quite young, typically in their mid to late 30s (p.146). Women on the other hand, were on average 5 ½ years younger than the male administrators. Finally, Pfister et. al (2005) concluded that 80% of all German administrators (male and female) were between the ages of 36 to 65 years with the average age being 55 years old. When they compared the age of female administrators to that of the men, they found that women were approximately 5 years younger than their male counterparts. Interestingly, they also reported that the age cohort for the over 72-year-old executive members was exclusively male (p.24) highlighting the continued existence of an old boys network and the fact that men in power tend to keep their positions for longer periods of time.

Second, familial status as well as the dual careers of job and motherhood has been one of the pivotal points of the feminist argument for the under-representation of women in many areas. With regard to family status and motherhood, Cameron (1996) underscores its importance to women in sport leadership stating:

"...family background provides (or limits) availability of material and other sources which facilitate sports participation, especially at a high level, and secondly, family is where individuals receive those beliefs and values which together foster and place value on an ideology of participation and achievement" (p.36).

The ISLP and IOC (2004) report also supported her findings as respondents in their study discussed the significant impact of support from their parents as socializing agents' who were responsible for their initial involvement in sport (p.47). Similarly, the German study revealed that only a minority of administrators (11% women and 4% men) had not participated in sport as children (Pfister et. al., 2005, p.9).

Overall, it was found that male administrators were more likely to be married and have co-dependents than female sport administrators. McKay (1997) found that nearly all of the men but only two-thirds of the women were married or in de facto relationships with dependent children (p.48-49). Similarly, Cameron (1996) found that female sport administrators were less likely to be married or have dependents than other women their age (p.60). Pfister et. al. (2005) found that 87% of male administrators were married compared to only 57% of the women whereas 20% of female administrators were single while only 6% of the men were not in a relationship (p.9). They summed up these findings of their German study stating that:

"...women in leadership positions are significantly more often 'singles'. ...67% of the female but as many as 83% of the male leaders have children and 90% of the fathers reported that it was mainly their wives who looked after the children. These results indicate that women have more difficulty in balancing the triple burden of family, profession and voluntary work." (Pfister et. al., 2005, p.25)

This seems to be more of an issue at the regional and national level as evidenced by the ISLP and IOC report which indicates that 70% of the sample women were in a de facto relationship and that a similar percentage had one or more children. It should also be

noted that this finding could be influenced by the sample of respondents in this international study as they are older and have had more time to establish their family.

Third, the female leaders' level of education, occupation and professional status have been identified as tertiary qualifications necessary to gain entry into sporting organizations, especially those at the higher levels. Most all of the aforementioned studies found that both male and female sport administrators were well educated (Cameron, 1996; ISLP and IOC, 2004; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Pfister et. al., 2005) and many had higher levels of education than that of the average population (Pfister et. al., 2005, p.9). In their study, MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) found that men and women had comparable educational backgrounds where approximately 80% of respondents had a university degree and another 50% had a master or higher level degree (p.146). The ISLP and IOC (2004) had similar data where 35% of female administrators had a university degree and 22% had postgraduate degrees. Most administrators were also found to be in paid employment, usually in the higher echelons of professional careers (McKay, 1997; Cameron, 1996; Pfister et. al., 2005). This background was considered beneficial to their sport leadership work as many respondents reported using their professional office spaces to host meetings and perform administrative tasks such as photocopying, faxing, and telephone calls for issues related to sport administration (Cameron, 1996, p.22). More importantly, a number of studies found that most female sporting leaders were also in paid work. Cameron (1996) states that half of the women in her study had full-time employment while a small percentage were in part-time paid work. Likewise, the ISLP and IOC (2004) study found that 63% of female leaders were in employment with 48% working full-time and 15% part time. In the German study, Pfister et. al. (2005) noted

that 64% of their respondents were in full-time employment and most held high positions in their professions. Interestingly, they also pointed out that most female administrators were involved in educational professions while their male counterparts are usually employed in business and administrative professions (p.9). Therefore, this does indicate that many women juggle family, profession and their sport administration work, whether paid or volunteer.

Also of interest to this study was women's past experiences in sport as athletes. In 1990, MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) found that many more male than female administrators brought with them this athletic background.

> "About one-quarter of the professional staff brought personal international-level sport experience to their jobs. ...When compared to her male counterpart. ...[women] less often possessed national level or higher personal sport experience..." (MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990, p.146).

Interestingly, this pattern seems to have changed over the past fifteen years. Recent studies such as Cameron (1996), Pfister et. al. (2005) as well as the ISLP and IOC (2004), investigated administrators athletic background and found that though women entered sport administration in a variety of ways, a significant number of them were initially involved as a result of their involvement in sport, particularly those with a high performance athletic background. They also established that many female leaders had participated in elite sport at regional, national and international levels (ISLP and IOC, 2004; Pfister et. al., 2005). In fact, the ISLP and IOC (2004) study revealed that 81.8% of their female respondents had been competitive athletes of which 45% had competed at the international level (p.19). They concluded that:

> "The sporting background of women recruited...clearly indicates the importance of a background as an elite performer for women. It is suggested...that there is more onus placed on having a background as an

elite performer in the case of women than of men" (ISLP and IOC, 2004, p.37).

On the other hand, Pfister et. al. (2005) also found that only some of the sporting leaders had competed at the national and international levels however they found no major differences among male and female administrators in terms of their athletic backgrounds (p.10). This highlights an important difference in leadership qualifications between national and international sport administration. Interestingly, Cameron (1996) also points out that almost all of her research participants began their work as sport administrators in the organization of the sport in which they had been involved (p.40). This statement again demonstrates the importance of girls and women's involvement in sport at the participatory level as well as coaching, managing and officiating. In this way, women's athletic backgrounds seem to play an important role in their choices to become involved in sport administration and progress into high level leadership positions. Female athletes thus provide a pool of possible candidates to fill leadership positions in sporting organizations, given that successful athletes have recently been recruited to become involved in the administration of their sport. However, it does leave a large group of women who do not necessarily have an elite athletic background but possess excellent managerial and leadership skills and have a great understanding of the sporting system. This issue does need to be addressed if organizations want to increase the number of potential female candidates for high level sporting leadership positions.

2.2.2 Entry and progression into high level sport administration positions

Many studies conducted on women in sporting leadership have attempted to trace the career paths of women (Cameron, 1996; Pfister et. al., 2005; Hovden 2000a, 2000b). Much research has examined the ways in which women are recruited to sporting

organizations and particularly into high level leadership positions. As was just discussed, many female leaders initially enter sport administration as a result of their athletic participation in sports. To this end, the ISLP and IOC (2004) found that there had been a significant effort to recruit women who were already involved as athlete representatives, which they suggest is a 'more gender balanced area of recruitment' (p.37). Hovden (2000a) studied the gendered selection processes in Norwegian sporting organizations. She examined the criteria most often used for the selection of candidates for sporting leadership positions and found that they seemed to be advantageous for male administrators. The most evident was incumbency which allowed members to stand for re-election. She found that male administrators were more likely to stand for re-election and had longer average time periods of membership than female members (p.77). Her analysis of the most common selection strategies perceived by sporting leaders revealed that many times, candidates were recruited from networks which not surprisingly, were male dominated. In another article, Hovden (2005) reports that most selection committees were mainly populated by male administrators and all of them had a male leader. These processes therefore reproduce and maintain the traditional gender order in sport administration.

Hartmann-Tews and Combrink (2005) studied the under representation of women in sport governing bodies in order to better understand the significance of recruitment and affirmative action. They concluded that 2 main procedures were used to recruit female members: 1) a restricted procedure where the President selects members of the Executive board and 2) an open procedure where several candidates are nominated for a position from which a selection committee and thus, the organization is involved in recruiting

members (p.74). It is therefore obvious that open procedures are more conducive to the entry of female administrators.

Finally, the authors of the ISLP and IOC (2004) report suggest 3 general ways in which female leaders are recruited to NOC Executive Committees: 1) nominate themselves for election or are invited to stand, 2) as a result of their athlete representative role or as IOC members, 3) a mixture of these routes, underscoring the important role of senior administrators in encouraging, asking, nominating and appointing women to leadership positions in sport administration. Nonetheless, many sporting organizations have taken measures to increase the number of women in decision-making positions such as adopting policies which has undoubtedly been a positive step in recruiting more women to sport administration.

Cameron (1996) found that many female sporting leaders follow a somewhat linear bureaucratic path into leadership positions which oftentimes begin as competitive athletes and/or involvement in club or regional administration and eventually progressing to the provincial, national and international level. She describes how women usually become involved in the administration of sport at the club or regional level and that once they have attained an executive level position within this organization, they are able to move onto the regional governing body (p.42). According to this author, it was often at the regional level were women in her study seemed to experience barriers to advancement. She does note however, that progression to national sports administration became a viable option for women who had adapted to the organizational culture and were persistent in their ascension to higher leadership positions. She found that over half of her participants had followed the club-regional-national administrative career path

(p.42). Similarly, Pfister et. al. (2005) also reported that female leaders in German

sporting organizations followed 'a fairly typical pattern of promotion' (p.13) where most

progressed from club level to regional level and from there, to the national and in some

cases, even international level. Indeed, the ISLP and IOC (2004) report indicated that:

> "...the most significant form of leadership experience of women recruited
> to NOC Executive Committees is work with the national federations..."
> (p.19).

Although the club – regional – national model of progression was typical for most

sport administrators, Cameron (1996) in particular, did note that for some women, the

paths and opportunities in sport administration were interestingly varied (p.51). Either

way, administrators in high level leadership positions have been involved in sport

administration for many years which suggests that leaders have to acquire a considerable

amount of experience in order to reach high level sport organizations.

> "As a rule, the way up to the higher echelons was marked by a relatively
> long qualifying period in which they had to prove their loyalty, display a
> willingness to work hard and show success" (Pfister et. al., 2005, p.13).

Cameron (1996) examined the average length of service for sporting leaders and found

that most women in high level leadership positions had held a position on a provincial

executive body for an average of 10-12 years (p.42).This seems to be the norm for most

sport administrators aspiring to top leadership positions though it was perceived that

women were often held to a much higher standard (McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al., 2005).

Finally, Cameron (1996) also investigated female leaders' future aspirations in

sport administration. Interestingly, she found that only three of the 39 women in her study

wanted to progress into a higher position while another six said they might be interested

if such a position was offered to them (p.47). Similarly, the ISLP and IOC (2004) study

found that though some women wanted to continue their work in sport administration to make a difference, very few aspired to progress into more senior positions or move up the organizational hierarchy (p.67). Several female participants in the study did indicate that they were frustrated with their positions and were not likely to continue in sporting leadership. On the other hand, Pfister et. al. (2005) reported that 50% of their interviewees aspired to progress into high leadership positions (p.14). In this way, these studies also provide important data on various barriers that deter or inhibit women from entering high level sporting leadership positions.

2.2.3 <u>Leadership skills of female sporting leaders</u>

Since only some women ever reach the highest positions in sporting leadership, it becomes essential to discuss the leadership skills and styles perceived as required for such roles. As has been mentioned, the literature indicates that most high level administrators also hold influential positions in their professional occupations (McKay, 1997; Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; Pfister et. al., 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004). Pfister et. al. (2005) in particular noted that female leaders were able to apply the skills they developed in their professional careers to their sport administration work. Consequently, a position in the upper echelons of professions is a preferred qualification for sporting leadership (p.13). Similarly, Cameron (1996) reported that many female respondents spoke of being able to transfer skills such as organizational and financial management as well as public speaking from their professional occupation to their work in sport administration (p.95). Much research supports the notion that business and administrative capabilities are essential for gaining entry to high level sporting organizations. In fact, many authors discussed the impact of the commercialization and

the professionalization of sporting organizations on the shifting leadership skills and styles required to be successful in sport leadership at its highest level (Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004; Cameron, 1996). As early as 1990, MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) reported that financial expertise and fundraising experience had become the most desirable qualities for potential sport administrators and much less attention was paid to their athletic background (p.68). Because of the gendered structure of the Canadian labour force, men were most likely to meet these credentials. To this end, Hall (1996) asserts that:

> "...the direct and ongoing intervention of the state has resulted in the rationalization of the Canadian sport system creating a professional bureaucracy with a more corporate style of management. The control of amateur sport has been largely removed from the hands of volunteers and is now directed by a new professional elite" (p.92).

Lastly, Hovden (2000a) also notes how corporate managerial skills such as broad organizational experience (p.21), economic management, budgets and strategic planning (p.23) have become essential for individuals wanting to reach high level sporting leadership. Indeed, the ISLP and IOC (2004) report indicated that respondents believed that organizational leadership, human relations as well as communication skills were the main qualities that were needed for sport administration. In sum, positions of leadership now require that individuals possess a number of skills that enable them to successfully manage sporting organizations.

Another leadership attribute that has been lauded in sport administrators is commitment to the organization and the sport. For those individuals doing advocacy for under represented groups, typically women, this was also considered an enviable trait for any leader. Most studies concerning women in sporting leadership discuss the intense

time commitment that administrators must devote to the organization in order to be effective (Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; ISLP and IOC, 2004; Pfister et. al, 2005). Hovden (2000b) found that high level sport administrators had to make themselves available to attend competitions and meetings, usually held during the evenings and on weekends. Moreover, many of these events take place out of town, requiring large amounts of travel and time spent away from home (p.23). These findings are supported by those of the ISLP and IOC (2004) where they found that many female administrators had made sacrifices in terms of their relationships while trying to balance work, sport administration, family and personal relationships. Undoubtedly, commitment is an integral part of leadership, however a redefinition of what is considered commitment is essential. Our current understandings of commitment point to an individual who works long hour's everyday of the week and is willing to be away from home quite often; a commitment not everyone can afford to make.

With respect to advocacy, women were often involved in sport administration because they wanted to give back to sport and make a difference (Pfister et. al, 2005, p.13). With the recent focus on women in sport issues, many sporting organizations have created Women's Committees whose purpose is to identify and attempt to rectify issues pertaining to women in all aspects of sport. In fact, the ISLP and IOC (2004) study revealed that 49% of all female NOC administrators worked in Women's Committees and over half of those perceived their role as primarily related to women's issues (p.22). Though this is problematic on many levels and is a clear demonstration of the ways in which female administrators are being driven into niche areas that are typically associated

with less prestige and influence, it does indicate that many women administrators are strong advocates of girls and women in sport and dedicated to their cause.

Finally, a number of research studies discussed the fact that past and current female sporting leaders act as role models for young girls and women who might want to enter sporting leadership (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004; McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al, 2005).

> "The focus on role models...is...an essentially reactive one. ...the presence of women in leadership positions demonstrates to other women that achieving such a position is possible. ...perceiving that such a position was reached through chance does not provide much guidance in terms of what others should do in order to be similarly successful." (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990, p.32-33)

This argument is less significant today as women have made considerable inroads however it is important that these women be there in larger numbers and remain visible in their positions.

Another leadership skill that was emphasized in numerous studies was a member's ability to network (Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; ISLP and IOC, 2004; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990). In her study, Hovden (2000b) found that sporting organizations were seeking individuals who had a broad social network as well as contacts in business and politics (p.23). Leaders are most often very influential and can provide opportunities to junior members in their networks. This is important for female administrators wanting to progress into top leadership positions (ISLP and IOC, 2004, p.52). In addition, a network of friends and contacts provides an individual with sources of mental and emotional support as well as practical advice (MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990, p.72). As is summed up in the ISLP and IOC (2004) report:

"All of the respondents pointed towards the importance of being a part of a sports network, of being socialized into it and learning from it and of gaining support or having advice from other members of that network, or of contributing to the confidence of other members in the network" (p.49).

Finally, there were many personal characteristics of sporting leaders that were beneficial for their work in sport administration. To this end, Cameron (1996) concluded that personality and personal traits were the most important factors in accessing national level leadership positions (p.76). Each study provided a similar description of the individual skills needed to be successful in high level sporting leadership. Individuals who were orderly, determined, loyal and had a good reputation were believed to represent ideal candidacy (Hovden, 2000b, p.23). In Pfister et. al's (2005) study, female leaders were described as competitive and ambitious while remaining very humble and modest (p.13). In addition, these leaders cited the ability to work cooperatively with, for and against men inside and outside of the organization as an important skill that female leaders in particular, had to develop (p.14). At the international level, the ISLP and IOC (2004) report noted that respondents believed moral qualities, personality traits such as honesty, integrity, passion and charisma as well as extensive knowledge of the sporting system were important characteristics perceived to be advantageous for women attempting to forge careers in sport administration (p.26). On the other hand, the IOC has been found guilty of numerous scandals and corruption among its elite leaders therefore this finding seems to be more of an ideal and not particularly a reflection of the actual organizational membership.

Leadership skills are therefore important criteria by which high level sport administrators are selected. The under representation of women has been attributed to a

number of reasons however personal leadership skills remain the areas in which women

are said to lack the experience of most male administrators.

> "Women were excluded from leadership positions because they were
> suggested to possess less relevant personal skills than their male
> counterparts. The seemingly gender-neutral construction of leadership
> skills acts to subordinate women's abilities and experiences and thus
> reinforces prevailing leadership structures" (Hovden, 2005, p.26).

2.2.4 <u>Leadership styles in sport administration</u>

There has always been a debate concerning styles of leadership among men and

women. Some authors (Hovden 2000a, 2000b, 2005; McKay, 1997, Cameron, 1996)

argue that male leaders are generally perceived to have an aggressive, competitive and

autocratic leadership style which is both the result and reaffirmation of a traditional

masculine culture in sporting organizations. Women on the other hand, are believed to

bring a more consultative, cooperative and democratic approach to leadership. For

example, McKay (1997) describes how female respondents perceived that "…their

consultative styles conflicted with men's adversarial tactics" (p.77). In Cameron's (1996)

study, she found that women believed that female sporting leaders were more organized,

more careful with the organization's finances and spending as well as more inclined to

consider the consequences of decisions taken at that level (p.132). Historically, it has

been the virtues associated with the masculine style of leadership that have been valued

in sport management and as a result, women's particular style of management, if different

to that of her male colleague, is usually undervalued and effectively rendered invisible.

Furthermore, other studies have highlighted the ways in which women adopt this

masculine leadership style in order to 'fit in' with the organizational culture (McKay,

1997; Hovden, 2000a). These characteristics have traditionally been associated with

behaviour deemed masculine and thus, the basis of conventional sporting leadership. It is therefore evident that women have entered organizational at a disadvantage and have had to fashion their leadership strategies to accommodate the structure and culture of the organization.

> "During their careers most of the women came to the conclusion that they had to adapt to the structures and cooperate with men in order to be successful. ...These women have appropriated the gendered culture of organization..." (Pfister et. al, 2005, p.10).

For this reason, it is believed that high level male and female sporting leaders are a product of their organizational culture; that is, they must lead in a way that is accepted by the members of the organization or risk not being successful in the boardroom. This in turn could limit the opportunities for women attempting to reach the top leadership positions in the organization.

To conclude, Pfister et. al (2005) provide a clear description of a prototypical female leader in sport administration.

> "The typical female executive in German sport organizations is about 50 years old. She is either single and has no children or she is married and either has no children or her children are grown-up. She has the full support from her husband or companion. She is well-educated and highly qualified. Today she works in a leadership position and has the freedom to organize and make decisions. In her profession she is required to have guidance skills, too. At the beginning of her career in voluntary work she was mainly encouraged by the people around her to take on higher positions. As a young adult she first made her mark on the executive board of her local sports club before taking on commitments at the regional and national levels" (Pfister et. al, 2005, p.11).

2.3 BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT: WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT THE GLASS CEILING' FOR WOMEN IN SPORT ADMINISTRATION

The data provided in the relevant studies recognizes the barriers that still exist for female sporting leaders. In terms of the barriers faced by women entering high level

administration, research suggests that subtle methods of female exclusion are embedded

in the historical context of the organization's existence, the structure on which it is

founded (e.g. mission, administrative procedures, membership selection) as well as the

individuals who have historically been involved in its governing bodies (Chase, 1992;

Hovden, 2000a, 2000b, 2005; McKay, 1997; Inglis, 1997; Pfister et. al, 2005; Cameron,

1996, MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004; Hartmann-Tews and

Combrink).

Building on Pfister et. al's (2005) 'processes of influence', I will discuss four

main areas where barriers have been experienced: (1) the individual level (motives,

decisions, competences, conditions of life, images, identities, etc.); (2) the organizational

level (structure, culture, positions, policies, etc); (3) the relational level (colleagues,

leaders, networks, etc); and (4) the societal level (gendered labour market, gender order)

(p.1). As these authors state:

> "It can be assumed that processes at all these levels influence the
> decisions, motives and 'careers' of men and women in sports
> organizations as well as the reasons for their 'dropping out'" (Pfister et. al,
> 2005, p.1)

Furthermore, they indicated six reasons why female administrators were leaving sporting

leadership: 1) resistance of the organizations to new ideas, 2) withholding of information

by top leaders in sporting organizations, 3) lack of acceptance and acknowledgement, 4)

lack of solidarity among women, 5) striving of current administrators for power and

prestige, and 6) gender discrimination (p.16). As a result of these frustrations, some

women chose to drop-out of sport administration.

2.3.1 Individual level

There are many factors influencing individual women's decision to enter, remain and progress in sporting administration. Personal circumstances such as socio-economic status as well as family and educational background affect women's initial access to sport and consequent choice to participate in its administration. Likewise, women's personal family status influences their ability to participate in sport administration as partners and children are relationships that require time commitments and day-to-day responsibilities. The lack of sensitivity and flexibility for female administrators with personal commitments was a barrier reported in nearly every study on women in sporting leadership (McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al, 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Cameron, 1996; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990). In Cameron's (1996) study, 86% of her participants believed that family responsibilities were a barrier to the advancement of women in sporting leadership (p.129). MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) noted that no childcare was provided for members with children at competitions, meetings or conferences (p.72). They concluded:

> "It is literally impossible for those females who bear the responsibility for the majority of the home-care work also to meet the expectations involved in national level sport positions" (p.73).

Another common reason given for the under representation of women in high level sport administration is their lack of willingness to take on leadership roles (ISLP and IOC, 2004; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990). Some authors attributed this to a lack of confidence (Pfister et. al, 2055, p.19) and others perceived that women were consciously not willing to give up so much of their home life to be visible in sport administration (MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990, p.62). McKay (1997) found that men tended to attribute

the under-representation of female leaders in sporting organizations to individual deficiencies (p.52). Again, Hovden (2005) and MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) established that some administrators believed that the lack of female leaders was due to an individual lack of motivation, ambition, priorities or adequate qualifications. In any case, all of these reasons point to individual issues with the female leaders which reinforce the current attitudes toward gender equity and women's under-representation in sport.

Additionally, the lack of commitment by sport administrators, particularly men, to gender equity has been identified as an enormous barrier to the increase of women in sporting leadership (Cameron, 1996; McKay, 1997; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990). In Cameron's (1996) study, 72% of women agreed that a lack of commitment by men to gender equity or affirmative action programmes was a barrier to women's advancement into high level sporting leadership (p.129). Likewise, McKay's (1997) analysis of affirmative action and organizational power in Australian, Canadian and New Zealand sport revealed that there were generally three political stances toward affirmative action policies: those who oppose it, the sceptics and cynics as well as the advocates (p.97-101). He found that most male administrators were not particularly welcoming of such policies; some were even inauspicious while others believed that it was 'women's work'. Finally, Hall, Cullen and Slack (1990) state that:

> "The three major reasons given as to why there was no need for a [equal opportunity] policy were: (1) equal opportunity exists already and there is no discrimination based on sex; (2) the 'merit only' principle should apply always; and (3) any changes in the balance of males versus females should evolve 'naturally', rather than through any imposed policy" (p.20).

Lastly, there are both tangible and intangible costs to high level sport administrators. Cameron (1996) reported that meetings, competitions and administrative work could require childcare and that there are often high travel costs needed to attend championships and conferences (p.97). In this sense, individuals from lower socio-economic classes are excluded from participation in sporting leadership. As a result of the current gendered labour market, many more women belong in the lower income brackets. Closely related to barriers at the individual level are those at the relational level, as it involves all of the individuals in the organization.

2.3.2 <u>Organizational level</u>

The under-representation of women in leadership positions is "…an outcome of institutional [and] structural arrangements which limit the choices of whole groups who share certain characteristics (e.g. women, or lower socioeconomic status group)" (Cameron, 1996, p.187). As mentioned, the organizational structure of sporting organizations restricts the entry of women into leadership positions of power and leadership. First, the organizational structure dictates the ways in which the organization is to be managed and operate therefore administrators are forced to work under specific guidelines. One of the most cited complaints with respect to the organizational structure was the time commitment and the inflexibility of organizations regarding scheduling (McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al, 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Cameron, 1996). The time spent away from home for out of town meetings and competitions proved to be too demanding for many female sporting leaders to which Cameron (1996) adds the financial costs associated with such commitments (p.49).

The organizational structure also influences the number of women in sport administration as a result of many organizations refusing to institute gender equity policies (McKay, 1997; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004). Interestingly, in organizations which had adopted equity-related policies, it was found that equity commitments were often overlooked in favour of establishing a performance-oriented sport program (MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990, p.81). Indeed, Hall, Cullen and Slack (1990) echo this stating that:

> "In fact, all issues of equity such as those related to Francophone, regional disparities, socio-economic privilege, athletes' rights, or gender are basically ignored. Quite simply, the priorities of Canada's high-performance sport system appear to be elsewhere…" (p.35).

At the international level, the ISLP and IOC (2004) report indicated that the lack of female members was due to the national federations which failed to present enough suitable female candidates (p.39). Therefore, if we acknowledge that the structure, which includes the stated mission, values, objectives and programs are influenced by those involved in the decision-making processes, then entry into the organization becomes crucial if any structural change is to take place. It is also necessary to examine the influence of organizational culture on the entry of women into sporting leadership. Research has shown how sporting organizations have embraced masculinity as the ideal leadership model (McKay, 1997; Cameron, 1996; Pfister et. al, 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004). As Cameron (1996) put it, "…sport represents a way of life which has its own peculiar ethos and its own sets of beliefs" (p.36). Many of the traditions as well as the procedural functioning of an organization are directly influenced by the culture that is deeply embedded. The historical foundation of many sporting organizations testifies that it was usually male administrators who established the organization for males and it is men who have since controlled it. As described by Pfister et. al (2005), the leadership styles of male and female sporting leaders are closely associated with the organizational culture:

"The culture of sports organizations and their patterns of interaction are shaped according to men's (socialized) behaviour and tastes, men's wishes and needs, and men's ways of life. Organizations demand that leaders are self-confident, performance-oriented and competitive; that they strive for power, that they proceed strategically; that they have the ability to enforce their interests; and...that they have a thick skin when faced with insults and hostilities. ...those few successful female leaders [that] have adapted to these expectations...have developed similar behaviour patterns and strategies to those of their male colleagues..." (p.17).

Thus, women have been required to adapt to the organizations structure and culture; essentially they must 'fit in'. This is echoed by Cameron (1996) who concludes that managers tend to reserve power and privilege for those administrators they believed 'fit in'; those they saw as being most like themselves (p.192). Similarly, Hovden (2000a, 2000b) concluded that candidates who had extensive managerial skills and fit the hegemonic masculine ideal corporate image were more likely to be selected.

Another structural and cultural barrier found in sporting organizations is the isolation of female administrators into particular positions. Research statistics have clearly shown that even when women attain high level decision making positions, they usually serve in the less powerful positions. As mentioned, many female leaders who have reached high level national and international management positions have come from Women's Committees (Cameron, 1996), disabled sport (McKay, 1997) and women-only sport organizations (Bischoff and Rintala, 1994). In addition, McKay (1997) observed that women were more likely to access top leadership positions in multisport organizations and those associated with sport and disability. This provides evidence that female leaders have used these positions as stepping stones to gain leadership experience.

Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) conducted a number of studies concerning the under representation of women in US politics. Their observations are applicable to this

study of women in sporting leadership in terms of women's positions in male dominated institutions.

> "...many female politicians have opted to work closely with political organizations for women. Not only do such groups often provide a starting point for women's political careers – affording much needed experience, encouragement, and funding – but they frequently continue to work closely with female legislators long after they are elected to public office" (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, 1995, p.98).

In the Canadian context, Sport Canada's (1991) research of female leadership in national sporting organizations pointed to numerous factors which hindered women's opportunities and concluded that women in sport faced similar situations to those in other sectors of the Canadian economy: they were located on lower levels of the organizational hierarchy making significantly lower annual salaries than did men in equivalent positions. Likewise, Bischoff and Rintala (1994, 1996) concluded that women were more likely to reach the position of Executive Director than that of President, and that this usually occurred in traditionally female sports or those less visible on the Olympic program (i.e., synchronized swimming and field hockey). They predicated that women were systematically excluded from those organizations that belonged to the Olympic Movement because of their important and prestigious status (p.3).

More recently, Cameron (1996) found that women executive officers were more often in women-only sport organizations or in small sports (p.16). Indeed, research has shown that it is easier for women to access high level positions in sports that command less power and less prestige; the sports that men rarely play and do not wish to administer (Cameron, 1996; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Pfister et. al, 2005; ISLP and IOC, 2004; McKay, 1997). Even when women have entered high level positions within larger and

more influential sporting organizations, they do not hold the most powerful posts.

Echoing McKay's (1997) findings, Pfister et. al (2005) concluded that:

> "...women were employed at the lower end of the hierarchy whereas men occupied the top positions. Women, moreover, were mainly responsible for the 'soft' areas such as prevention strategies, health management, integration through sport or women in sport" (Pfister et. al, 2005, p.3).

Furthermore, in their study of female NOC members, the ISLP and IOC (2004) also reported that 80 per cent of women's commissions were filled by women. From this research, it is clear that many women are segregated into Women's Committees which not only perpetuates the notion that these are 'women's jobs' but continues to frame the issues as women's problems.

2.3.3 Relational level

Sporting organizations, like most organizations, require men and women to work together to achieve the goals and objectives set by the top administrators. As such, the relationships that exist between members can impact and affect their position within the organization; or their 'organizational fit'. Cameron (1996) states that:

> "...administration at the controlling level of sport, as a high status activity enhances a tendency for social closure – the process whereby access to opportunities and associated rewards are limited to a certain group, often through the process of formal qualification or credentialism." (p.190).

She concludes by advancing that networking and mentoring can only minimally diversify sporting organizations as this strategy often accommodates particular kinds of female administrators.

Another relational barrier that has been widely discussed is that of men's social networks. It has long been contended that 'old boy's networks' have had a considerable influence on the under-representation of women in sporting organizations. Through these

networks, it has been reported that male administrators make informal decisions on important topics, lobby for other male candidates and discuss the promotions of other high level executive (McKay, 1997; Cameron, 1996; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990). Since most of these activities occur outside of the boardroom in settings such as golf courses and bars, women are often excluded. Research by Cameron (1996) and McKay (1997) has shown that men's informal networks are largely perceived by women to hinder their opportunities in high level sporting leadership.

In the Canadian context however, Hall, Cullen and Slack (1990) found that 59% of women agreed that men's social networks were a barrier to the advancement of female leaders. What is problematic is that women's networks are not yet as powerful or influential as those of men and therefore are not beneficial in the same ways (McKay, 1997, p.54).

2.3.4 Societal level

"Most advances for women in sport have occurred within the existing structures of sport, for white, middle-class women, and for those already involved in competitive sports who have overcome the practical and ideological constraints that continue to inhibit vast numbers of other women from participating at all" (Hargreaves, p.290 quoted in Cameron 1996, p.159).

The gendered structure of society continues to play an important role in constraining women in sport administration (Pfister et. al, 2005, p.10).

Gender in sporting organizations was also linked to stereotypes about male and female leaders. McKay (1997) found that male leaders held many stereotypical views regarding women's capabilities in sport administration (p.83). However, many studies showed that female administrators found numerous ways to deal with stereotypes and opposition in the male dominated world of sport (Pfister et. al, 2005, p.14). In her

research, Chase (1992) examined the key people and forces as well as policies that affected women's involvement in Olympic governance. She argued that in addition to the role of NOCs and IFs in hindering women's opportunities, religious beliefs regarding women in different cultures, medicalized discourses about the female body and their participation in 'appropriate' sports, as well as media representations of female athletes have each been dominant forces working against the inclusion of women in the Olympic Movement. In her analysis of the implicit and explicit IOC policies, she determined that policies were not clear or powerful enough to cause significant change in the organization. What is even more problematic is the fact that there are no compliance strategies in place to implement, monitor and enforce the gender equity policies therefore organizations are not required to abide by them.

2.3.5 Summary

This entire section has focused on research highlighting the numerous barriers limiting women's entry and participation in high level sports leadership. It is evident that women have had to work within restricted environments that greatly advantage men. For this reason, some women may have opted not to enter or aspire to high level sporting leadership therefore presenting a barrier that must be addressed if women are to become equally represented in sport administration. It is clear that men have played an influential role in the under-representation of women in sporting leadership. Given that sports were developed and administered by and for men, the organizational practices put in place corresponded to their definitions of sport and how it should be practiced. Without having those men who are in power recognize the historical, structural and social barriers that still exist hindering women's opportunities to access high level decision-making positions

within sporting organizations, change will only be limited. As we have entered the new

millennium and previously established policies on women and sport have had time to

take effect, this study will provide a better understanding of the barriers that still exist in

light of the inroads made by women. It can be concluded that:

> "...women who do not possess the expected opportunities, qualifications
> and competencies and who do not have this particular type of personality
> have great difficulty in joining the executive boards of sports associations.
> This is also true for those women who...cannot adapt to the prevailing
> structures of sport organizations" (Pfister and Radtke, 2005, p.11).

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.4.1 Feminism and social constructionism

Hall (1996) insists that we need to understand "...that sporting practices are

historically produced, socially constructed and culturally defined to serve the interests

and needs of powerful groups in society..." (p.6). In this way, feminist theory generally

seeks to analyze, criticize, affirm and advance the place of women in society and in this

case, at every level of the sporting system. Because many of these studies had a particular

focus on women, most do have feminist theoretical underpinnings. This perspective

highlights the ways in which gender and power operate and are reproduced in the

governing bodies of sport (McKay, 1997; Cameron, 1996; Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; Hall,

1996). McKay (1997) used a pro-feminist theoretical lens to examine the impact of

affirmative action policies on the positions of women in sporting leadership. He also used

concepts such as emphasized femininity (p.17) and hegemonic masculinity (p.21) to

explain women's continued exclusion from top leadership positions in sport

administration. Cameron (1996) and Hovden (2000a, 2000b) used feminist theory to

discuss the under representation of women in sporting administration while relating this

to critical perspectives on gender and sporting leadership. Each referred to organizational theory to point out the important structural barriers that still hinder women's opportunities.

In addition, many authors referred to social constructionist theory which states that notions of gender are constructed by society and thus, reiterated and played out in sporting organizations (McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al., 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Hall, 1978, 1996). According to Hall (1978):

> "Gender...is best perceived as 'a continuum of human attitudes and behaviours, socially constructed, socially perpetuated and socially alterable'" (p.4)

McKay (1997) used the concepts of masculinity and femininity (p.3) to show the ways in which gender is socially constructed and consequently, how women are affected by the structures of labour, power and cathexis. In describing the similarities and differences between men and women's experiences in relation to the male-dominated culture of sporting organizations, McKay (1997) advanced that sport organizations were an important site where gender struggles occurred and thus, played a role in the construction and reproduction of gender inequalities (p.14).

MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) discussed the concepts of sex-role socialization as well as power relations that exist between male and female administrators (p.75) to emphasize how the construction of gender influences the organizational culture. This was furthered by Pfister et. al (2005) who pointed to the gendered structures and hierarchies in society as well as the impact of organizational culture to explain the under representation of women in German sporting organizations.

2.4.2 <u>Organizational Theory</u>

The concept of gendered organization theory (Acker, 1990; Martin, 1990) posits that much of the conventional research and theories have conceptualized organizations as gender neutral even though historically, many organizations were established by men in order to administer male sport thus taking on a masculine perspective. Hovden (2000b) used Acker's (1990) theoretical constructs concerning the construction and reproduction of gendered processes in sporting organizations (p.19) to explain the constant influx of men into sporting leadership positions while few women are visible at any level of governance structures in sport. As Mercier and Werthner (2001) point out:

> "we have a framework for thinking about a sport world that has as its basis many norms that are based on men's characteristics, lives and experiences" (p.3).

Elizabeth Moss Kanter's (1971) concept of 'homologous reproduction' has especially proved useful in examining the barriers that exist for women in sporting leadership (Hovden 2000a, 2000b; Cameron, 1996; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Bischoff and Rintala, 1994; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990). Cameron's (1996) understanding of this concept is that men who hold powerful leadership positions in sport typically select other men and few women from those candidates who share similar values and opinions to themselves. With this theory, she was able to highlight the stereotyping of female administrators in sport and its influence on their entry into sporting leadership. On the other hand, Cameron (1996) criticized Kanter's concept of 'homologous reproduction' as it does not question the structural processes which "…support patriarchal systems of domination and how these arrangements are maintained by the very women who are oppressed by them" (p.194) highlighting the

complexities concerning the lack of women in sporting leadership. Hovden (2000a,

2000b) also used Kanter's (1971) theory to explain why male administrators were more

likely to select other male leaders which best fit their idea of a skilled administrator.

According to Bischoff and Rintala (1994):

> "The concept of homologous reproduction, the process in which the
> dominant group reproduces itself based on social and/or physical
> characteristics, has been used to explain the increasing level of men
> coaching women's sports, since the majority of athletic directors in
> decision making positions are males. This could certainly be a factor in the
> male-dominated gender ratio of the International Olympic Committee, as
> well as in the United States Olympic Committee Board of Directors and
> the Executive Committee" (p.86).

Furthermore, Hall, Cullen and Slack (1990) used the structural issues identified by Kanter

(1971) as opportunity, power and proportions to explain the processes by which female

leaders are segregated into positions of low opportunity and power as well as their

proportional under-representation on decision-making bodies in sport (p.30). In their own

study, MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) used Kanter's theory to better understand the

changes that needed to take place in sporting organizations in order to achieve equity

(p.71) and the ways in which gender policies were implemented in various sporting

systems.

This thesis will therefore be based on a number of these theories in addition to

broader concepts relating to the particular methodology used for this study. I used a

feminist perspective in this study because I wanted to elicit information on the career

paths and leadership skills of high level female sporting leaders by using personal

interviews with women holding such positions in Canadian sport administration.

> "Coming out of the modern literary movements of poststructuralism,
> postmodernism, and deconstruction, discourse theory focuses on the
> analysis of a text – broadly understood to include lived experiences and

cultural forms such as sport." (Birrell in Messner and Sabo, 1990, p.196)

In this way, discourse analysis provides important theoretical insights to deconstructing some of the participants stories in order to highlight the complexities of the under representation of women in sport administration. Many times however, the female administrators' perspectives are not deconstructed but read as they were understood by the women themselves and presented as they are interpreted by the researcher. Finally, I both confirm and trouble some theories when comparing my data to that which has been presented in the literature review.

3.0 CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN CANADIAN SPORT ADMINISTRATION

Who are the women in high level Canadian sporting leadership?

Although the research questions investigated a breadth of topics, they also

provided a general picture of the women involved in high level sporting leadership in

Canada. The data collected allowed for an interesting analysis as it highlighted both the

similarity and diversity of the female leaders' backgrounds and perspectives. This chapter

will first provide a general profile of the participants involved in this study and then

present the findings in two main areas of analysis: career paths and leadership

involvement.

3.1 PROFILING THE PARTICIPANTS

What are the women's backgrounds and what led to their entry and progression in high level Canadian sport administration?

Sport administration at its highest level requires individuals to have particular

skills in order to successfully manage the organization. As demonstrated in the literature

review, modern day sporting organizations operate like major corporations in Canada

with one exception: many organizations dealing with Olympic sport are run by

volunteers. Though many of these organizations have full time employees handling the

day-to-day operations, key decision making positions such as those on the Executive

Boards are primarily occupied by volunteer members. In addition, some of the top

leadership positions such as CEO and COO, which are also paid, are very influential thus

members have a direct input on the direction the organization takes and its overall

success. Research has shown that in both cases, volunteers and paid sport administrators

have very similar backgrounds and career paths with a few important exceptions. For this

reason, sport administrators will be treated as a general term for any individual involved

in sport governance and the distinctions will be reviewed in Chapter 4 in the 'volunteerism' section. Because only a small number of women hold top leadership positions in sporting organizations, it is important to understand how they initially become involved in sport administration and gain access to leadership positions in the organization. It is through their life stories that we can better understand women's career paths and leadership involvement in high level leadership.

3.1.1 Personal Backgrounds

How have the participant's backgrounds influenced their skills, perspectives and approaches to sport administration?

The literature review has shown that an individual's background is a dominant factor in a person's disposition to enter and progress in sport administration (Cameron, 1996; McKay, 1997; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; ISLP and IOC, 2004; Pfister et. al, 2005). In this section, I will elaborate on the various circumstances which appear to have influenced the participant's decisions to initially get involved in sport administration and their choice to advance into higher leadership positions. In essence, this section provides a general profile of a 'typical' high level female sporting leader in Canada and her career path in high level sport administration. This of course does not imply that all of the women were similar or represented the views and interests of only the 'female gender'. In fact, each participant seemed to have her own leadership style and qualities as well as divergent points of view on many of the issues discussed during the interviews. This shows the importance of understanding women's backgrounds and their influence on their decisions to participate in sport administration, particularly in high level leadership positions. The research data collected

to explore this aspect was coded into three specific areas of the participant's background: family background; educational and professional background; and athletic background.

3.1.1.1 Family background

The stories collected in this study show that women were either getting involved in volunteer activities or playing sports at a very young age. Over half of the women talked about the role of their family upbringing on their decision to enter sport administration. Many of them mentioned that their parents had been involved in the community in some sort of volunteer capacity and had encouraged them and their siblings to engage in extracurricular activities. For other women, their volunteer work in sport administration began at a young age and stemmed from a personal interest in being involved 'behind the scenes'. Consequently, most described their initial involvement in various volunteer or sporting activities as a family oriented endeavour. This then led some of them to combine their interest in sport with their volunteer work or vice versa, all of them eventually choosing to pursue volunteer or paid positions in the higher levels of sport administration. As one woman put it:

> "The way I was brought up, my family really believed that you had a responsibility to give back to the community so you either give back with your time or you gave back money. And...so it's just engrained..." (Participant 009).

This finding clearly supports Pfister et. al's (2005) research that pointed to the importance of parental support on the involvement of men and women in sporting leadership. Likewise, this also supports feminist theory which links the social construction of gender to sex/role theory (Hovden, 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Hall, 1996).

Coincidentally, the women's own familial circumstances played an important role in their degree of involvement in sport administration. Almost all of the respondents had a partner at home who supported their work, thus enabling them to spend more time in sport administration. Indeed, 80% of the women in this study were in de facto relationships which challenges somewhat McKay (1997) and Cameron's (1996) findings that suggested women were more likely to be single. It does however mirror the results found in the ISLP and IOC (2004) report that indicated that 70% of female respondents were married and the same percentage had children. Interestingly, there were two female administrators in this study that were still active athletes and both had families. Each woman was slowly reducing her workload in volunteer sport administration to focus on their families and athletic careers pointing out that trying to 'juggle' all three was too demanding. One woman described how her in-laws' proximity allowed them to accommodate and support her work as a volunteer sport administrator by providing her with daycare when needed. This highlights the fact that there are many women who do not have these support networks in place and may therefore be unable to participate in high level sporting leadership. This particular finding is important as very little research has focused on the secondary support networks which facilitate women's opportunities to enter and progress in sporting leadership.

It is evident that both family upbringing and current familial situation provided the opportunity for these participants to engage in volunteer and sporting activities. Many of the women's initial experiences were crucial in determining their future choices to enter sport leadership and progress into more important leadership roles within Canadian sporting organizations.

3.1.1.2 **Educational and professional background**

Many of the female participants spoke of their involvement in high school and university committees; experiences which later influenced their decision to continue into high level sporting leadership. Seven of the participants mentioned attending university while 3 had completed graduate studies, suggesting that high level sporting leaders are indeed well educated. Interestingly, university athletic associations provided two of the 10 women with their initial experiences in the administrative side of sport while another woman worked in her university athletic department. This is clearly supported by most literature pertaining to women in sporting leadership (Cameron, 1996; ISLP and IOC, 2004; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Pfister et. al, 2005). The educational background also provided some women with the opportunity to work in paid sport administration such as university athletic departments. This has been a starting platform for women progressing into Olympic and international administration. Interestingly, the participants had studied a number of different professions, from physical education to law and even women's studies. These divergent backgrounds influenced the roles women chose to take on and the viewpoints they brought to the table. The analysis revealed that the women's professional backgrounds were a valuable asset in sport administration and provided them with the necessary knowledge to be successful in leadership positions. This combination of skill and experience allowed them to progress into the higher echelons of sport administration. Furthermore, over half of the women mentioned that they had been involved in their sporting organization mainly on account of their professional background:

> "...to be honest umm, I think my background...umm, you know, as soon
> as you have an accounting background or a legal background, it just seems

to be that those people are the ones who tend to take on the leadership roles because for some reason, you're viewed as having more credibility or whatever" (Participant 007).

Those women who worked in paid sport administration also talked about the 'luxury of their positions'. Some women explained that their job afforded them the time, resources and opportunities to participate as a volunteer in high level sport administration because they had flexible work hours and were able to attend necessary meetings and access support networks. This confirms previous data provided by McKay (1997), Cameron (1996) and Pfister et. al (2005) which indicated that female sport administrators were overwhelmingly found to be in professional employment, typically holding important positions. Whether they were self-employed, physical education teachers, practiced law or worked full-time as a coach/trainer or sport administrator, the women believed their profession was conducive to taking on leadership positions in a Canadian sporting body. Women's professional backgrounds thus played a significant role in their access and participation in sport administration, especially in the higher executive level positions.

3.1.1.3 Athletic Background
"...I do think that it gives you an...edge to be a high performance athlete and then bring content into that" (Participant 002).

Another factor found to be significant in leading women to seek positions in Canadian sporting organizations and successfully progress to its highest level is their athletic background. Though not every woman interviewed had been an elite athlete, 90% of the respondents had participated in national and international competition and talked about their love and passion for sport. This supports recent research by Cameron (1996), Pfister et. al (2005) and the ISLP and IOC (2004) that found that most female sport

administrators had competed at the regional, national and international levels. One woman in this study had been a recreational athlete and used sport as a vehicle for her work as an advocate for girls and women and physical education teacher for children. Generally speaking, the analysis showed that most women believed that an elite athletic background was important for sport administrators for four main reasons. First, the women mentioned that having participated in an Olympic Games and particularly, having won an Olympic medal for some individuals, made them high profile individuals in their communities. Many of the female sport administrators interviewed were world renowned athletes who used their 'quasi celebrity status' to become involved in public speaking or charity work. In some cases, the women said that many leaders were able to use their notoriety to bring attention to various charities inside and out of the sporting world and thus, lend a hand to a number of other volunteer causes. In addition, their high profile status also brought positive attention to the sporting organization and gave them an advantage in the areas of fundraising and corporate sponsorship. This supports the argument that athletes should use their high profile to give back to the community and act as role models for young athletes.

Second, it is argued that former athletes bring a specific knowledge of sport to the table as a result of their sporting experiences. Many participants mentioned that being an athlete gave them 'credibility' in the boardroom because they had been around the sporting world for some time and could relate to what past and current athletes believed was needed to be successful. It was perceived that past athletes had a better understanding of the issues concerning sport because they had been an 'end user' and were able to see both the athlete and administrative side of the issue. Moreover, three

women had also coached elite athletes which gave them a unique understanding of the issues from all three perspectives; athlete, coach and administrator. As one woman put it:

> "…it does give you an advantage that you could speak to issues logically and from experience right. …and externally, it's credibility" (Participant 006).

In sum, it is perceived that an athletic background provided women with the ability to understand the impact of decision making on athletes, coaches as well as administrators and thus, make informed choices concerning policy and practice at the governance level.

All of the participants reiterated the qualities that sport develops in athletes; qualities transferable to other areas of their lives such as resilience, patience and confidence. Interestingly, a few women pointed out how various kinds of sporting backgrounds develop different leadership skills. For example, one woman noticed that team sports allowed athletes to develop a sense of team work, a necessary skill in the boardroom while sports that placed two opponents against each other developed skills such as time and risk management and gave them the ability to deal with uncertainty. Because decisions are usually taken at the executive level, it requires leaders to discuss issues and make decisions as a group. For this reason, the athletic background of sport administrators is therefore believed to develop characteristics that are valued in sporting leadership and are viewed as advantageous to successfully performing at the highest level of sporting organizations. It seems that administrative work is perceived by some leaders as a 'logical step' for both past and current athletes. However, it is important to recognize that an elite athletic background does not necessarily mean that the individual has all of the leadership skills required to be successful at the highest levels of decision making in sport. A few women indicated that past athletes did not necessarily have the

administrative background needed to fulfill those leadership roles. It was found that many

athletes representatives' on Executive Committees did not always believe they were

being taken seriously and reported being stereotyped as 'wet behind the ears' and only

looking out for themselves and their particular sport. For this reason, it was important for

women to develop various skill sets in order to be credible and thus, successful. This does

indicate that sport administration positions also need to be filled by individuals who have

a business administration background as well as the networking and leadership skills

required to be successful. There are a number of male leaders that have been recruited as

sport administrators from the areas of business and politics where there are again, much

fewer women involved. However, it is essential to find female sporting leaders in these

areas and recruit them to the Canadian sporting system.

Lastly, almost all of the women reported that their initial involvement in sport

administration was a direct result of their being involved in sport as athletes. Many of the

female leaders interviewed had begun their careers on an Athlete's council or committee

as a representative for their particular sport. Some women had even been involved in

setting up some of the first Athlete's Committees and were pioneers of the athlete's

movement. One woman asserted that:

> "...to this point, every position I've had has been as an athlete
> representative so you know for me, without that sporting background, it
> would not have been possible" (Participant 007).

Certainly, Athlete's Committees have become an important 'stepping stone' for women's

(and men's) entry and progression into the higher echelons of sport administration

supporting Cameron (1996) and the ISLP and IOC's (2004) findings. Indeed, most of the

study participants initially entered the Athlete's Committee within their particular sport,

which demonstrates the importance of all sporting organizations taking steps to increase the number of high level female sporting leaders because many women move up through their local, provincial and national level sport governing bodies.

3.2 CAREER PATHS IN SPORT ADMINISTRATION

It is obvious that all of the women interviewed had been involved in sport administration, though to varying degrees. Some common patterns emerged in the career paths of the participants which highlight the ways in which many women access leadership positions and progress through sporting organizations. Nevertheless, these women also have differing levels of interest and achievement as sporting leaders. This section will therefore examine and describe the general patterns of entry and advancement for the high level female sporting leaders who participated in this study and their numerous leadership accomplishments.

3.2.1 <u>Entry into sport administration</u>

This study explored the reasons why the female participants chose to become involved in sport administration and the circumstances under which they entered their leadership positions. Firstly, many women pointed to the fact that they joined sport administration because they wanted to create change within the sporting system. Similarly, a few women took on a sport administration role because they simply wanted to give back to sport; often the same sport which they felt they had received so much from. Seven of the participants, for a number of different reasons, specifically mentioned that they had advocated for change in order to make their sporting organizations better for both current and upcoming athletes as well as girls and women. Some of the participants initially engaged in sport administration because they believed there were imbalances in

the system such as cheating or inequities, and felt they needed to become involved in the decision making process.

> "That's how I started, just simply you know, not liking what I saw around me and trying to make a difference, trying to make a change" (Participant 010).

Almost all of the women mentioned being involved in volunteer sporting leadership 'for the right reasons'. For example, the female leaders who had been involved in the restructuring of their administrative body had actually eliminated their own positions in order to make their sporting organization more effective. Again, some women mentioned that they had introduced succession planning to their sporting organizations with the hopes of building a more coherent sporting system at all levels. It is therefore evident that this advocacy work on behalf of athletes, coaches and women shows the various areas in which they are involved and the successful endeavours being undertaken by female sport administrators. Thus, it is evident that these women wanted to contribute to making a difference and improving the organization.

Two participants remarked they had become involved in sport administration because they had a 'knack' for administrative work and wanted to combine these skills with their interest in sport. Others believed that they were invited because of their professional backgrounds. Having participated in sport and being involved in its administration provided the women with countless opportunities to network with other athletes and administrators. This and other skills play an important role in women's access and advancement into leadership positions in sport. In several other cases, women said they were recruited by their sport to sit on various committees, sometimes because there were no other female members.

"In my earlier years, I was one of the few women. And I know I was invited because of that and that was in the 80s. Prior to that, I bet there were very, very few women on boards but I think I was one of the first to really get on the boards" (Participant 004).

Interestingly, several of the participants mentioned the possibility that some members may have initially entered their positions partly based on their gender or race. They did argue however that it was essential that these members actively contribute to the boards and the decision making process in order to prove their capabilities at this level. It was evident that none of the women wanted to feel as though they were in their position simply on the basis of their gender or other minority status. To this extent, one woman said:

"I always think...that being a woman or being an athlete or being black you know, being a minority...these might be the sort of things that might get you in the door eventually but it's your hard work; it's your commitment; it's what you really contribute that keeps you in the door. [you] never want to feel that, in any position, I'm in as a result of or just because of those visible things. ...certainly I think we can never be complacent again..." (Participant 001).

During the interviews, the participants were asked about how old they were when they first entered sport administration. 60% of the women said they had taken on leadership roles in sporting organizations in their mid/late 20s to early 30s while the other 40% reported that they were in their mid 30s to early 40s. This shows that most of the women were quite young when they initially got involved in sporting leadership yet are much older by the time they reach the top leadership positions. Interestingly, one woman commented that Executive Committee members who were athlete's representatives seemed to be much younger than members who came from other areas of the sporting system. This is an important consideration given that there are many high level female leaders who are or have been athlete's representatives however there is little research

examining the entry-level positions held by female sporting leaders to confirm or advance this notion. In the future, this could provide an important area of analysis to the under-representation of women in sporting leadership.

The women were especially encouraged to discuss their first leadership experiences in sport administration in order to investigate at which level female leaders enter into sporting organizations and how these experiences influence their future involvement. The women interviewed in this study entered sport administration at various levels and in different positions. As mentioned, many women began their work as athlete's representatives for their sport and in athlete advocacy groups. It was mentioned that since athletes have had a much greater involvement at the administrative level, more and more governing bodies are targeting athletes and ex-athletes to become committee members and use them as resources. This was evidently important to some of the women in this study given that many women had entered sporting leadership as a direct result of their involvement in sport. Another participant began her career in sport administration as President of her club while others took up Executive positions within their provincial sporting organizations. One female respondent's first position was at the national level for her sport while two participants were in paid employment in a Canadian sport program.

Some of the participants had been elected to their positions in sport administration. Others had been nominated by their committees or organizations for leadership roles. In one case, a woman discussed how some female leaders ensured that other women were being voted into the organization saying:

> "...throughout elections, a lot of times we'll sort of do some backroom
> deals, not deals but we would look at who are the key women that we

wanted to get on there because we wanted to make sure that we promoted
these women to get them in the role" (Participant 005).

Finally, some women had been appointed to their positions by the organization or had

been asked to serve as a volunteer member on the administrative bodies of their

organization.

Furthermore, many of the female participants suggested that they had been

encouraged to run and supported by other board members, usually their mentors or

people in their social networks. In one case, a woman's social network initially got her

involved in sport administration from which she developed an interest in pursuing a

career at the highest level. Another woman talked about how she was 'hand picked' to sit

on the executive board because she had shown an active interest in the administrative side

of the organization and was willing to become involved on a volunteer basis. This

thought was echoed by a number of women interviewed in this study and has important

outcomes for the ways in which organizations recruit their members, particularly women.

As one woman put it:

"I don't think if I saw a call for board members I would have stepped into
the ring and I don't think it works that way" (Participant 008).

Some of these recruitment methods were reviewed by Hartmann-Tews and Combrink

(2005), ISLP and IOC (2004) and Cameron (1996) are consequently supported by the

findings of this study.

Thus, the recruitment of women into sporting leadership is particularly

meaningful because it has implications on the number of women who enter and progress

in sport administration. This also shows that potentially good leaders may not always

advance themselves for positions but are more than willing to be involved when asked to do so.

> "Well I think that umm, women sign up for things or join things or turn up for things in a different way than men do. Like…women sometimes have to be pursued and have to be identified and communicated with and told that, look there's something that you might like to try and, whereas men might just show up more and I mean I've seen that, certainly in administrative roles. I wouldn't have been involved in the international federation if a woman hadn't sought me out, I wasn't thinking gee, I'd like to be involved internationally. …that's why I say you know, maybe we have to look at doing some recruiting because it's not necessarily the best way to promote more women in the organization, just by waiting to see who shows up" (Participant 003).

3.2.2 Progression in sport administration and leadership accomplishments

During the interviews, the women were asked to describe their career path in sport administration focusing on their advancement into high level leadership positions. Equally important was their perceived leadership accomplishments in sport administration as it demonstrates success and contentment in these leadership roles. As discussed, many women started their careers as members of a sporting organization, usually the same sport in which they have competed, then taken on a Vice-Presidency or Vice-Chair position and finally, move into the top leadership positions in various organizations.

> "…I don't know whether women do it more linearly… like in terms of career path. And they need to be a bit more patient you know, whether sometimes it's stepping out to the side before you get where you need to go" (Participant 008).

The literature review did suggest that progression is often linear, meaning that sport administrators start off in small leadership roles for their local club, then move on to the provincial level, reach the national body and its executive and some proceed to the international level (Cameron, 1996; Pfister et. al, 2005). Though only one woman in this

study specifically said she had started doing sport administration at her club, the progression of female leaders in this study is very similar to that described in the literature review. For the most part, women became involved at the provincial level of their sport (90%) and progressed into leadership positions at the national level (80%) while 3 of the women were involved at the international level. Furthermore, 30% of the women were also in paid sport administration positions of which 2 were also involved in the volunteer side. Again, this advancement usually involved the women first becoming members of these organizations then moving up to the Executive level positions. The analysis showed that women followed a logical path within and between various levels of sporting organizations. Over half of the respondents mentioned that their career path seemed to be a natural progression where one position had led to the other. It is said that this natural progression allows for individuals to gain important knowledge and experience at the entry-level positions so that as they progress to the higher levels, they can understand how 'it all works together'.

> "...there's no vantage point like seeing how every piece works so when you do sit there and look around, you know it works because you've been around it, you've been in trenches and that's why you've worked your way up and you can sort of have the ability to, to be able to strategically focus on different things and draw in the best people..." (Participant 001).

This 'natural progression' was not always quick as most of the respondents described that they had all been involved in sport administration for a long period of time before attaining those top leadership positions at the provincial and national level. Essentially, women had to work their way up the organizational ladder incrementally, continuing to gain valuable knowledge and experience along the way. One woman described her strategy as:

"So I think that's always been my strategy…to establish my credibility and then…people listen to you and you can go a lot farther that way rather than coming and saying this is what we have to do, without people really knowing and trusting you. Yeah, it takes a long time but I think it works better and then you've got them on your side as well" (Participant 003).

To this end, the average length of service for the female leaders in this study was 15 years with one woman having been involved in sport administration for over 25 years, 3 for over 20 years and only 3 with 10 years experience or less. This does support data provided by Cameron (1996), Pfister et. al (2005) and the ISLP and IOC (2004) about the average length of service for female sporting leaders in various countries.

It was also found that female administrators moved into higher leadership positions in similar ways to which they entered sport administration. Women usually progressed into more important leadership roles by running for election and/or being recruited and nominated to sit on a particular board or committee. One participant in particular mentioned that her 'name' had facilitated her progress into other leadership positions because the other administrators knew who she was as a result of her athletic success. In another case, one of the respondents was 'headhunted' by a particular organization who had witnessed her success in prior administrative roles. Another woman specifically attributed her progression in sport administration to another woman who had sought her out and asked her to become involved at a higher level, saying that she had not initially thought about moving up the administrative hierarchy. All of these examples highlight the importance of social networks for those who are pursuing high level leadership positions.

"So I think a lot, I think part of that had to do with me being identified as a person, there were a few people that said you know, there's someone we'd like to get involved and you know, we have elections every 4 years and

there's lots of you know, behind the scenes negotiations and discussions going on" (Participant 005).

With respect to career paths, the participants were also asked to describe the circumstances that helped them achieve and prosper in high level leadership positions. To a certain extent, all of the women talked about the time commitment and necessary resources required for advancement in sport administration. Some of the participants also emphasized the importance of support networks, whether it be their partner or extended family and friends, in helping them reach and perform at all levels of sport administration. In addition, leadership skills such as business competency, proven success, experience and the ability to work well with men were singled out as important to advancing in sport management; skills that will be discussed in the section on leadership attributes. Finally, all of the women talked about the time commitment and necessary resources required for advancement in sport administration. Some of the participants also emphasized the importance of support networks, whether it be their partner or extended family and friends, in helping them reach and perform at all levels of sport administration. In addition, leadership skills such as business competency, proven success, experience and the ability to work well with men were singled out as important to advancing in sport management to discuss the leadership accomplishments mentioned by the female administrators in this study.

As seen, all of the female leaders reported some progress in their sport administration careers and were encouraged to describe some of their greatest accomplishments. Because all of the women had chaired a number of important committees and/or led their organizations at one time, they mentioned having been significantly involved in the decision making process of large initiatives such as

organizational mergers and the hosting of major competitions. Several others had

managed major reform within their organizations. One woman declared that:

> "...my biggest legacy I think will be in the change of the structure of the
> [organization] because I was involved so long and it was so ineffective.
> We would have these meetings once a year and we've have like 30 new
> people and a lot of them were still young and they had nothing to really
> bring to the table. So I said...we need to move this forward and I'm
> prepared...to support it's move forward and here's what we need to do.
> We need to you know, get a governance administration to work with us to
> get this set up and we need to get the following people on our committee
> with differing opinions and really draw all of that forward" (Participant
> 005).

A few women stated that they had created an innovative concept that had been

successfully implemented and praised throughout their particular sporting system. For

example, when one organization restructured their administration, this female leader, who

received a large amount of support from the members of the Executive Committee,

mandated a gender quota policy, which stated that the same number of men and women,

were to sit on the Executive Board. Since there had been considerable resistance to this

idea and she had worked very hard to convince the organization that this was important,

she believed this to be one of her greatest accomplishments. In another situation, one

woman had developed a sport policy that was currently being implemented in her

sporting organization and that organizational profits had accrued as a result of her

ingenuity. Similarly, another participant spoke of her experience in establishing the first

Women and Sport Committee of her organization as a result of the lack of women in

administrative leadership roles. Due to this hard work, she reported that more women had

been nominated and elected within the governance structure than ever before.

For those women who had entered sporting leadership as a result of being an

athlete representative, many believed that they had been able to effectively integrate the

athlete's perspective within their boards and felt that this was an important achievement for sport administration. One woman worked to improve the athlete's representation in governance structure stating:

> "...if I am the proudest of anything thus far that I've done...and maybe appreciated by myself and a few athletes who truly understand the value of this, and that is that we went from...a partially elected board to a completely elected board and the only way you can do that is by completely cutting out the representative model. And if everyone was elected, than everyone was elected and there were no appointed people in it" (Participant 010).

The importance of this achievement is that athlete's were able to take on a much more influential role within the organization. Overall, the women had been involved in a number of important decisions and had actively participated in major projects and reforms within their sporting organizations.

Throughout their careers, all of the women experienced successes and some were formally recognized through trophies and awards. Half of the women had won a prestigious award for their work in sport administration. Some were honoured for their leadership skills and accomplishments while others were for their dedication to sport and their contributions in the management of these organizations. One woman specifically regarded her award as remarkable because she had been the only woman nominated and was 'up against all men'. All of the women were thus successful in sport administration and had accomplished some important feats throughout their careers. On the whole, although the women's career paths were quite similar, each of them recounted a particular story and emphasized various factors that contributed to their success in high level sporting leadership.

3.2.3 <u>Limits to progression and participants' future aspirations</u>

During the interviews, the female participants were asked to discuss their extent of their current involvement as well as any future aspirations in sport administration. As mentioned, it was found that 80% of the female leaders interviewed were retired athletes though some had retired more recently than others had while two women were still actively competing at a very high level. Though these women in particular had reduced their sport administration workload in order to focus on making the national team, both did remain associated to the organization in a limited capacity. Half of the women interviewed were still very involved in high level sport administration however few had clear aspirations to progress to top leadership positions at the national and international level. This fact is very significant as it demonstrates that many female administrators enter sporting leadership without clear intentionality to progress into the top leadership positions. Other female respondents said that they had worked very hard in order to prove themselves and gain enough membership support to access the Executive level of the organization. One woman claimed:

> "...I'm still growing, there's still lots more I want to do. So, I'm not done yet" (Participant 001).

This is in accordance with Cameron (1996) and the ISLP and IOC's (2004) observations that few women admit to actually aspire to the top leadership positions in sport administration. On the other hand, another woman mentioned that she had 'no desire to be leader of all organizations' and was not pursuing higher leadership positions, though she did say that if an opportunity came up, she would consider it. Similarly, another participant said she chose to end her progression at the national level even though she

was offered positions at the international level because she did not want to leave these commitments.

It is also important to discuss the fact that four women had stepped down from their last positions or retired from sport administration saying they had been involved for a long time and wanted to focus on their careers, their families or their personal interests. For example, one woman mentioned that she wanted to continue working with athletes on marketing their portfolios and with their public speaking. Another woman specifically said that she wanted to stay involved in coaching while two other respondents had taken on paid leadership positions outside of sport. Many of them also stated that they wanted to see 'new blood' on the committees and hopefully new perspectives which is a clear indication that the female leaders wanted diversity at the governance level. One woman talked about her frustrations in sporting leadership and pointed to the lack of appreciation for the volunteers 'time and other responsibilities. Nonetheless, all of the women were involved in sport leadership to various extents and continued to help their sporting organizations in various ways. The fact that they did not just 'step into obscurity' after retirement from sport administration is indicative of the dedication and passion they bring to their work. They felt it was important to share their wealth of knowledge and experience with young people aspiring to sport leadership therefore many female administrators had been mentors. The factors which led women to leave the organization will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 dealing with barriers.

3.2.4 Concluding thoughts

> "...women who have risen to that top are those who have made a career of sport and so they have this sport experience and the sport background umm, and the knowledge to rise to the top because it's been their career path..." (Participant 006).

There is every indication that volunteer work for women in high level sporting leadership is inextricably tied to their familial, educational, professional, athletic and vocational lives. All of these components seemed to play an important role in both the level and degree of the women's involvement in sport leadership. The familial background provided insight into the initiation of women to involvement in volunteer work. The educational and professional backgrounds of the female leaders exposed the personal circumstances that were advantageous for individuals seeking positions in high level sporting leadership. More importantly, the women's athletic background was found to be an important factor in reaching executive level leadership positions within sporting organizations because it was perceived that they had credibility, experience and oftentimes, a high profile. In addition, each participant discussed numerous aspects of their sport administration background that led to their entry and progression in sporting leadership and the qualities that were deemed necessary to advance in sport administration. The analysis also revealed that many women had virtually progressed in the same manner, many of them beginning at a young age and starting as athlete's representatives or on provincial executive boards, taking on larger and larger roles in sport administration. The knowledge and experience gained allowed some of them access top leadership positions at the national and international level. Finally, female administrators talked about their many leadership accomplishments and some revealed that they had won awards or been recognized for their work in sport administration. For these reasons, career paths should be a strong area of interest for those who are trying to understand and establish policy concerning women in sport.

3.3 LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

It is evident that an analysis of the career paths of women in sporting leadership is essential for understanding the circumstances under which women enter and progress in sport administration. It is also important to further discuss their leadership involvement as it pertains to the leadership skills and styles that the respondents perceived to be necessary or advantageous for sport administrators. First, women were asked to talk about the leadership skills that have been essential to their progression and success in high level sport leadership as well as those they believed were present in other sporting leaders.

3.3.1 Leadership Skills

As mentioned, all of the women interviewed in this study had a minimum of 10 years of experience in sport administration while others had up to 25 years therefore it is evident that these women had accumulated enough experience and credibility to be in the top leadership positions. During this time, they amassed a number of leadership skills both in their professional and sport management work that were beneficial to their sport administration careers. For this reason, the women were encouraged to discuss the various skills that they believed were required for sport administrators to be successful at the highest levels. Four main themes emerged.

3.3.1.1 Individual characteristics

During the interviews, the women addressed the personal attributes that they perceived allowed them to be successful in sport administration. Though each woman described various personal leadership skills that they believed were important to their sport administration work, some individual characteristics were repeatedly mentioned

thereby highlighting the attributes particularly meaningful for sporting leaders. First, competency was identified as a crucial aspect of leadership. All of the women talked about understanding the governance structure and having the 'tools' to perform successfully in their positions. Often, the participants pointed to their experiences as athletes, coaches and administrators for having provided them with an understanding of high level sport and the skills required to be successful. Equally important, some women explained that their self-confidence and positive attitudes had given them the courage to take on various projects and challenge themselves in sport administration. In leadership positions, several women mentioned the importance of actively sharing opinions and viewpoints within the organization and thus, getting involved in the decision making process.

Furthermore, almost every woman believed that self-presentation and an aptitude for public speaking were essential for sport administrators. In order to be successful, women needed to be able to effectively articulate their ideas and perspectives to other leaders, administrators and athletes. As one woman summarized:

> "...you have to be umm, in my opinion ...a good public speaker, you have to be able to present ideas strongly and effectively and to be comfortable networking with people...because nobody can have an opinion prevail on its own. You need a critical mass behind it to drive it forward. So I need to get you on side and you on side...which means sitting down with you and discussing with you the merits of my idea; that all involves speaking. And, and I have yet to find a really high level successful administrator who cannot project themselves well" (Participant 006).

All of these personal qualities were thus advantageous for women entering high level leadership positions within any sporting organization. The literature review showed that women had a diverse skill set which made them eligible and competent for leadership positions in sport administration, some of which were also reported in this

study. For this reason, the findings both confirm and further our understandings of leadership in sporting organizations.

3.3.1.2 **Administrative skills and broad perspectives**

It is evident that administrative skills are necessary for anyone involved in sport administration. Many women stated that a combination of understanding the governance structure of the sporting system as well as possessing the organizational, administrative and time management skills were required to perform successfully in their positions. The ability to have a vision, set goals and focus on the task at hand were believed to be important for sporting leaders because they set the agenda of the organization and ensured its realization. In addition, strategic planning and thinking as well as risk management and problem solving were also said to be vital skills for successful sporting leaders. A few women commented that business management skills such as marketing, corporate sponsorship and an understanding of politics provided a useful background for bringing innovative approaches to sport administration. Almost all of the participants had enrolled in various kinds of leadership courses or attended conferences to gain other skills pertinent to sport administration. Thus, these administrative skills afforded women with the necessary technical skills to do the job.

Most sport administrators were also found to be qualified in a number of important areas and bring this expertise to their leadership positions. As mentioned, women highlighted the importance of their various backgrounds in their initial interest in sport; their family, education, professional and athletic background were critical elements that influenced their access and progression in sport administration. In particular, those with professional backgrounds such as accounting, law and business administration

seemed to have a unique understanding of sport and insight into some of the issues. Similarly, the athletic and coaching background of some respondents provided them with a broad perspective of the issues. Many women believed they brought 'big picture thinking' to the boardroom table as a result of these backgrounds. In addition, those who were involved with more than one sporting organization or committee were perceived to have a better understanding of the ways in which decisions could impact other areas of sport as well as the probable outcomes of these choices. This broad perspective was believed to lead administrators to make informed decisions as they could see various sides of the issue and not just the interests of their particular sport. These different viewpoints are then reflected in the decisions taken on the administrative side of sport. These findings are not surprising as they are almost identical to those reported by Pfister et. al (2005), Cameron (1996), Hovden (2000a, 2000b) and the ISLP and IOC (2004).

3.3.1.3 Commitment and Advocacy

Women also talked about the level of commitment required for sport leadership and communicated their dedication to sport and its administration. Sport administrators are required to attend numerous meetings and thus, spend a lot of time preparing and working. Furthermore, some respondents were simultaneously involved in various committees and talked about the heavy workload associated with these responsibilities. In addition, the fact that many of these sport administration positions are volunteer shows that individuals who fill them are committed.

As previously mentioned, most female leaders with an athletic background remarked that they wanted to give something back to sport, particularly the sport in which they had been involved, by working at the technical and administrative level. This

supports the findings of Pfister et. al's (2005) study on women in German sporting organizations. Interestingly, almost all of the women talked about their involvement in sport administration as advocacy work and discussed their perceived role as change agents in these organizations. As discussed, some of the participants entered sport administration with the intention of reforming the sporting system for the better and changing the current functioning of the overall administration. Many of them were thus proponents for the 'softer' side of sport, advocating for issues such as drug-free sport, women in sport, athlete's rights and sport for the disable, to name a few. One woman described it as:

> "…you try to do something that comes back and allows you to profile, to start to talk about issues, to start to talk about values, to start to talk about the other things that you really want to so that you end up having a better sport system and one that's held a little more accountable to the social values of the country" (Participant 002).

On the whole, the women's commitment to advocacy seemed to be an integral part of their involvement in sporting leadership and a particular strength they brought to the boardroom table confirming previous research in this area.

3.3.1.4 Networking

During the interviews, women frequently spoke of the critical role that social networks played in their sport administration career and of the importance of leaders possessing this skill. Building relationships with both men and women inside and outside of the organization is a critical aspect as high level sport is now inextricably linked to business and sponsorship. For this reason, it is necessary for leaders to establish relationships with a number of potential sponsors and constituents that can help move initiatives forward. This is understandable as MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) did find that

the entire Canadian sporting system had undergone a transformation from volunteer-based administration to the professionalization and commercialization of its governance structures.

In addition, top leaders need to gather votes and rally support from other members for initiatives they believe are important. Moreover, almost all of the women believed that relationships with members in their social network allowed leaders to share information and receive input about some of their ideas. In a sense, women could use other sporting leaders as both a sounding board and support system. Several women also mentioned that they made it a point to introduce themselves to other members at meetings and forge friendships with key people in the organization, particularly men because they still hold most of the influential positions in sport administration. To this end, one woman emphasized the importance of having members be familiar with you stating that "it's not who *you* know but *who* knows you" (Participant 004). Indeed, these connections also provided leaders with a network from which to recruit and recommend other administrators for various positions. In some cases, women's entrance and progression in sport administration were directly influenced by their networks. This supports what Hovden (2000a, 2000b), the ISLP and IOC (2004) and MacIntosh and Whitson (1990) reported with respect to the significance of social networks in providing access and support to women in sporting leadership. One particular aspect of high level sporting leadership was underscored by 70% the women; the ability to interact and network with the male administrators who populated most of the leadership posts in sport administration. Many women believed that organizations were still very androcentric and that female leaders had to be comfortable in this masculine environment.

Finally, the women also talked about the ways in which networks were developed. Attending conferences was repeatedly mentioned as a strategic method used to meet other people in sport administration and scan for other potential leaders for their organization.

> "…some things like going to sporting events, going to networking meetings, going to seminars, going to workshops, attending conferences all over the place; I mean understanding how the sport organization works, meeting the leaders of these sports and how they work you know, what they need…you have to stay connected to them and I think that that has really helped me" (Participant 001).

Nevertheless, it seems that social networks played a crucial role in the women's entry and advancement in sport leadership.

3.3.2 Leadership Styles

The female respondents in this study not only talked about the skills required to be successful in high level sporting leadership but of the various approaches they had used to manage their careers. Consistent with their commitment and advocacy, several women talked about ensuring that ethics were respected and incorporated in their decision making which they believed allowed them to make justifiable decisions for sport. One of the participants described that:

> "…it is your values that define you as a person and so you can't waiver from what it is that you believe in. And so, sometimes that means you either have to make the unpopular decision and you have to walk away because otherwise what do you stand for? And so umm, and that's, that's a hard one you know, as a leader…" (Participant 009).

Many of the women also talked about 'leading by example'. They felt that by performing successfully and demonstrating strong leadership qualities, they would be role models for all leaders succeeding them, especially female administrators. One woman mentioned that leaders only have their reputation in the sport administration world and therefore must ensure they make sound decisions. Furthermore, a few of the

women described themselves as empowering leaders suggesting that they liked to extend their power and influence to other members by involving them in the decision making process. For example, one woman asserted that she was more successful when she included the input of her opponents in business proposals and initiatives. Often times, women reported mentoring other prospering leaders, sharing valuable knowledge and experience which empowered the apprentice. Similarly, a few female leaders mentioned that they did not 'micro manage' their employees but instead allowed them to perform their duties independently. It is therefore evident that most women's approaches to leadership seemed to be linked to cooperation and empowerment which supports the information provided by Cameron (1996) and McKay (1997).

Nonetheless, the hegemonic masculine culture of sporting leadership means that both men and women have been compelled to adopt a specific type of leadership style, typically one based on the masculine values of aggression, competition and autocracy. The women in this study did say that they believed there was a difference between the leadership styles of male and female leaders in sport. Several examples of this were provided in the discussions. For example, one woman perceived that men worried about the financial aspect of the administration such as cost effectiveness and investments while women seemed to be more concerned with the philanthropic and ethical position of the organization. Men were also seen to be strategic and logical in their thinking while women were more detail oriented which according to them, made the entire governing body run more smoothly. Another woman mentioned that she was told that she had to learn to be less emotional in her leadership approaches as this was perceived to be a sign of weakness by men in the organization. Furthermore, some women explained that high

level male administrators tended to manage in a hierarchical manner believing the organization should be 'ruled from the top down'. On the other hand, several female participants stated that they used the 'bottom up' approach and encouraged junior members to take on leadership roles in the organization. As one woman put it:

> "...the men, and they still do to this today, a hierarchy. They rule from the top down. Women manage like a web. And I thought like yeah, you're just sort of equal...yeah, like a web. And I thought: 'that's my style'. ...you surround yourself with the best people, and you let them do their job. You motivate them, you inspire them, you assist them...in any way that you can to help them do their job. And that was sort of, I guess, my style and umm, luckily it seemed to work" (Participant 004).

Though these are generalizations, these leadership styles do complement each other and have the potential to be very effective however they are not necessarily related to gender. As one of the women characterized her Executive Committee:

> "...I say that we're the blue suits and track suits. I think that our board needs to be blue suits and track suits because the blue suits give me the business advice I need and the track suits keep you honest as to why you're here at all" (Participant 009).

In this sense, executive boards that have a diversity of perspectives allow the sporting organization to be creative and progressive in its thinking and planning. However, there are as many similarities as there are differences between generalized male and female leadership styles and Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) warn that:

> "The problem has been (and continues to be) that one leadership style has been institutionalized and rewarded" (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, 1995, p.187).

3.3.3 Conclusions

It is obvious that women have had extensive involvement in sport leadership and have been successful in a number of areas. The women in this study had wide-ranging experience in sport administration and many had held top leadership positions such as

Chair/President and Vice-Chair/Vice-President in regional, national and international sporting organizations. The interviews investigated the leadership skills believed to be advantageous to female leaders. It was found that administrative qualities such as organizational and management skills were required for sport administrators while their professional background was significant in providing expertise to the Executive Board. Individual characteristics such as competency, self-presentation and public speaking were perceived to be indispensable for those who wanted to take on the top leadership roles of the organization. Similarly, networking was shown to be a critical skill in sport leadership because administration requires intense group work and relationship building. In addition, membership support was needed for personal support, to share information and to gain access to leadership positions. During the interviews, the participants also discussed their various approaches to leadership and how these often differed from those of men in sport administration. It was noted that building good relationships with male colleagues was necessary for those women attempting to progress into the higher echelons of sporting organizations as men still held most key positions and organizations operated in a masculine leadership paradigm. Lastly, the women also described their leadership styles as empowering other members around them, particularly women, by sharing valuable knowledge and experiences with them.

4.0 CHAPTER 4 – BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ENTRY AND PROGRESSION IN CANADIAN SPORT ADMINISTRATION

What are some of the barriers that have hindered women's entry and progression in sport administration?

This chapter focuses solely on some of the difficulties women face when entering and progressing in sporting leadership. As discussed in previous chapters, sport administration is in many ways similar to operating a business; members need to possess specific leadership skills and access the top decision making positions in order to effect change and move sport forward. This shift has also brought about a change in the barriers that affect female sport administrators. Throughout the interviews, women discussed their perceptions of barriers and how these and affected their career, if at all.

4.1 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Based on Pfister et. al's (2005) interpretation, barriers at the individual level relate to the administrators' motives and decisions to enter and progress in sport leadership. In addition, this section also refers to the individual's competences and conditions of life.

4.1.1 "Gender is no longer an issue in sport administration...": the invisible barriers and the effect of gender on entry in sporting leadership

During the interviews, the women were asked to discuss their experiences as high level sporting leaders and the obstacles they may have faced in reaching these leadership positions throughout their career. Some women said that many people in sport administration believed that the issues of women and sport had been resolved as a result of the increase in opportunities for women at all levels as evidenced by the recent increase of female participation rates and slight increase of women coaches and sport administrators. 3 respondents maintained that they had personally never faced any

barriers or they were unaware of any difficulty progressing in sporting leadership. One

woman acknowledged that barriers did exist but believed that the only potential barriers

were psychological:

> "...there are barriers out there, I know there are but to me it's, it's
> psychological; it's, if there are barriers, I don't see them which I think is a
> positive. So there are barriers, I know there are umm, and I guess there
> have been barriers for me but I've never noticed them. So my belief is the
> only barriers we have are limited by what we think our barriers are right"
> (Participant 004).

She believed that her self-confidence and skills had allowed her to work through any

obstacles and achieve high level sporting leadership positions. One female respondent

asserted that the 'scariest' female leaders were those who believed that because they had

been able to make it to high level leadership positions, any other woman or individual

with the requisite qualifications could also access leadership positions in sport

administration. The lack of acknowledgement for the many obstacles that do exist for

some women does act as a barrier because women in sport initiatives need to be

supported by sport administrators in order to be implemented. Interestingly, one woman

commented that change could take place quite quickly if all members were on board with

the initiative, refuting the notion that only with time will women enter high level

leadership positions in greater numbers. She recounted that her administration had been

able to significantly increase their francophone membership in the governance structures

by nominating and selecting such representatives at the following elections. This

therefore demonstrates that organizations are very capable of realizing gender and

diversity initiatives if they focus their effort and resources on accomplishing that task.

Furthermore, the fact that some female leaders believed there were no barriers because they had been able to access top leadership positions and challenges the notion that women are representative of the 'female gender'.

Most women did not perceive that they had accessed sporting leadership on account of being a woman but that it was their skills that had gotten them elected or nominated to leadership positions in sport administration. Evidently, every member would like to be taken seriously and believe they are there because of their skills and not their gender. However, one woman did mention that she was first recruited in her sporting organization because they needed a woman but that she had had to prove herself and demonstrate high-quality leadership skills in order to remain and progress in her position. To this effect, one woman said:

> "I always think...that being a woman or being an athlete or being black you know, being a minority...these might be the sort of things that might get you in the door eventually but it's your hard work; it's your commitment; it's what you really contribute that keeps you in the door. [you] never want to feel that, in any position, I'm in as a result of or just because of those visible things. ...certainly I think we can never be complacent again..." (Participant 001).

For this reason, some female respondents believed that gender was not an issue anymore; it was really about getting the best people for the positions. It was widely perceived that sporting leaders should be highly qualified and connected and that this was more important than the gender of this individual. As one woman put it:

> "So there's still work to do internationally and in Canada too in some areas but I think we're, it's all, it's accepted now that this is what we do and these are the issues and how we're dealing with them. And let's say in sport, it's just, it's not even a question anymore, so that's great" (Participant 003).

What is problematic with this statement is that it questions the entire role and validity of Women in Sport Committees and the women and sport movement. If we agree that the problem of female under-representation in sport administration is resolved then strong policy initiatives will not be developed and the remaining barriers will not be challenged. All that will be left to do is promote the participation of women as athletes, coaches and sport administrators. For instance, one woman revealed that her organization's Women and Sport Committee had recently stopped providing a list of female candidates to the selection committee and at the following elections; significantly fewer women had been voted into the organization and few filled the top leadership positions. This underscores the fact that the problem is not resolved and that efforts must be sustained to ensure that women are entering and progressing in sporting leadership.

If there is a widespread notion that no barriers remain for women attempting to forge careers in sport administration then their under-representation will continue to be viewed as the individual problem of the women and no measures at the organizational level will be put in place. Unfortunately, this may also mean that these female leaders are less likely to mentor or recruit specifically women and will not be active proponents of women in sport initiatives at the highest level in sport, where it may very well be needed the most. This argument has not been evident in the literature on women in sporting leadership. McKay (1997) did find that men were more likely to associate barriers to women's individual characteristics however there is no mention that administrators did not perceive any barriers at all in their career path in sport administration.

4.1.2 "Involvement in sport administration is a personal choice...": volunteerism as a barrier

As mentioned, many female respondents acknowledged that some impediments did exist for some leaders with respect to entry and progression in sport administration but it was generally perceived that involvement in sport leadership was a 'personal choice', especially in volunteer positions. Most of the positions in Canadian sport administration are volunteer and though members may receive some remuneration for airfare and accommodations, there is little or no direct financial gain from its involvement. The women in this study emphasized that individuals pursuing top leadership positions were required to commit extensive amounts of their time in order to gain the skills, experience and network to access those positions. As has been repeatedly found in this and other studies, the time commitment, particularly in the higher levels of sport administration, is enormous in addition to the extensive traveling requirements of leadership positions. Concomitantly, this time commitment also consists of a significant financial commitment as leaders must take time off work, pay for childcare and at times, forward the funds for travel and accommodation fees.

> "...there are volunteers out there that are willing to give up their vacation pay to do it. You know so, or miss a day of pay or whatever. I mean it costs you to be a volunteer. It costs you big time. You know, you get your expenses paid if I remember to send in my receipts which I hate to do you know, so it costs, it can cost thousands of dollars a year to volunteer. And it does and that's not even just around time" (Participant 004).

Because most female sport administrators also had full time professional employment, they needed to take time off which often meant that they would not be paid. Generally speaking, boards held between 6-8 meetings per year or held monthly meetings, depending on the level of the organization (i.e. regional, provincial, national or international) and the importance of the committee. If an individual is involved in a

number of committees, the time commitment becomes greater and requires them to be away from home for birthdays, anniversaries as well as children and family events.

The volunteer aspect of sport administration elicited various reactions by the women in this study. Two women specifically talked about the difficulty of having people sign up for leadership positions within sporting organizations because they would not be receiving pay for this commitment and could not afford the time. Conversely, another women perceived that many people were willing to be involved in sport leadership and had the time to devote though often did not possess the proper qualifications to be fill the role successfully. Moreover, a number of female respondents perceived that many professionals did not view this work as credible because they were not being paid to do the job. One woman's words show this:

> "...I think sometimes what happens is because you're, you are a volunteer, people might not think that you understand or that you comprehend it but the President of the IOC is a volunteer umm, just about every single sport leader that I know in the world...90% of them are volunteers. ...I think at the end of the day it's umm, you know, people never underestimating people just because they're not making money. I think so many times in life, not just in sport, you, we often tend to define people by how much money they make. Well, they make a lot of money so they must know what they're doing" (Participant 001).

In a sense then, volunteer sport administration was considered by some women to provide them with individual rewards.

On the other hand, some women believed that there was a positive side to the fact that sporting administration was mostly volunteer based. These respondents believed that volunteer sporting organizations tended to attract individuals who really cared about sport as there was no financial gain to be made from its involvement. This however does not necessarily apply to high performance sporting organizations at the provincial, national

and international levels whose budgets are immense and leadership positions comprise a large amount of power and influence. As a final point, one woman suggested that volunteer-based sporting organizations might need to rethink this model in light of the increasing commercialization and professionalization of the high performance sporting system. Inglis' (1997) study of administrators in Canadian volunteer sporting organizations concluded:

> "In the...national amateur sport organizations, there has been a noteworthy shift during the past two decades from volunteer-run 'kitchen table operations' to the replacement of volunteer management with professional managers operating in a highly rational, bureaucratic style" (p.160).

In conclusion, it is important to highlight that many respondents believed that volunteer sport administrators chose to commit their time and resources to this endeavour, without acknowledging that these 'choices' are often constrained by various personal commitments. An individual must have the means to become involved in sporting leadership as it requires them to spend many weekends out of town at competition, meetings and conferences away from both personal and professional responsibilities. In addition, this also means that individuals take on a great deal of work over that of their usual full-time employment as was found in Cameron (1996) and Pfister et. al's (2005) studies. These roles become more intense as they move up the organizational hierarchy therefore high performance sport can be a very demanding from an administrative point of view. For this reason, there are many individuals who possess the skills to be great administrators but do not have the means to take on such enormous commitments. There needs to be an understanding that personal choices are guided by personal reality since some individual's are not in a financial or personal situation to

volunteer or work in sport administration, especially at the higher levels. Again, if sport administrators do not recognize that the volunteer aspect of sport administration could be difficult for many individuals, there will be no effort to enable such potential leaders to access leadership positions.

4.1.3 <u>The importance of support networks and their role as a barrier to women in sport administration</u>

In order to be successful at the higher levels of sport administration, individuals must have various sources of support. Support networks are a major factor in women's decisions to enter and/or progress in sporting leadership and even more so for women with young families. They include immediate and extended family as well as friends, colleagues, hired help and daycare. Though this list is far from exhaustive and support can extend from a number of sources to the individual, these do represent the necessary assistance for individuals to devote their time and resources to volunteer sport administration.

As mentioned when profiling the participants of this study, almost all of the women specifically mentioned having a partner and/or family in their lives that provided the support they needed to be involved in sporting leadership. For example, one woman reported that she and her husband had taken maternity (paternity) leaves so that both could be involved in the raising of their family yet both be very active in their careers. In another case, she explained that her husband had worked from home and it was he who had stayed home to care for the children. It should be noted that several women mentioned that female leaders who reached positions in high level sport administration often had children who were old enough to be independent which indeed, afforded them

more time to dedicate to sport administration. Another woman expressed gratitude for the help her husband provided with the children but had also hired a nanny to help with the household responsibilities. Also of interest was the fact that two of the participants implied that many marriages of sporting leaders had failed as a result of the time commitment required and/or the fact that out-of-town competitions, meetings and conferences were mixed and not all partners were comfortable with that.

> "...the major barrier is being able to umm, find the flexibility that will allow you to lead a balanced life. Sport administration, I'm one of a handful of women that have actually raised kids and stayed married, [that is women] that are in sport administration. It just isn't compatible" (Participant 009).

This is also indicative of the socio-economic background of women in high level sporting leadership as many could afford to hire outside help which provided them the time to do their sport administration work.

Of the women interviewed for this study, six of them had children; some with young families while others had adult children and even grandkids. When asked how she balanced her sport administration work, her career and her family, one woman retorted that it was impossible to balance; it was more like juggling. Some women had reduced their level of involvement in sport administration after they began having children. It is understandable that they take time away from their volunteer work when they are young mothers. What is problematic however, it is the fact that many are not returning because they cannot meet the demands of sport administration and provide for their families. One woman summed it up:

> "if you look at women in positions of power, I always notice that very few women have children you know. And the ones that do, you have to wonder how they do that. ...they've got it you know, that they can go away for weeks and months and...fine, but women aren't going to do that.

I mean...it's too big a cost and...some might have too much guilt so you get some [female leaders] that don't have kids; and do you want a profession that only has women who don't have kids...They need to come up with something else...we've talked a lot about team coaching and [about] kids coming or not coming. People want to do it differently and I guess that's the other thing, there needs to be a whole array of ways" (Participant 008).

This confirms Cameron's (1996) observations that family responsibilities were considered a major barrier to women forging careers in sport administration. Though only four women in this study had no children, most acknowledged that this had played a role in their choice to pursue a career in sport administration. One woman describes her experience:

"...there were a couple of years where I was thinking whoa, this is too much; where I had a meeting every night. But I don't have any kids, if I had kids umm, I wouldn't have volunteered for those things because you, there's no way I'd want to be away from them...So I think that makes a big difference, I know umm, that there are a lot of women umm, in sport administration who don't have children, I mean I would say it's probably half and half but there are women, I think they have time you know, so I think it's easier for them. But I think it's tough but people do it and they do it in a certain way. I'm sure it would all work out it's just; I probably wouldn't have done as many. Yeah I would have just focused on one..." (Participant 003).

In contrast, six respondents referred to the notion that male administrators had stay at home wives who looked after the household and children who provided them with the time and independence to pursue sport administration at a high level. One woman disclosed that the men in her organization didn't understand the sacrifices that some women had to make to remain involved with the sporting organization. She says:

"...I think a lot of the men just don't even consider and I'm talking even in the administration, this is why I'm kind of getting frustrated with [my organization], they just don't appreciate the other lives and responsibilities we have" (Participant 005).

Generally speaking, all of the female respondents had some degree of support which allowed them to be involved in sporting leadership and thus affirm the importance of support networks to any successful leadership career. Consequently, female leaders who do not have sufficient support remain unable to commit to high level sporting leadership. These negative experiences can also lead to women leaving sport administration as a result of their frustrations. This supports almost all of the literature which found that a lack of sensitivity and flexibility on the part of the organization towards women's personal and familial responsibilities caused a number of women to 'drop out' (McKay, 1997; Pfister et. al, 2005; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Cameron, 1996; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1991).

4.1.4 Women's Individual Characteristics

As presented in the previous chapter, many leadership skills were believed to be essential for women to successfully enter and progress in high level sporting leadership. Likewise, these also work to exclude specific types of leaders which have typically been women. The barrier that was most frequently mentioned among respondents was that some female leaders were not able to present themselves for positions as well as the men. They were perceived to lack self–confidence in applying and expanding into more influential leadership positions. As one woman put it:

> "…this is a generalization but just my perspective is that some of the woman were not as good at presenting themselves as the men and you know, when it's that close and everyone is qualified, if you're not going to present yourself professionally…you're not going to get the votes" (Participant 007).

Self-presentation was viewed as a key asset in accessing sporting leadership positions because successful leaders were perceived to be great public speakers who could

effectively present their ideas and the organization's overall message. Self-presentation also includes excellent communication skills which was beneficial for networking and relationship building. These findings are clearly supported by Pfister et. al's (2005) study which indicated that female leaders did not apply for leadership positions in sport administration because they did not believe they had the necessary qualifications to be chosen and therefore, lacked confidence in themselves.

Moreover, several of the participants pointed out that women were perceived to 'avoid conflict' within the organization and for this reason, may be less suited for top leadership positions whose responsibilities include conflict resolution and personnel management. One participant noted that often, female leaders would retreat when confronted with 'strongly voiced opinions' and thus, their thoughts were not effectively integrated into the discussions. One woman argued that personal resolve was a major factor in women's decisions to take on leadership roles in sport administration. Though the literature pointed to women's lack of qualifications and experience as the main cause of their under-representation in sport leadership, these female respondents believed that there were a few personality traits in female leaders that hindered their opportunities to participate in sport leadership but that the biggest barriers were present at the organizational level.

4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

At the organizational level, several factors were found to hinder women's opportunities in sport administration. The barriers involve the culture, the positions and the policies within the organization.

4.2.1 Organizational structure

Research has attempted to show that the greatest barriers for women in sporting leadership seem to exist in the current structure of most sporting organizations. The professionalization of sporting organizations has also generated a change in the governance model where administrators have been replaced by professional experts in business administration. In one instance, a woman recounted that she had had to fire a volunteer administrator because that individual was not performing successfully in their leadership positions. This has also meant that positions are now being filled by professional individuals; an arena where there are also less female candidates.

Nearly all of the women spoke of the complexity of being involved on a large board. The positive side they believed is that there are more positions available for women to gain entry and experience in high level sport leadership. However, in the larger organizations where there can be anywhere from 50 to 150 members, it can be difficult to gain the necessary support to institute change, particularly with regard to the actual governance structure. Several women in this study had been involved in the restructuring of their organizations and spoke of their experience convincing members to vote themselves out of a position as the aim was to reduce the number of members on the executive so that it could work more efficiently.

> "So I think that [the] governance model still needs some work and when you have a governance model where you have a [large] board...and therefore it seems to be democratic because everybody has a say, it's very hard to roll it back..., people think you're taking something away" (Participant 009).

Another challenge with large boards that was repeatedly mentioned is that the huge membership makes it intimidating for members to stand up and express themselves in front of the board, particularly when it comes to putting their name forward for

nomination. One woman noted that in some organizations, the voting in of the members is done publicly so that everyone can see how many votes each member received. This is problematic as it is potentially embarrassing for those who do not accumulate many votes and may deter them from running again for membership. It seems that this may be more detrimental for women because female administrators have been recognized to lack self confidence and thus, many are already hesitant to present themselves to the board for nomination. In addition, since most of the membership is male, it can be less intimidating for men to introduce themselves to the board than for female leaders. In this sense, smaller boards could provide a more comfortable environment for some men and women to assert interest and voice their opinion.

Several women discussed the lack of leadership training provided for administrators by the sporting organization. It seems that many new members were not prepared and did not possess all of the necessary skills required to be successful in their leadership role, particularly in volunteer sporting organizations. One woman noted that many administrators who had come up by virtue of their athletic or coaching background understood well the sport aspect. Some however, did not possess the proper management skills to do the work and make decisions broad in scope. Without this additional training, they were forced to learn by 'trial and error' which one woman described as 'unproductive leadership'.

Organizational rules and policies also have a great impact on the individuals involved in sport administration as well those who choose not to participate. First, the Canadian sporting system has taken the direction of high performance sport where programs are started at the grassroots level in order to identify talent at a young age.

"...so there's that whole shift from...a system that has been based on a state run system versus umm, the business model where people pay for quality programs" (Participant 009).

Some of the women mentioned that in the past, lessons were free at local swimming pools and equipment was provided so that children could learn basic sporting skills at little or no cost. However, the recreation system is now geared toward middle to upper classes families as prices for registration, equipment and lessons have risen significantly, leaving many kids unable to participate in grassroots sport. If these individuals are not able to participate in sport at a young age, then they are most likely not going to be involved in sport administration as they get older. Again, this could potentially have adverse effects on organizational diversity as statistics show that visible minorities make up a large part of the lower socio-economic class and therefore are also under-represented in sport and its administration. One participant put it this way:

"...the kids are encouraged to be involved in sport all across the board and I would think once that, if that could happen, more children will move up through the system and become adults who are still involved in sport. But that's a long and slow process" (Participant 007).

In this way, the organizational structure impacts the diversity of membership.

Second, another woman explained this choice as one woman were just not willing to make. She explained:

"...if I was a single woman...I would have probably gone right up the ranks and [be]...actually running the show. It really doesn't interest me. ...like there's only a few women, even in the corporate world...that rise to the top. And you what, I don't think we want to work 120 hours a week. Like, I don't want to work 120 hours a week for, you couldn't pay me ½ a million dollars to work 120 hours a week, seven days a week like most men have to do. I'd just rather, I'd rather have more balance in my life" (Participant 004).

In this way, she believed that some women simply were not going to give up their families and personal lives for a career they felt was not particularly rewarding. It is therefore evident that despite inroads made by female leaders, it is perceived that many women do not aspire to 'that level of leadership'. She states to this effect:

> "…women are much more cautious so and then they get smaller organizations that are then umm, responsible for, less powerful in the structure and less budgets and you know, …and so then they don't get into the sort of, the echelons of power broking …" (Participant 008).

Every organization has its chartered rules which members are supposed to follow; rules which can sometimes affect organizational membership in subtle ways. For example, one woman talked about refusing to join an organization because it forced its female members to wear 'skirts and blazers'.

> "…they've got a lot of rules that I just think I don't know whether…we have to have them, I don't know if we have to have as many rules as they do…. They might like the work but the way you've structured it, absolutely not suitable to their lifestyle. So then they're forced; it's the subtext. They're making a decision like I did, on the polyester suit. Not a chance. I ain't going nowhere in a polyester skirt. So therefore you've done it, and I didn't tell [them] that, [they] didn't have any idea but I'll tell you right now, you've set it up poorly for women" (Participant 008).

Moreover, the organizational structure dictates the length of time members can serve in their position. Many organizations allow members to remain for long periods of time which usually means that many of the top leadership positions are filled by the same people. According to some participants, there wasn't enough turn-over in the organization, particularly in important leadership positions and therefore there was no 'new blood' replacing them. Since men hold most of the leadership positions in sport administration, women are not gaining representation in large numbers. On the other hand, it is important to note that a few women did discuss the negative impact of having

too much turn over in the organization because new members were not informed about the initiatives being discussed. This meant that issues had to be reviewed yearly. One respondent commented that this was particularly problematic for low priority committees saying:

> "… we met once a year, there was a big turnover each year so we had new faces, which was great to get people involved but it wasn't really effective" (Participant 007).

These point to the organizational structure, which sets the rules, as influencing those who applied for sporting leadership positions and more importantly, almost all of the women perceived that it was very difficult to institute rule changes.

Finally, governing bodies establish a number of committees to help them manage the organization. These range from a financial committee to strategic planning, fundraising to team selection as well as nominations and women in sport, to name a few. Some committees are crucial to the adequate functioning of the organization while others ensure that important interests are represented. When these committees are ineffective for one reason or another, progress is not achieved and thus, goals are not met. In this study, three women reported that some committees within their organization were not functional and therefore ineffective. For instance, the nomination committee is very important because they provide the list of candidates for membership. If female leaders are not put forth on that 'slate' and do not nominate themselves to the board, they will not access leadership positions in great numbers. The names put forth by the nominations committee also make a statement about where the organization is going and what they hope to accomplish. If this committee is ineffective, it can act as a barrier for female leaders.

Likewise, it is evident that Women and Sport Committees have also been unsuccessful in breaking down barriers for women in sporting leadership

4.2.1.1 **Women and Sport Committees**

It is important to discuss the role and impact of Women and Sport Committees in and on sport administration. Generally speaking, Women and Sport committees are used to process information concerning various professional and educational opportunities for female leaders such as national and international conferences or external funding for leadership training. The existence of a Woman and Sport committee in any organization also creates a space where issues concerning women can be discussed and resolved internally. In addition, the creative work being produced in this forum provides those members with opportunities to successfully demonstrate their skills and thus, their potential to advance within the organization (i.e. success as Chair of the Women and Sport Committee can lead to Chair of other committees). Some of the participants noted that it was essential to get women involved in sport administration and more importantly, have them take on various roles such as taking minutes, facilitating meetings and presenting their ideas within a group setting. As mentioned, Women and Sport committees are usually filled with many other female leaders which act as a network of mentors who can encourage younger women to take on leadership roles in the organization.

The women interviewed in this study reported that Women and Sport committees were almost always exclusively filled by female leaders. This is important as it implies that only women are responsible for increasing female representation in sport administration while diminishing the crucial role male leaders could play in the resolution

of gender issues. In this study, 3 women specifically stated that they had not personally been involved with women and sport initiatives nor did they feel the need to advocate for this movement or represent 'women's' views in the boardroom. Though it is important that each female leader become involved in areas in which they are comfortable, it is important that the organization provide the space and opportunity for women who want to work towards equality.

4.2.2 Organizational culture

Each sporting organization is guided by a vision and direction which is established by the governance structure of the organization and enacted by the leaders. Usually, there are 2 to 3 top leaders who are at the helm of the organization as well as an executive board which oversees the administration of sport. Consequently, the individuals involved in these positions create and reproduce the environment in which the organization will operate. Given that sport administration has traditionally been a male domain and men still hold most of the influential leadership positions, the organizational culture has accordingly been found to be androcentric (Hovden, 2000a, 2000b; Cameron, 1996). Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) point out that even when women do gain leadership positions in sport administration, they are constrained by their gender.

> "…women can successfully enter masculine leadership roles but face two unhappy options, neither of which alters existent gender power relations. Either women must conform to artificially heightened gender differentiation as a leader and agree that feminine leaders' style exist, thereby perpetuating gender differentiation in the process or women leaders can 'do masculine leadership'; they can perform their leadership tasks in a way more masculine than men. The former reinstates gender differentiation, which in turn perpetuates the probability of masculine domination. The latter leaves women reinforcing masculinist modes of leadership when women might prefer to operate by other modes. Both options reinforce masculine valuation…" (p.31)

It is evident that many female administrators are not likely to continue in sport administration if they are in an environment where they feel uncomfortable. However, this under representation did not seem to affect all female respondents as one woman discussed her experiences of committee and executive work where she had been the only woman on the board. She said:

> "...I don't really think about that. Like I think about doing my work and contributing and getting to know all my colleagues from their vantage points... but I hardly, I don't always think oh god, I'm the only woman..." (Participant 001).

Even so, another woman did say that she wondered what it would be like if the numbers were reversed and there were '30 female administrators to 5 male administrators' with women holding the key positions in the organization. She believed that organizations would be managed differently and that leadership approaches would expand opportunities toward women.

During the interviews, participants were asked to describe some of their thoughts and experiences of organizational culture in sport administration. The women respondents identified a number of important outcomes of the masculine organizational culture that they believed hindered women's opportunities to enter and progress in sport administration. First, female respondents remarked that the organizational culture in sport administration does not support women with or having children. One woman described an incident where her staff was reluctant to tell her about her pregnancy because she feared she would lose her position. It was widely perceived that there was a negative connotation associated with high level female leaders having children as it was thought that this would create a lag time in their career and a distraction from their work in sport administration. There was a widespread belief that motherhood and sporting leadership

were not compatible as found in previous studies by Cameron (1996), Pfister et. al (2005) and MacIntosh and Whitson (1990). However, one female leader discussed the changes that needed to take place in order to create a woman and family –friendly environment as well as find ways in which leadership positions could be adapted for member who have families. To this effect, one woman said:

> "…I think we just have to make it work. Otherwise, we lose that expertise. And a lot of corporations aren't getting that. They're still willing to let women go, and not keep them" (Participant 004).

Unfortunately, the organizational culture is heavily based on male traditions; many of which have been in place for years and others since inception. For this reason, they have become deeply embedded in both the structure and management of every sporting organization. For example, many of the female respondents insisted that the organizational culture in their sporting organization was still very much male centered and that this was evident in the way that the organization was managed. One participant complained that meetings would be scheduled over a 4 day period allowing the men to do some golfing during the day, or that meetings would be held or finished over beer at the end of the day often excluding the few female leaders. In addition, regular and monthly meetings were usually scheduled at dinnertime on weekdays and/or on weekends including during the holidays which are inconvenient for those administrators who are responsible for their home and children as well. This clearly supports McKay (1997), Cameron (1996) and Pfister et. al's (2005) findings that male networks were an advantage for men in sporting leadership. Some respondents went on to say that female leaders would probably have been more aware of these issues when scheduling meetings and would not spend additional 'vacation' time at out-of-town competitions and meetings

in order to be away for the least amount of time. Throughout the interviews, female respondents repeatedly mentioned that sporting organizations were very much afraid of changing these traditions and therefore past policies and procedures continue to restrict the amount of change an organization is willing to embrace. One woman summarized:

> "...you know the myths aren't true but they're all, scientifically based. If you run, your uterus is going to fall out, right. We laugh at it now but at the time, you're fighting science.... So I think it's that...because the myths are held, they are really entrenched and they are very vicious so when traditions become the male way of doing things, it is tough to change" (Participant 002).

Interestingly, some women reported that in those sports where men and women competed equally or in equal numbers such as curling, triathlon or equestrianism, the governance structures were more often evenly balanced with male and female administrators.

Finally, a number of female respondents discussed the influence of organizational culture on men and women's leadership styles in sport administration. It was perceived that there were different expectations in terms of behaviour and approaches in the boardroom. To this end, one woman related a significant experience:

> "...it was my very first meeting so you can imagine, I was hardly over the top in confidence and in everything else plus you're surrounded by 21 men and umm, not knowing anyone. And umm, I had a couple of points that I had to bring up.... Anyway, I presented them as best I could and by then I...wasn't a babe in woods when it came to sitting around the boardroom and that. Anyway, during one of the breaks, I was pulled over by, I'm sure a well meaning gentleman...who told me that you know, ...you really have to watch your tone...people might be off put by my tone. They may agree with me but...I needed to take a much softer approach and not be so, I guess, aggressive. And I was absolutely...shocked...I mean, I could see myself as aggressive or assertive at much, much later meetings but this is my first meeting. ...this is a stereotype" (Participant 010).

She went on to say that at that same meeting, a man had lost his composure while vehemently arguing why his idea should be implemented. Though he had banged the

table with his fists while ranting and raving in a very loud voice, he was ironically praised for the passion he brought to his sport administration work. This illustrates the various ways in which we perceive and evaluate female leaders as opposed to male administrators. It supports the findings of Pfister et. al's (2005) German study which revealed that men and women's leadership styles in sport administration were greatly influenced by the organizational culture of the sporting organization. Indeed, McKay (1997) sums it up saying that women:

> "...must perform extraordinarily well by men's criteria but in a manner that does not threaten men's stereotypes about 'appropriate' feminine behaviour; they need to be tough without being 'macho'..." (McKay, 1997, p.85)

4.3 RELATIONAL LEVEL

Barriers at the relational level refer to the relationships that exist between the individuals inside and outside of the sporting organizations such as colleagues, leaders and social networks.

4.3.1 Resistive attitudes towards female sporting leaders

As the executive boards are predominantly filled with men, a number of women discussed incidents where they had been challenged or even discredited by men in their organizations during their careers in sport administration. In one case, a respondent reported that a male colleague was extremely offended when she had challenged his belief that a particular sport was 'ordained by God to be played by boys'. Another woman asserted that even though she had been successful in high level leadership and had 'sealed, signed, delivered' many policies and initiatives, some members still questioned her and other female leaders' credibility as high level administrators. Similarly, a few participants mentioned that talented women who were articulate, educated and modest

were often perceived as intimidating to other members in the organization, particularly men. It was also insinuated that these female administrators had been scrutinized because they were viewed as serious competition for the top leadership positions. In a more serious case, one participant described her unpleasant encounters with a male administrator who she claimed was trying to ruin her career, stating that she had nearly had a nervous breakdown because of the grief he had put her through while she was head of the organization. She believed that he could not contend with having lost a leadership position in sport administration to a woman and therefore was determined to discredit her in front of other members in the organization.

Given this sometimes hostile environment, the lack of female administrators in sporting organizations also means that there is less support from same sex colleagues who could better understand the issues and position that some female leaders were facing. Interestingly, three women described high level sporting leadership as a 'lonely' place for female administrators though it was mentioned that feminist-based advocacy groups did provide some support for those who were involved in the women and sport movement. In essence, some female respondents believed that there was no one to talk to, especially in the highest leadership positions within the organization.

> "There's no one to talk to and you can't when you're in a leadership position really umm, there needs to be most of the time, a little bit of distance between you and your staff because they're not there to solve your problems" (Participant 009).

4.3.2 <u>Mentoring and the notion of female 'turf protectors'</u>

Mentoring was an important aspect explored in this study and thus, the participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences and perceptions concerning this topic. Mentors, much like social networks, were considered important by all of the

interview respondents and were said to be necessary for younger members as it not only

helped them become comfortable within the organization but also provided them with

leadership advice and encouragement in a number of situations. In this sense, mentors

contribute greatly to younger female members' overall in their sport administration

career. Several women talked about being guided to initial leadership positions and with

their mentor's assistance, were able to get voted in. The women in this study had been

mentored by male and female administrators and some had positive while others had

negative experiences. One woman said she entered and progressed in sport administration

because of a male administrator who was well known for his support of female leaders at

a time where there were a few. In this way, she believed he provided her with the

confidence and abilities to take on bigger leadership roles in the organization. Similarly,

another woman mentioned that having a mentor enabled her to cope with the pressures of

high level sporting leadership. For these reasons, mentoring was often considered as an

essential part of succession planning if the organization is to develop its future leaders.

Interestingly, one female respondent viewed mentoring as a kind of leadership training.

Unfortunately, few female leaders are coming into sport leadership by way of mentoring.

To this end, she says:

> "...we keep talking about having to increase our representation of women
> and not just representation, I'm talking qualified leaders, talked about
> developing leaders, handholding leaders, helping evolve leaders who
> happen to be women and men for that matter but especially women need
> that help. Every man around the table was oh, yeah, yeah, I'll be a leader
> you know, this and that, whatever you know, I'll be a mentor and I've
> never yet seen one of them or heard one of them be connected with,
> introduce me to umm, send me an e-mail of or from another female
> mentoree of any kind of sorts" (Participant 010).

It is therefore evident that mentors were perceived to be important for women in sport administration although several of the women did report having negative experiences with mentors while others had not personally been mentored in their career to date.

In one case, one respondent expressed that she had never experienced mentoring but quite the opposite saying that she had had very disheartening relationships with female leaders. She believed that they had been very tough on her and had not been understanding, sensitive or compassionate to her needs which had thus made he experiences with mentors a 'nightmare'. Despite not having a mentor, one woman said that she had made it a point to mentor other women to give them the tools and advice she wished she had had. It can therefore be assumed that for individuals who have unpleasant mentoring experiences, they are not likely to themselves become involved in mentoring other young administrators which can negatively impact the entire sporting organizations. On the other hand, women who reported having good mentoring experiences claimed they were able to use this new knowledge and apply it in their leadership relationships throughout their careers.

During the interviews, some women did state that there were some leaders who were perceived to be involved in sport administration for 'ego gratification', relishing the power and prestige associated with holding top leadership positions in high level sporting organizations. Interestingly, it was also mentioned that some female leaders who had earned a certain degree of influence in the organization were determined to continue this successful path and any other members, particularly female members, were regarded as competition. This is supported by Pfister et. al (2005) who found a

"...lack of solidarity among female leaders..." (p.31). Though this can be somewhat

attributed to the ethos of competitiveness associated with the masculine organizational

culture, it also shows that women know that only a few women are likely to be voted into

the organization and therefore view other female candidates as opposition. Acker (1990)

also discerned that:

> "...women were failing to cooperate with each other, taking power and
> using it in oppressive ways (repeating exactly what the men have done),
> creating their own structures of status and reward. [These images are]...at
> odds with other images of women as nurturing and supportive" (Acker,
> 1990, p.142).

For this reason, some female leaders described that mentoring was perceived by some as

a loss of their power and a fear of perhaps losing their position. To this end, one female

respondent commented:

> "...they are in positions of power so they're...scared that if they act a
> certain way, people will think they are favouring and then you know,
> ...they're not much of a help to any of the women coming to work
> because they're so worried about being labelled and being helpful; it's
> counterproductive. You would have gotten better help from the men that
> were at the helm" (Participant 008).

One participant suggested that female leaders needed to feel that equal

opportunities existed for all talented leaders regardless of gender before this diffidence

would disappear. In order to protect their position as well as their possibility of achieving

the top leadership positions, some leaders were perceived to put very little effort in

helping and mentoring other women into sporting leadership. What is interesting is the

fact that only two women discussed this issue during the interviews and both believed

that this was an important barrier that women faced in sporting leadership which needs to

be addressed. One female respondent summarized:

"...when you have women who are turf protecting or men who are 'turf protecting', then you have a ceiling on what you are going to achieve because there are some very good, well intended women who could rise above but for a woman to...go up, more importantly, it means a man has to come down. ...it's important that initial leaders... wherever they make that first breakthrough be as confident as possible and be...as global in their thinking as possible because they only pave the way for more women if they're successful. But if they're not successful, they make it ten times harder for the women behind them" (Participant 006).

4.3.3 Male networks and the Old boys' club

In the previous section, the organizational culture was discussed as it related to excluding women from high level sporting leadership. In particular, it was noted that the masculine culture in sporting organizations was perceived to create an uncomfortable environment for some female leaders. In addition, the organizational structure influenced who entered because it dictates the ways in which leaders gain access to these positions. Some organizations for example, elected members and therefore, individuals who were voted in were relatively well known and accepted by the other members. This again highlights the importance of social networks in accessing sporting leadership positions for women. One woman explained that another female candidate had not made the executive board in her organization because she was not 'well-known' by the other members. It was believed that when she had been involved long enough, other members would recognize her name and contributions and she would thus be voted in because she already had the skills and administrative background to fill the position. Social networks however can also present a barrier for individuals who have conflicting perspectives to those already holding leadership positions as evidenced by some women saying that progression into the top leadership positions of an organization was more difficult as these positions of power were usually held by well-supported men in the organization

who remained for long periods of time. For this reason, women must already 'fit in' with the masculine organizational culture and most importantly, be accepted by the men in the organization as the best candidate among those representing themselves in order to access high level leadership positions, as was advanced by Hovden (2000a, 2000b). There is also support from Shaw and Hoeber (2003) who assert that:

> "...women who express discourses of masculinity are perceived by individuals in organizations as people who can adapt with the social hierarchy and access power.... Women who want to succeed in an environment that is dominated by discourses of masculinity must also embrace masculine work practices" (Shaw and Hoeber, 2003, p.352).

Equally important is the fact that most men in the organization were familiar with each other and many had been friends or acquaintances for years. In this way, it was difficult for new members to access these social networks and consequently, leadership positions. One woman pointed out that it was often the same members around the table and that this sometimes caused the board to become complacent with the functioning of the organization and even less likely to change the way things were being done. Nevertheless, one woman did perceive that this 'male culture' had somewhat disappeared though she was not certain how this had influenced women in sporting leadership saying:

> "...I don't know whether the change in culture has made it easier or harder for women. Easier in so far as if you're qualified person...I mean you have to put in some time...you need experience, but it's not so old boys club. Umm, on the other hand if you were a woman in that old boys club before, you could ascend through as well so it's...I suppose overall it's made it easier because it's not so much an old boys club anymore" (Participant 007).

In the same way, another participant described what she called the 'alpha male mentality' where there is one particular male leader on the board who is never challenged by other members in terms of opinions and decision-making. This is significant for

leaders attempting to make change within the organization. For this reason, men in the network were seen as being held to different standards than other men and women in the organization. For example, one woman perceived that female leaders needed to work harder than male administrators in order to gain respect and be taken seriously as leaders:

> "...I definitely do everything that I can to contribute to the best of my ability and in as many ways as I can so that it, so that it leads people like myself to overachieve, to over develop...and that's killing...because we're over exhausted in trying to do everything and to be everything to everyone at all times while the guys are just cruising with only one project on the go at a time. So, you definitely feel like you have to over achieve. You also...feel like you have to be careful because if you make a mistake, well then you obviously weren't ready for responsibility. Whereas if a man makes a mistake, well things happen...mistakes happen...don't worry about it...dust yourself off and keep going. I'll be there. Want to have a beer afterwards?" (Participant 010).

This supports Duerst-Lahti and Kelly's (1995) findings that "...women but not men face a proving period of about a year.... Further, women apparently need to reprove their competency with every new group they encounter" (p.29).

4.4 SOCIETAL LEVEL

In this last section, barriers found at the societal level relate to the gendered labour market as well as to the gender order in sporting organizations. This point is particularly significant because as Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) affirm:

> "...the paucity of women at executive levels cannot be satisfactorily explained by demographics...the barriers are multiple in level, are related to a masculinist society that judges roles and behaviours differently due to sex and gender, are experienced almost exclusively by women regardless of their color (although women of color experience these barriers differently than do white women)..." (p.82)

4.4.1 The gendered labour market and sport administration: Similarities

Though men must do sport administration under these same conditions, the gendered labour market demonstrates that more men are located in the higher salary

echelons than are women. Because the traditional volunteer based governance model has shifted to a professionalized and commercialized administration, potential members are now being recruited from the political and business arenas where men again dominate leadership positions. In this way, men are more likely to possess the qualifications, leadership skills and social networks now required to access sport administration posts. This finding clearly reflects many other studies on women in sporting leadership (Cameron, 1996; MacIntosh and Whitson, 1990; Pfister et. al., 2005) which have assessed the influence of the gendered labour market on women's opportunities to participate in high level sporting leadership. In addition, this also reflects the gendered labour market on an international scale such as the United Nations where it is pointed out:

> "Because of education and employment trends, it is suggested optimistically that the pool from which the next generation of managers is drawn will contain as many women as men. However, this will effectively lead to a greater access to top levels of management only if the structural barriers that impede the access of women managers (lower and middle level) to decisive positions can be surmounted" (United Nations, 1995).

4.4.2 The influence of the 'gender order' and stereotypes on women's entry and progression in sport administration

> "Sport contributed to the fabrication of the gender order by 'naturalizing' male dominance; preserving an arena of popular culture for men; dividing women along lines of class, race, and athletic interest; contributing to changes in gender ideologies in the dominant culture; and structuring physical and emotional experiences, and modeling the human body and human feeling around masculine and feminine axes" (Hall, 1996, p.39).

Many studies have discussed the 'gender order' that exists in sport administration and explained the ways in which high ratios of women are relegated to positions of lower status, influence and compensation. McKay (1997) elucidated:

"…gender must be seen as decisive in organizations because most have cultures in which men's experiences are ascendant and women's are subordinate. …Given that men control the most powerful social institutions, and their values are more highly esteemed than women's, then women must continually 'do' gender under disadvantaged conditions" (McKay, 1997, p.14).

In this way, the 'gender order' constrains women's opportunities to gain entry and progress in high level sporting leadership positions. Stereotypes regarding male and female administrators are a significant contributor maintaining this 'gender order' that exists in sporting organizations. One woman described the stereotypical beliefs between men and women in terms of leadership styles and skills. She succinctly states that:

"The men were concerned that the women are going to spend all the money and the women are concerned the men are going to take all the power; in a nutshell. And it's true anywhere you look, on boards, anywhere you go" (Participant 006).

For a long time, feminists have been arguing that women in high level sporting leaders are forced to maintain some element of 'femininity'. Though some believe these kinds of issues had been rectified, one woman commented that she carried herself in a more feminine manner and made sure to dress professionally because she believed this afforded her a certain amount of credibility. At the same time, she commented that men could come to meetings in shorts and a golf shirt without a problem. In another interview, the participant remarked that one female member in her organization needed to adjust her attire to become a little more feminine if she wanted to succeed and progress in sport administration. This suggests that there is still some truth to the notion that women feel they are required to maintain a certain degree of femininity. This reflects what was found by Cameron (1996) and the ISLP and IOC (2004) who discussed the significance of dress codes in sport leadership.

Throughout the interviews, the respondents often referred to stereotypical notions of male and female leaders to characterize other administrators they had worked with during their sport administration careers. First, almost all of the women talked about the typical approaches men and women took to entering and progressing into top leadership positions. It was agreed that men were much bolder in their pursuit of leadership positions, often applying for the top positions in the organization. Women were described as being more passive in their initial involvement as many of them were encouraged by their social network and recruited by other organizational members. One participant noted that many young men would apply for leadership positions for which they did not meet the criteria while women were much more 'cautious' in where they applied. With respect to this progression, one woman explained:

> "...a lot of the men don't need to be grounded so much in the sense of their accomplishment to feel they have a right to move on" (Participant 002).

Over half the women in this study stated that women in general tended to be insecure and lacking confidence which impacted their patterns of entry and progression in high level leadership. Women were most often portrayed as reserved, passive and compassionate in their leadership approaches and were perceived to avoid conflict. As one woman put it:

> "...women don't like conflict so they'll often acquiesce in the face of strongly voiced opinion rather than to say: 'I understand what you're saying and how clearly you are saying it umm, but here's how I think'" (Participant 006).

On the other hand, men were usually characterized as outgoing, aggressive and authoritative. One woman attributed most barriers to women's lack of confidence and stated that these could be overcome if women believed in themselves. However, this

reasoning does not explain the other factors that have hindered some female leaders despite their having reported a positive attitude and a high level of confidence. Although some research has rendered a degree of validity to these characterizations (Cameron, 1996; Pfister et. al., 2005; ISLP and IOC, 2004; Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990), the stereotypical image of women remains. These stereotypes can thus potentially have negative effects on male and female leaders which could deter them from wanting to enter or advance into high level leadership positions. It is important to note however that this dualism characterizing male and female leaders as complete opposites should not be considered by any means representative for all sporting leaders, regardless of gender. It is true that opportunities for women in all spheres of leadership have increased tremendously, even though barriers continue to shift and redefine themselves and still exist in various forms for many women today.

> "And for some reason, women seem to go so far and then be content at that level and I think some of it is women holding back, not expanding their own borders, not wanting to move up umm, they found a comfort zone and they're and I think sometimes that has to do with time because you know, if you're going to be involved at this level, you do have to do some traveling, you do have to do some weekend work" (Participant 006).

Finally, many women indicated that there was a lack of recognition for female leaders in terms of awards and commemorations. Most of the participants in this study had been acknowledged for their work in sport administration though they recounted being among very few female nominees and even fewer female recipients. This is a logical consequence of the under-representation of female leaders in high level sport administration since most are never given the opportunity to lead the organization and therefore do not have a platform on which to demonstrate their success. Without showing other organizational members concrete success, women are less likely to be accepted into

high level leadership roles and thus, will be unable to change the 'gender order' in sport administration.

5.0 **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

"...it's the old story, your work is never done..." (Participant 006).

5.1 **GENERAL REMARKS**

As has been shown, it is essential that all of those who enjoy sport in Canada have representation at the administrative level of the Canadian sporting system where decisions about the sport programs are taken. Though diversity can include language, race, ethnicity, region and many other areas, this study focuses on gender and the under-representation of women in Canadian high level sporting leadership. It investigated the career paths, leadership skills and barriers that exist for these female administrators and elicited, through interviews, information on female leaders' experiences in sporting organizations and the perceived competencies required to access these leadership positions. Because sport, particularly Olympic sport, has taken on such importance in Canada with government and corporate sponsors spending millions of dollars, it is important to understand the ways in which women access (or not) the governing bodies of high level sporting organizations. In this way, the decision-making process might become more balanced and representative of the general population.

Data concerning female athletes' participation rates at Olympic Games, both internationally and for Canada, showed the incremental progress women have made in terms of increasing their representation over the years. However, Rintala and Bischoff (1997) remind us that:

> "...while women may participate as athletes, far fewer women participate
> in the leadership positions of sport, positions which exert control over
> women's sporting experiences" (p.2).

As has been shown in this and many other studies, this void is the result of a number of factors inhibiting the progression of female leaders to important leadership positions in

sport. Despite the efforts of the Women and Sport movement which began around the mid 1970's, there has been no significant overall change of the organizational structures and cultures in sport administration. It is therefore evident that changing the gender imbalance and the deeply embedded traditions in sport administration is difficult as sporting organizations are very resistant to change. One participant noted:

> "So I think those kinds of things are some of the learning's that I've had, in that, you have to hold in those places that are uncomfortable if you want change to bring about and realize that change doesn't go in a straight line, it goes forward and back and it, at what point do you push and pull and those kinds of things" (Participant 002).

It is essential to first understand the factors that influence women's entry and progression in sport leadership as well as those that lead to their under-representation, given that both have a significant effect on the entire sporting system. For this reason, this study makes use of feminist ideals that take women's perspectives as the basis for understanding their experiences in sport administration. Feminist research must therefore work:

> "...towards developing practices that are informed by understandings of the ways in which various structures of inequality articulate in given contexts, and shape the lives of different groups of women" (Hargreaves, 2000, p.216)

In this chapter, I will review the findings of this study in terms of career paths, leadership skills and barriers to women's entry and progression in high level sport administration. To this end, I will attempt to draw some conclusions as well as provide some modest recommendations with the objective of increasing the number of women in sporting leadership that might be of some use to sporting organizations and particularly, Women and Sport Committees.

5.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 Women and Sport Movement

With respect to the Olympic Movement, the IOC and some of its related

organizations have taken some measures to improve the number of female leaders

involved in their administrations by sponsoring Women and Sport conferences and

providing gender equity guidelines for all of their constituents. However, the IOC as well

as many other international organizations do not follow these prescribed guidelines and

thus, are not demonstrating a strong commitment to improving the representation of

women in leadership positions. Those participants who had been involved with sport

administration internationally reported that women are still greatly under-represented at

the international level and that fundamental issues such as the use of gender neutral

language or mandating the presence of at least one female administrator on each

committee are still being contested by Women and Sport advocates. One woman

commented:

> "If you talk to any woman that's involved internationally, she'll tell you
> that...it's just not accepted that women should be treated on an equal plane
> than men because they have tradition and they have events that have
> always been in place for men and have less events for women. ...even the
> language...it's totally accepted here to have gender neutral language [but
> internationally,] that's a big fight...changing our constitution.... [They]
> don't agree with calling Chair...like [as a woman], I was Chairman of [a]
> commission..." (Participant 003).

The Woman and Sport Movement has provided a platform for groundbreaking change on

an international scale over the past 25 years. Most of the women in this study did report

that there were more women now then when they had first entered sporting leadership but

that the boardroom tables remained gendered. In addition, there have been a number of

very successful Canadian high level female sporting leaders which have brought positive

attention to the country. Canada has been regarded as a liberal and forward thinking

country in that Canadian sporting organizations have had a number of women in top leadership positions, at least compared to the rest of the world. As mentioned, some of these female leaders have been extremely successful in their roles and are respected internationally. The female respondents in this study perceived Canada to be an international leader in the area of Women and Sport. One woman asserted that Canada was actually one of the few countries that invested almost equally in men and women's sport. They believed that this was important if the country was going to be seen and heard at the international level of the sporting system. One woman explained how she believed the corporate sector had positively impacted the Women and Sport Movement by sponsoring both male and female athletes and sporting organizations in order to reach men and women customers. In addition, many of these corporations have equality policies themselves which point out that they must invest in both male and female sport and at times, these policies are tied to the sponsorship dollars thus advancing the position of women in sport.

On the other hand, we must not get complacent and argue that since we may be ahead of international standards, our work is done. Though there is still a long road ahead, we cannot underestimate the positive impact of policies and programs on the increase of female leaders. The addition of female leaders in sport administration has provided sporting organizations with different perspectives drawing attention to issues previously overlooked by male dominated executive boards, thus improving the management and operation of high level sporting organizations. Moreover, the increased visibility of women in top leadership positions through opportunities and media is

believed to have drawn other women to sport administration and thus augmented the pool

of female candidates aspiring to sport leadership. One woman concluded:

> "Women aren't seeing their lives with the same degree of limitations and hopefully that will expand to the world of sport as well. I just think that sport leadership, leadership in general, has often been viewed as a male domain. I mean, we don't have women Prime Ministers...we don't have many women Presidents, we have some...we have women corporation leaders...now so the world is changing for women but there was a time when women didn't aspire to that level of leadership. [Growing up]...I saw women as participants and I saw women as the ones who served brownies and cocoa and coffee at the events. That's the way I saw them [because]...I never had a woman coach...I see women now in coaching at grassroots which I didn't see them then, it used to be all the dads who were out.... I do see some women in officiating, I do see women achieving at a higher level..." (Participant 006).

5.2.2 Career Paths and Leadership Skills

As was discussed in chapter 3, the study informed the literature concerning

women in organizational leadership as it pertains to their career path and the

organizational leadership skills needed to be successful in high level sport administration.

Generally speaking, it was found that a number of factors needed to intersect in order for

women to be involved in sport administration at its highest level; they had to have the

right personal circumstances, possess the necessary skills and personal resolve, be given

opportunities and have strong support networks which afforded them the time and

resources to participate.

This study was able to provide a general image of a typical high level female

leader. First, most female administrators were highly educated and were in high level

professional employment with many of them having a vast background in sport as

athletes. They were typically in their late 20s to early 30s and had partners helping them

with family responsibilities as well as a large support network which enabled them to

participate in sport administration at its highest level considering the extensive time and resource commitment. Female leaders claimed they had entered sport administration out of a personal interest in sport with many of them having come in as athlete representatives. The study also highlighted the importance of social networks and mentors in accessing sporting leadership positions. Most women began their careers on provincial governing bodies progressing 'naturally' up the organizational hierarchy to national and even international sporting leadership with an average length of service of 15 years. One woman explained that when leaders first enter sporting leadership positions:

> "...it's very important to...listen to the culture of the organization when you first getting on the committee or the board, understand how people get there, what's happening, move agendas but never, ever, ever be afraid to speak up and speak up umm, also umm, get umm, you know connected or just sort of understand how all of these people work and get them to buy into what you're also all about, you know and if it's agenda for women specifically, then you champion on that committee or on that board too to support what you're doing" (Participant 001).

Though this career path seems to be similar for both men and women, female leaders' enter at much lower rates into much lower positions and often never reach the top leadership positions in high profile sporting organizations. This does support what has been stated in organizational theory, particularly with respect to the homologous reproduction of male leaders. This study did find that women perceived that the influence of men in leadership positions and their social networks meant that more men than women were nominated and consequently elected to governing bodies. However, it should also be noted that the few women who are able to access these networks are more likely to progress to the highest leadership positions in sport administration.

In terms of leadership skills and styles, the female respondents reported a number of competencies they believed were essential for sport administrators in general but particularly for women. Administrative and business skills in addition to self-confidence, a broad perspective and a great sense of commitment to the organization were believed to be essential skills for success in high level sporting leadership. Networking capabilities were also seen as advantageous for entry and progression into leadership positions as administrators must be respected and supported in order to be nominated and elected to such posts. This is also associated with the accepted leadership styles prevalent in sport administration. As discussed, the masculine traits of aggression, competition and confidence are valued while more feminine dispositions such as compassion, cooperation and timidity are subordinated and thus, this androcentric culture constrains the leaders who do not 'fit in'. Social constructionist theory can be used to explicate the fact that female leaders who have made it into high level leadership positions have usually adopted this accepted style of leadership. However, widely held stereotypes about female leaders also suggest that they must maintain a certain element of 'femininity' when adopting this masculine leadership style. In this way, the social construction of gender dictates the ideal leadership skills and approaches to high level sport administration. Hall (1996) avers that in order for women to lead without stereotypical constraints on their approaches, there must be a redefinition of female leadership. She says:

> "...a kinder, more variable, and more forgiving ideal of femininity needs to be constructed" (p.58).

5.2.3 Barriers

As is evident in chapter 4, many barriers remain making it difficult for women to attain leadership positions in sport administration. Though these barriers are much more

subtle than in the past, they nonetheless influence female leaders' career paths in sport administration. As mentioned, barriers were identified at four levels: 1) individual level, 2) organizational level, 3) relational level and 4) societal level.

5.2.3.1 **Individual level**

Barriers identified at the individual level were related to the female leaders' personal characteristics, competencies and circumstances. First, the study highlighted the lack of acknowledgement of barriers that exist for some women in sporting leadership. In addition, several of the female respondents did indicate that they did not look at the gender of potential candidates but wanted to find the best person to fill the position. Without acknowledging issues that exist, it will be impossible to put measures in place to rectify them. Most participants however did accept the fact that some barriers do hinder women's opportunities to access leadership positions in sport. Most women pointed to the influence of personal circumstances on an administrator's ability to devote the time and resources to sport administration, particularly in volunteer-based organizations. Furthermore, this seemed to have a greater impact on women who had children as their personal responsibilities were perceived to conflict with the heavy demand of sporting leadership. To this end, support networks were reported to be essential as they provided the necessary assistance for women to participate in sport administration to the degree they wished. Finally, this study revealed that female leaders' lack of self-confidence and consequently, lack of communication and networking skills were believed to limit women's entry and progression in sport administration. Essentially, women who were not in the right personal situation or have the key skills were not likely to be involved in sporting leadership, especially at the higher levels.

5.2.3.2 **Organizational level**

The organization was also perceived to present numerous barriers to women attempting to gain high level leadership positions in sport. Overall, some aspects of the organizational structure and culture were considered to hinder women's opportunities in subtle ways. As Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) affirm:

> "Sex discrimination and patriarchal control have only become more subtle and insidious, rather than reformed or eliminated, and the worst part may be that female legislators remain unaware of their differential participation" (p.185).

For example, the governance structure determined the large number of administrators sitting on executive boards which was often intimidating for female leaders as most of these posts were filled by men. In addition, the ineffectiveness of organizational committees particularly the Women and Sport as well as the nomination committees was problematic in the sense that goals and initiatives were not being developed or met, which rendered the issues invisible to the governing bodies. Additionally, respondents pointed out that organizations have rules and policies in place to help them properly manage the entire structure, although many of these were believed to deter women from participating in leadership positions. The cost associated with attending out-of-town competitions, meetings and conferences in terms of time and money was too great for some women who were thus unable to contribute their skills to the organization. Again, traditions such as competitions and congregational attire for women which includes skirts and blazers did not appeal to some women and caused them to turn down leadership positions in sport administration. Finally, the length of service for administrators is also dictated by the organizational structure where members could remain in their positions

for many years meaning that fewer women were able to infiltrate the organizational

bodies and increase their representation.

Similarly, the organizational culture was also perceived to act as a barrier for

female leaders entering and progressing in sport administration. The historical

involvement of men in sporting leadership has left its imprint in the ways in which

administrators behave and develop within the organization. This androcentric culture was

believed to influence women's career because those who were not comfortable in this

kind of environment were not likely to continue their involvement in the organization.

> "According to organizational theorists, the structure and behaviour of
> institutions is determined, at least in part, by the character of the institution
> itself; its predominant culture; and the characteristics of the policies they
> administer" (Kelly and Duerst-Lahti, 1995, p.144)

In addition, many female respondents reported that sport administration was not family

friendly, particularly to female leaders with children. Nonetheless, this masculine culture

was perceived to have the most impact on the leadership styles of male and female

administrators. The participants clearly described that female leader's were required to

take on some of these masculine traits while maintaining a degree of femininity in their

leadership approaches. For this reason, some women were unable or unwilling to meet

such difficult criteria and did not become involved in sporting leadership. As Mercier and

Werthner (2001) maintain:

> "...the traditional view of leadership was founded on male-oriented values
> of rationality, competition, and independence. ...[they] are so deeply
> embedded in our political and social institutions that they are invisible."
> "And when we simply try to fit women into this existing model, they
> often, and yet not surprisingly, are isolated, receive little support, have
> limited opportunities, and do not stay around, thereby perpetuating the
> prevailing thinking that women cannot 'take the pressure'" (p.5).

Some of these findings can be explained by sex-role theory as well as social constructionism because women are compelled to take on specific attributes and behaviours simply because of their gender. Nevertheless, these findings evince the need for:

> "...an organizational vision that embodies the goals, needs, and values of both leaders and followers, of both girls and boys, women and men. This will require...organizations to adopt new values and act in new ways" (Mercier and Werthner, 2001, p.7).

5.2.3.3 Relational level

As mentioned, the relational level comprised barriers that existed as a result of relationship between individuals in sporting organizations. Notably, a number of female respondents described situations where they had experienced resistance on the part of male leaders. They recounted that female leaders' work was highly scrutinized by other administrators while another said that she had been directly challenged by a male colleague in the boardroom. In addition, this study examined the relationships between female leaders in sporting organizations. These respondents believed that some female leaders hindered other women's opportunities by gripping their power and status instead of using it to assist and mentor other women into sporting leadership. Many female leaders considered mentoring important, particularly those women who had had positive experiences themselves. Moreover, the study revealed that men's strong social networks continue to be perceived as a major barrier to women's entry and progression in sport administration. This 'old boys club' reproduces the masculine culture as all of the organization's committees and boards are populated by these male administrators. Consequently, these networks have a broad spectrum of power and influence in sporting leadership.

5.2.3.4 Societal level

Barriers at the societal level were associated with the gendered labour market that exists in present society in addition to the gender order in sport administration that work to maintain women's under-representation in sporting leadership.

> "Almost all areas of social life – such as occupational and educational opportunity, political behaviour, marriage and family, sexual beliefs and practices, leisure patterns, and most certainly sport – are influenced and affected by the institutionalized inequalities of society." (Hall, M.A., 1978, p.65)

Women working inside and outside of sport administration have similar career paths in as much as they are located in the lowest echelons of administration and salary. Furthermore, stereotypes about female leaders and their skills/styles continue to constrain women's abilities to succeed into high level leadership positions as some female respondents mentioned that they felt they needed to dress and behave with a certain degree of femininity in order to be accepted as credible administrators.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

> "Given the embeddedness of gendered power relations in organizations in general and sport organizations in particular, the impetus for change needs to come from sources both internal and external and, as well, encompass multiple strategies" (Rintala and Bischoff, 1997, p.17).

In this section, I provide some modest suggestions for sporting organizations looking to increase the number of women entering and progressing in leadership positions. Without a doubt, effective measures are needed to eradicate the barriers still affecting women in sporting leadership and encourage their full participation in leadership at the highest levels. One female respondent summed it up saying:

> "...I came into what I felt was a culture where women were already important. I didn't feel like it was a battle yet when you look at the membership of the [organization], it's still, the majority are men. Umm,

but I think especially with women making up at least half, if not more of our athletes right now, ...it's really important that they be able to see female faces on the administrative bodies that...run the program of sport" (Participant 007).

With respect to the barriers that exist for women in sporting leadership, there are many recommendations that could help increase the number of female administrators gaining high level leadership positions in sport administration.

5.3.1 Recruitment of female leaders to sporting organizations

First, it is fundamental that the sporting system continue to encourage the lifelong participation of young girls and women in sport because the longer women are involved in sport, the likelier they are to become involved in its administration. For this reason, it is essential to actively recruit women for participation as well as leadership in sport. This recruitment process should target women at a young age, particularly in the local and regional sporting organizations, getting them involved in volunteer administrative tasks at competitions. In this way, they acquire skills and experience needed to gain access to leadership positions in high level sporting organizations. This 'new blood' in the organization has also been perceived as providing a fresh perspective to the administration and ensuring that the organization continues to deal with current issues facing sport.

As was found in this study, many female leaders are former athletes thus providing a large group of potential candidates for leadership positions. Recruitment should be focused on female athletes but should also be expanded to the areas of business and politics where some qualified and influential women might be interested in becoming involved in sport administration. The professionalization of the sporting system has made it difficult for 'kitchen table' administrators to gain leadership positions yet their

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participation should not be turned away as they could be of assistance to the organization in a number of ways. This study did establish that many women are perceived to join sport administration in different ways than men therefore it is imperative that sporting organizations implement new and innovative ways of recruiting women into sport administration. For example, organizational leaders could target women at sporting competitions, in educational settings (i.e. university, college, etc.) or at conferences and discuss what leadership opportunities are available for young women in sport.

As seen, there is much the organization can do to increase the number of women holding leadership positions. The nomination committee or a similar governing body should nominate women for various kinds of leadership positions and ensure that some of these female leaders are voted into sporting organizations. One woman suggested that more female leaders should run in different categories so that they enter various committees and are more likely to increase their overall presence in sporting organizations. Similarly, each governing body should have a list of women who are qualified at the regional, national and international levels and present it to various selection committees in order to ensure that experienced Canadian female administrators are accessing leadership roles at all levels of the sporting system. In addition, influential members in the organization need to continue promoting female members to progress to higher level leadership positions as it has been shown that women in top leadership positions can be a catalyst for an increase in female leaders within the organization. Unfortunately, we must keep in mind that:

> "Simply recruiting women to the higher echelons of bureaucratic organization does not necessarily mean that the character of the organization will become less masculinist and more feminized and woman-friendly" (Kelly and Duerst-Lahti, 1995, p.87).

5.3.2 Advancing female administrators into higher level leadership positions

Once women have accessed a leadership position, it is important that they be provided with a number of leadership opportunities on a wide range of projects, programs and committees within the organization. If female administrators take on leadership opportunities and successfully demonstrate their skills, they become more visible within the organization which is crucial for women wanting to progress into the top leadership positions. To this end, female leaders should be encouraged to attend sporting events, organizational meetings as well as conferences, seminars and workshops in order to gain experience and build a social network. Where they could, sporting organizations should make provisions to provide some financial assistance (daycare, etc) for some female members attending meetings, conferences or other networking opportunities.

As was mentioned, it is important for women to understand the management of sporting organizations and meet other leaders in sport if they want to progress in sport administration. When it is possible, the organization should collaborate with past and present female leaders on promoting women in sport administration in schools as well as various mentoring programs helping young leaders enter and progress in sporting leadership positions. In this way, mentors should encourage female leaders to apply for a variety of leadership positions even though they may not believe they have the required skills and experience for the role. Sporting organizations also need to look at the possibility of transitioning their leaders just as they do with their athletes. Retired leaders are a great source of knowledge and it is important to use their expertise even after they have left sport administration.

5.3.3 The implementation of quotas or mandated equality

The implementation of quotas or affirmative action policies has been debated for years. Though there continues to be debate, it is suggested that mandating some sort of equality at the governance level is important in order to ensure that minority groups are represented at the boardroom table. Two women discussed the large amount of resistance from administrators to the implementation of quotas or 'mandated equality'. When asked why organizations were reluctant to adopt such measures, the standard reply from the female respondents was that it was perceived to constrain the quality of membership by legislating the gender, age, race or ethnicity of the individual filling the position. In essence, it was believed that quotas did not allow for the 'best person' to fill the position. Indeed, many female respondents agreed that setting quotas was not an effective way of increasing the number of women in sporting leadership and it would only work to undermine the credibility of women as they would be perceived to be there simply on account of their gender and not their skills.

One female respondent added that organizations which refused to use quotas or affirmative action must therefore ensure that their mission statements reflect the tenets adopted by the Women and Sport Movement and that their governing bodies understand and apply them in their decision making. However, many organizations still have no policies concerning women as evidenced in the ISLP and IOC (2004) study which revealed that 49.3% of National Olympic Committees did not make reference to any policy on Women and Sport in their mission statements and another 43.8% who had no national programs in place to promote women's sport (p.42-43). As discussed, in order for women and sport initiatives to be passed successfully and be implemented effectively,

it is necessary to have the full support of all board members since most policies cannot be passed or implemented without consensus.

Two participants argued the opposite view, that there was a positive impact of mandated equality and claimed that quotas would not only be a catalyst for involving more women in sport administration overall but would make it easier to implement Women and Sport initiatives. In addition, a quota system allows an organization to make a clear affirmation regarding this issue by not leaving the increase of female sporting leaders to only chance and time, both of which have not seemed to be effective during the past 25 years. One Canadian female sporting leader described her experience mandating equality in her sporting organization:

> "...the resistance was not on the part of the women for equality, it was on the part of the men. Umm, and I think there was a feeling that, the sentiment was that...mandating 50/50 perhaps did not allow for the best people and that an organization is best served by the best people. There was another group of us...the group that came together to create this...was pretty much equal men and women...that said yes but if we don't start out this way, we will never likely get to that point" (Participant 006).

Based on the participants' interviews, it is evident that there are many types of policies that could be established that would not necessarily threaten the quality of organizational membership. In one instance, a sporting organization mandated that two executive positions be reserved for female administrators who would remain for a minimum of one year at the end of which new administrators could be appointed if needed. Similarly, sporting organizations could also mandate equality on their boards stating for example that there are five male and five female members. The top leadership positions such as President and Vice-President could be elected or appointed regardless of gender. For those sporting organizations sending delegates to larger executive boards, it could be

mandated that there be one delegate from each gender put forward. More importantly, these kinds of initiatives should be subject to review every few years to ensure that the results are encouraging. Because these measures are then not perceived to be permanent, there may be less resistance to their implementation.

Unlike in the past, resistance to these kinds of initiatives has become very subtle. Most sporting leaders agree that there is a lack of female leaders in sport administration and that they are fully committed to increasing their numbers yet nothing seems to happen at the policy level. In her analysis of the implicit and explicit IOC policies, Chase (1992) determined that policies were not clear or powerful enough to cause significant change in the organization. This has remained a problem, as most policies are not associated with compliance strategies hence organizations are not required to implement the policies, an issue which needs to be addressed by sporting organizations. As Hall, Cullen and Slack (1990) stated long ago:

> "The adoption of an equal opportunity policy, and the creation of a mechanism to enforce and monitor it, are both the beginning and ultimate organizational solutions, since both recognize that the problem lies not with the women, but with the organization and its culture" (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1990, p.35).

5.3.4 The organizational development of support systems and social networks

It is important that sporting organizations provide support services such as babysitting for its members in order to enable those who have families or other personal responsibilities to participate to the fullest extent without giving up all that is important to them. For instance, some members may need to take their children with them to meetings as they cannot find or afford to pay for babysitting. In this way, the organization is supporting its members who are more likely to retain these administrators. One woman

recounted that she supported a female leader who needed to take some time off for her family by having two members do her job until she could take on the full time responsibilities again. Another example that was provided was to allow members to work from home and when possible, provide financial assistance to make that possible (i.e. pay for the internet and telephone/fax). If this is not possible then the organization could be flexible with work hours allowing members to work at their convenience, within reason of course. In this way, the organization reaches out to potential female administrators who are in the lower socio-economic groups and provide the governing body with the representation of an important and often, under-represented perspective.

It is also important that networking opportunities between all administrators are provided so that they may build relationships and gain a better understanding of each other's perspectives. In addition, male leaders should make sure to include female administrators in their networks and vice versa as women will not progress in sport administration without the support of the men in the organization.

5.3.5 <u>Leadership training for all sporting leaders</u>

It is important that women continue to develop the skills and competencies needed to succeed in leadership. Though sporting organizations must continue the work they are doing in terms of conferences and research, they could benefit from providing leadership training for all of their members. In this way, every administrator can know what to bring and expect at the boardroom table without singling out women in particular and 'fixing' them up for leadership. Examples include the creation of leadership training handbooks or organizational manuals that describe what is expected of members; how they go about passing initiatives or even the organizational policies that dictate the ways

in which the organization should be managed. This information is essential to the effective administration of the organization and acts as a reference document for all members. In addition, sporting organizations could collaborate with educational institutions to develop leadership training programs for schools and universities thus also providing students with opportunities to become involved in sport leadership. To conclude however, it is important to keep in mind what Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) believe concerning women's individual deficiencies as a barrier to their involvement in high level sport administration:

> "...hard work and individual self-improvement, though necessary for success, cannot independently enable most women to overcome most of the male-preferencing obstacles present in today's workplaces" (p.57).

5.3.6 Shifting the organizational structure and culture to create a supportive environment for female leaders

It is evident that structural changes are needed in order to really open sport administration to women. First, rules and regulations may need to be removed, changed or adapted in order to ensure that they are not inadvertently excluding various groups of individuals. For example, governing bodies should have various ways in which members join boards so that there are a number of different avenues into the organization. Though it is important to have members nominated and elected, some positions can also be appointed so that if there is a group that is under-represented, a representative can then be appointed to the board.

> "We need to understand that the structure of an organization is not neutral, that organizations are structured through an invisible gender-biased view of reality, and that individual solutions will not result in sustainable changes for women in coaching and leadership roles in sport" (Mercier and Werthner, 2001, p.5).

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All administrators, but particularly female leaders are encouraged to question the organizational processes and approaches as well as critically analyze the traditions and culture that are relevant in their sporting organization and where needed, take the steps to initiate change. If women are to enter and progress in sporting leadership in larger numbers, it is essential that the masculine organizational culture become more inclusive of other leadership styles. It is important that all leaders be encouraged to bring their own approach to leadership in sport administration and not be constrained by stereotypes of an 'appropriate' leadership style for each gender. To this end, Shaw and Hoeber (2003) maintain that:

> "The adoption of more inclusive managerial styles that recognize, value, and importantly, *articulate* the value of discourses of femininity and masculinity throughout organizations and, over time, develop an equitable organizational culture" (Shaw and Hoeber, 2003, p.371).

Sporting organizations could offer various forms of support for its members and allow them to give their input in a number of different ways. For example, the organization might encourage members to anonymously post suggestions by mail or e-mail so that they may be more comfortable sharing ideas that are not necessarily aligned with those of the organizational culture. If some leaders feel that something is lacking or that a particular issue needs to be discussed in detail, it is essential that they have the opportunity to strike up a formal or informal committee and make some recommendations. By ensuring that female leaders are comfortable in the organization, it is more likely that they will remain in sport administration long enough to advance into the top leadership roles.

5.3.7 <u>Recognizing female leaders and more broadly, women in sport</u>

It is important that sporting organizations continue to publicly recognize women that are making a significant contribution in to the organization and sport in general. The development of new awards and programs in addition to a public focus on female leaders' successes will not only highlight the work that is being done by women but may entice more of them to become involved in sport administration. In addition, Women and Sport must become a priority at all levels of the Canadian sporting system if the situation for female administrators is to improve dramatically. Organizations need to be proactive around women and sport issues, making these initiatives a priority within sporting organizations by setting and following policies as well as finding ways to enforce them.

It is most important to present advocacy work on behalf of women and other minority groups as a process for better decision-making and not simply a matter of having the same number of men and women in sport administration. This way, members and particularly male members, may see the benefits of these initiatives and support work on women and sport. One respondent commented that organizations and their members need to understand that the Women and Sport Committee is not looking to take over the management of the organization; it is simply looking to improve female representation and involvement in sporting leadership. She says:

> "We're just trying to make sure there are opportunities for women to emerge into leadership which impacts policy, which impacts the participation of women. And yes, we have pretty good success now on the playing field but we don't have that reflected in the technical side, we certainly don't have many women high performance coaches, we don't have many in officiating, so the technical side is very weak, and we certainly don't have it in leadership. So we're just looking to try and create awareness and to create opportunities so that young girls, following in our footsteps, might see that as a viable path for them to follow and you don't go where you don't see yourself being" (Participant 006).

Organizations should greatly encourage the participation of men on Women and Sport Committees in order to create a better understanding of and support for the issues facing women in sporting leadership. If men are more aware of and better understand the issues facing female leaders in sport administration, they may be less likely to resist initiatives promoting an increase of women in sport leadership. Equally important, men could also provide valuable insight and a unique perspective to these issues.

Finally, it is necessary that sporting organizations ensure that the appropriate amounts of dollars are being provided for Women and Sport initiatives and programs aimed at increasing the number of female leaders in the organization. In order to be effective, Women and Sport committees need to secure a certain amount of funding for the development and implementation of such programs and initiatives. It is evident that Women and Sport committees are important in as much as they provide a forum where pertinent issues can be discussed as well as opportunities for its members to accumulate skills and advance in the organization. Unfortunately, these committees are not always effective but without them, issues may be left unresolved. For this reason, efforts concerning women and sport must be sustained if the position of women in all areas of the sporting system is to be advanced. For this reason, sporting organizations need to engage sponsors and build partnerships with employers to set up programs for women in sporting leadership such as paid leaves for administrators attending administration-related events. Moreover, federal, provincial and regional government agencies who provide funding to sporting organizations could attach provisions to the money being given to the organization.

When great programs or initiatives are implemented and have demonstrated positive results, sporting organizations should encourage inter-organizational collaboration to establish various policies so that change is not isolated but enacted throughout the entire sporting system. If sporting organizations at all levels come together to work on these initiatives, it will unify the system and coordinate all of the resources available. These relationships may also open opportunities for leaders to be streamlined into higher sporting leadership positions.

In conclusion, there are a number of other issues that are specific to each organization which would require other measures than those mentioned. Accordingly, it is important that organizations elicit the opinions of their members as to what would make them stronger and particularly, how they can recruit and retain female leaders. If the organization remains flexible to the needs of its members, administrators could be more comfortable and satisfied and thus continue to be involved in sport administration avoiding the loss of knowledge and expertise from leaders 'dropping out'.

5.4 FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Although this study was able to provide some interesting data on the high level female leaders' career paths and barriers to involvement in Canadian sport administration, there are many questions and issues that need to be investigated. First, the participants in this study were all in a leadership position in sport administration, though not all at the same level. Nonetheless, the fact that all of these women had reached such a position signifies that only their perspectives have been incorporated into the research findings. For this reason, it is important that other studies examining the under-representation of women in sporting leadership include the viewpoints of women who

have been excluded from leadership positions in sport with the aim of better understanding the reasons for which they are not involved. As Cameron (1996) remarked:

> "...one of the difficulties in terms of promoting women's participation is that those who are already involved, the people who are consulted by policy-makers and funding agencies about barriers, needs, and potential programmes for women, are...women who have already overcome the barriers, or not been affected by them, or prefer that they persist" (p.166).

It is understood that future studies should also elicit the stories and opinions of male administrators.

Certainly, each of the barriers discussed in this study could be further investigated and include various perspectives. For example, it would be important to speak to those administrators involved with the Women and Sport Committees in order to better understand the lack of progress in female representation in sporting leadership. This information could also shed light on the ineffectiveness of policies concerning women and sport and the ways in which the cause could be better served. Another example concerns the issue of turf-protection which would provide an interesting area of analysis for those wanting to better understand the approaches and viewpoints of women in top leadership positions with respect to the relationships that exist among female leaders. Similarly, future research should address the gender relations that exist between male and female members in sporting organizations and particularly, at the highest level of governance where men are even more prevalent.

It is evident that societal, political and structural change is needed in order to increase the number of female administrators in high level sport. As shown, the organizational structure and culture that exist can constrain women's leadership opportunities although a deeper analysis of organizational policies and processes in

various sporting organizations on an international scale could reveal noteworthy comparative data.

Once there are more women involved in the higher levels of sport administration, it will be possible to assess if female leaders begin to reinvent themselves and alter their approaches to leadership. The true test for women in sporting leadership will be when young women coming into administration are no longer the firsts to reach these positions but the 10th and so on. Future studies need to examine the ways in which female leaders have tailored their leadership approaches to be successful in sport administration but also the acceptance of women in powerful positions at every level of sport. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see if some sporting leaders change their approaches as organizations begin to diversify and expand. Additionally, future research could delve deeper into various types of sporting organizations and the differences in access and progression that exist for women in sporting leadership. For example, various sports could be compared in terms of female athletes competing and their representation at the governance level as it is believed that 'feminine' sports are more likely to have more women leaders at the administrative level.

Finally, future studies should continue to advance theories concerning organizational processes as well as gender relations in male dominated environments such as sport administration. The more research that is generated about women in high level sporting leadership, the likelier it will be that their work in sport administration will be accepted and celebrate in addition to the prospect that their representation will become equal to that of their male counterparts.

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APPENDICES

Canadian Olympic male and female athlete participation rates and medal winnings for the Summer Olympic Games 1984-2006

SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES	MALE ATHLETES	%	FEMALE ATHLETES	%	TOTAL ATHLETES
1984 SUMMER – LOS ANGELES	262	63%	151	37%	413
1988 SUMMER - SEOUL	206	65%	109	35%	315
1992 SUMMER – BARCELONA	185	61%	118	39%	303
1996 SUMMER – ATLANTA ***year of the woman***	152	50%	153	50%	305
2000 SUMMER – SYDNEY	147	51%	143	49%	290
2004 SUMMER – ATHENS	135	51%	132	49%	267

SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES	MALE MEDALS	%	FEMALE MEDALS	%	TOTAL MEDALS
1984 SUMMER – LOS ANGELES	28	64%	16	36%	44
1988 SUMMER - SEOUL	6	60%	4	40%	10
1992 SUMMER – BARCELONA	11	61%	7	39%	18
1996 SUMMER – ATLANTA	11	50%	11	50%	22
2000 SUMMER - SYDNEY	7	50%	7	50%	14
2004 SUMMER – ATHENS	6	50%	6	50%	12

Canadian Olympic male and female athlete participation rates and medal winnings for the Winter Olympic Games 1984-2006

WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES	MALE ATHLETES	%	FEMALE ATHLETES	%	TOTAL ATHLETES
1984 WINTER - SARAJEVO	49	71%	20	29%	69
1988 WINTER – CALGARY	85	74%	30	26%	115
1992 WINTER – ALBERTVILLE	85	73%	32	27%	117
1994 WINTER – LILLEHAMMER	65	67%	32	33%	97
1998 WINTER – NAGANO	89	58%	65	42%	154
2002 WINTER – SALT LAKE CITY	87	55%	70	45%	157
2006 WINTER – TORINO	116	56%	90	44%	206

WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES	MALE MEDALS	%	FEMALE MEDALS	%	TOTAL MEDALS
1984 WINTER - SARAJEVO	4	100%	0	0%	4
1988 WINTER – CALGARY	2	33%	4	67%	6 (5)
1992 WINTER – ALBERTVILLE	5	56%	4	44%	9 (7)
1994 WINTER – LILLEHAMMER	8	57%	6	43%	14 (13)
1998 WINTER – NAGANO	8	53%	7	47%	15
2002 WINTER – SALT LAKE CITY	8	44%	10	56%	18 (17)
2006 WINTER – TORINO	8	33%	16	67%	24

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: 'BREAKING IN': WOMEN'S ACCESS TO HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT LEADERSHIP IN CANADA

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking this time to sit down with me and tell me about your life as a sport administrator.

My interest in doing this interview is to get some of your thoughts and perceptions about your experiences in sport administration. ███████████████████ ████████████████████████████████ Because the nature of the interview is to map your personal career story, there will be instances where questions may delve into private aspects of your life. If at any time, you become uncomfortable with the discussion, you can let me know and we will move on to another question.

Before we begin, I will have you sign this consent form which is simply a formality. It includes a brief summary of the study, the purpose and procedures and a statement of confidentiality. Here is a copy for your records.

If you don't mind, I will tape the interview because I really want to focus on what you are saying and I'm not great at listening while taking detailed notes. I also want to ensure that I have an accurate record of our conversation so that I don't misinterpret your comment. Because the interview is confidential, only I will have access to this tape and once the interview has been transcribed, the data will be erased.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions

A) Career paths

First, I would like you to talk a little about your entry into sport administration and your progression to your position ██████████████████████████.

1) Tell me about how you initially became involved in sport administration?

Probe:

███████████████████████████████████████
█████████████████████████ How do you feel your sporting background has influenced your entry into sport administration? ████████████████
████████████████████

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- Tell me a little about your role ██████████████████████?

  2) How and when did you first become a member ████████?

Probe:

- ██
████████████████████████████
Specifically, how did you come to █████████████? How is this similar OR different from other ████ members, both male and female? That is, how do other members come to their ███████████ positions?

- What exactly is your role ███████████████████ What do you see as your role; that is, what are you particularly interested in?

- How long have you been involved in sport administration?

- I am interested in the average age of female administrators. How old were you when you became a member ████████?

For the rest of the interview, I would like you to focus on your experiences ██████████.

- In order to better understand the significance of mentoring relationships ██████ ████ tell me what you believe has been the role of social networks in leading to your █████████████████ position? Was this mentor a man or woman? Who do you believe are the most influential members in social networks?

- I have read in your CV that you have held a number of important administrative positions both in the voluntary and professional sectors. Of these positions, which roles have been most influential in leading you to your position ██████████

- What do you feel are the most pressing issues facing ████████?

- Where do you feel you are having the biggest impact during your time ████████ ██████

Now I'd like to discuss the leadership characteristics that, in your opinion, are required or encouraged for high level sporting leaders.

  3) What do you believe are the skills or qualities you bring ████████? How is this similar or different from other ████ members, both male and female?

  4) We know that women have played a significant role in promoting and supporting other women into sporting leadership and throughout their careers. ████████████ ██ ██

██████████████████████████████ As a high level female sporting leader, how, if at all, have you viewed your role in advocating for other women and/or women's issues, ██████████████████████ ? Have you experienced any resistance in this work?

B) Barriers/Diversity

1) What are some of the challenges or barriers that you have come across throughout your career and some of the strategies you have used to manage them.

███
███

2) What role do you women have played ████████ and what is the value in having women participate in the administration ████████ ?

3) Why do you believe very few women are involved in high level sport administration?

Probe:

- ██
  ████████████████████████████ Do you feel it was harder being a woman on this Committee? Have there been other occasions were you, as a woman, were a minority in a particular role in sport administration?

- What about the balance between your career and family?

4) Some people claim that, to be competitive in a global marketplace, organizations should strive for a socio-demographically diverse membership. Thinking about the general membership ████████ how is diversity accounted for and do you believe this to be important in moving ████████ forward?

██
██
██

6) What are you future plans in sport administration?

D) Conclusion

As we've covered all of my questions, I'd just like to conclude by thanking you again for having taken the time to tell me about yourself. Is there anything else you would like to add or any additional comments you'd like to make?

Demographic Table – A General Profile of the Participants

Demographic characteristic	Number of participant with profile
Age	
25-29	1 (10%)
30-34	2 (20%)
35-39	3 (30%)
40-44	2 (20%)
44-49	1 (10%)
50+	1 (10%)
Race/Ethnicity	
White	9 (90%)
Other	1 (10%)
Class	
Middle to upper class	10 (100%)
Education	
University degree	7 (70%)
Graduate studies	3 (30%)
Professional occupation	
Lawyer	2 (20%)
Physical education teacher	1 (10%)
Sport administrator	4 (40%)
Private business owner	2 (20%)
Retired	1 (10%)
Marital status	
Married/De Facto relationship	8 (80%)
Unmarried	2 (20%)
Children/Co-dependents	
Children	6 (60%)
Athletic background	
Regional/Provincial	9 (90%)
National	7 (70%)
International	5 (50%)
Years of experience in sport administration	
5-10 years	4 (40%)
10-15 years	3 (30%)
15-25 years	3 (30%)
Sport administration position	
Paid	3 (30%)
Volunteer	7 (70%)
Level of leadership	
Regional/Provincial	10 (100%)
National	8 (80%)
International	3 (30%)