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Canadian Hockey Literature
for Young Adults
Highlighting Identity, Family, and Gender
in Selected Novels

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Foreword

Being a hockey player has shaped my life in numerous aspects. It not only gave me the chance to develop a handful of character traits and to test my strength and determination in the championships, the sport also motivated and enabled me to live in Canada for a while, a country to which I personally feel closely connected. When I learned about the possibility to combine my favourite topics, hockey, Canada, and young adult literature, it was clear to me that this thesis will feel like a part of me.

This thesis not only brings together my main interests, but it is also embedded into my teacher's studies – a perfect match. As a teacher in secondary schools, I will be reading young adult literature with my students in English as well as German class, thereby touching upon many of the themes discussed in this thesis. My research for this work will thus not end in the writing and printing of this thesis, but will be even more useful in my professional life.

My own experience with hockey includes playing the Austrian National Women's League 2 in my teenage years, in which I had the chance to not only play with the best female players in Austria, but also to experience hockey culture at the rink and in the team. For one season, at age 15, I moved to Canada to play with a girl's midget team and learned the Canadian way of playing and living hockey. After a break of several years, I joined an all-women's team in the Austrian National Women's League and re-entered the world of hockey. Playing the position of the goaltender, I managed to take part in practices and scrimmages in mixed and all-men's teams as well, which made the male component of hockey accessible. The sport and culture of hockey are often described as a world of their own, so this first-hand experience as a goalie has made the understanding of hockey literature easy, as it enabled me to relate to situations described as well as to understand the terminology and ideology behind certain events.

Based on my own hockey history, I am especially drawn to stories about female players, especially in the male realm of hockey. Thus, gender issues will play a major role in this thesis. A second point of interest is that of the position of the goaltender. However, stories about this particular position are rarely to be found. With this thesis, I hope to raise awareness for a genre that has been neglected until recently.

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Introduction

Literature for children and young adults is often neglected in university courses although extensive research is available. Sports literature represents a second group of texts that is even less frequently discussed in academic contexts as they may be regarded as non-literary production of low quality. However, both branches of literature play an important role in the everyday lives of readers and sometimes also present and shape a nation's identity, especially when the sport portrayed in the books is considered a country's national pastime.

In this diploma thesis, the focus thus lies on a very specific aspect of Canadian culture: hockey literature. In a country where ice hockey is played, watched, and lived by a large part of the population, their favourite sport is bound to have an influence on the country's literary production. Hockey literature has not been extensively researched, with only a few names linked to the field. Research on hockey literature for young adults had not yet been attempted, which leaves a gap that this diploma thesis ventures to address – and maybe close. It will thus be a thesis that aims to combine existing research of both fields of literature addressed above in order to pave the way for more extensive and in-depth research on Canadian hockey literature for young adults.

The present thesis aims at conducting a thematic study of the corpus described. The primary research question thus could be stated as follows: Which themes are prominent in selected examples of Canadian hockey literature for young adults and how do they relate to previous research on hockey literature and young adult literature? Although the research question seems to be quite general, it meets the aim of the thesis to give an overview of the literature available as well as of the most important themes embedded therein. These prominent themes will be categorized and illustrated with examples from the literature selected. Furthermore, the findings will be contrasted with secondary literature on both branches of literary research mentioned before. A special interest lies in the representation of gender and the lingering question, 'Are hockey books for boys only?', which will be addressed separately.

The thesis is structured along the lines of a hockey game. Before starting the game with a face-off, the players have to complete a warm-up. This warm-up introduces the 'players', the most important terms and concepts in this study and an overview of previous research related to the topic of this thesis. In the second chapter, the opening of the game, a first foray into Canadian hockey literature for young adults will be made and the representation of the sport in literature will be shown. The third chapter, titled 'The Game', is divided into three periods, each addressing a separate major theme within Canadian hockey literature for young adults: identity, rules, and growing up; family issues, and gender issues. The overtime allows for a short discussion of minor themes encountered in the reading of primary literature. If it is very intense, the game ends with a shootout, which will be a summary of the main discoveries. Finally, a post-game recap will conclude the game.

As both primary and secondary literature for this thesis is largely written in Canadian English, the present text is fully drafted in this variety. This choice is primarily based on the facilitation of readability through uniform spelling, but also takes into account production matters.

1 Warm-up: The Players

1.1 The Game: Hockey

Hockey is not important; but neither is it *not* not important. (Blake 11)

Hockey has been described as the fastest team sport (Pavliš 9), as the crown prince of sports in Europe (Kränzle and Brinke 9), as a growing sport even in warm climate with a growing popularity amongst female players (Corsi and Hannon xiii) and as the national sport of Canada (Justice Laws Website). But in order to fully understand hockey literature, the basic rules and characteristics of the game have to be familiar to the reader. In addition, to understand the relevance of hockey literature in Canadian national culture (or in individual cultures¹), the most important information on Canadian hockey is presented in the following subchapter.

1.1.1 Definition and Outline

For the International Olympic Committee (IOC) the sport is called "ice hockey" but when in Canada, do what the Canadians do and drop the ice because it's called "hockey". Seriously. (*Wheneearth.net*)

Hockey so dominates Canadian conversation that we regularly drop the qualifier. Only foreigners refer to 'ice hockey'. (Blake 3)

Hockey as a standalone term could be mistaken as ambiguous: When entering the term hockey into the search on Merriam-Webster, the dictionary asks for clarification on the type of hockey – field or ice hockey (MW *hockey*). This thesis is centred on the type referred to in the introduction: ice hockey. However, literature and Canadians rarely use the full term, the simple and short hockey replaces the unambiguous proper name in most instances (see Blake, Corsi and Hannon, Daccord). But what is hockey?

¹ The question of national culture is only partly discussed in the course of this thesis. It shall be noted that the author is aware of the non-existence of a specific national culture. However, the image of hockey as national sport of Canada occurs so frequently in literature and media that this picture will be continued in the present thesis. The discussion of national culture and national identity is left to the field of cultural studies.

Hockey, or ice hockey, is “a game played on an ice rink by two teams of six players on skates whose object is to drive a puck into the opponents’ goal with a hockey stick.” (MW *ice hockey*) This definition gives a good overview of the main ingredients it takes to play a game of hockey. However, only these parts could also lead to a game of shinny hockey, a less regulated, casual form of hockey. Thus, a few more rules have to be established to form a proper explanation of the game. Hockey is regulated by the IIHF, the International Ice Hockey Federation, which publishes the rules of the game, certifies referees, and holds international tournaments. Many players play in organized leagues, which in turn adopt (and sometimes adapt) the rules of the IIHF. In the following definition, a hockey game in a league such as the National Hockey League (NHL) will be seen as a standard procedure as it seems to be the norm of what readers and players understand as a hockey game. It has to be noted that less regulated or unregulated varieties of the game such as shinny hockey or pond hockey also frequently take place in Canada (Blake 20-21), which will be discussed in chapter 2.

The stage on which every hockey game is played is called a rink, a flat ice surface divided by two blue lines into three zones for each team: a defending zone, a neutral zone, and an attacking zone. Every team consists of six players on the ice: a goaltender, mostly referred to as goalie, and five skaters which are divided into defense (two players) and offense (left wing, center and right wing). For most instances of a game, these positions are all filled. However, the skaters themselves change frequently so that each professional team usually consists of up to four full lines for both defense and offense. Each team thus includes more than one player for a specific position, the best players usually in the first line, the weakest ones make up the fourth line. All skaters are equipped with protective gear, ice skates and a stick to play the puck.

The aim of the game is to score more goals than the opponent, using a rubber cylinder called puck, which is passed and shot on the rink with hockey sticks without violating the rules (IIHF 37). In order to score or prevent a goal, the players have to work together and are allowed to use a limited amount of body contact that is regulated in the IIHF rule book. In male leagues, bodychecks against opposing players are allowed and usually seen as a character trait of the game itself, as the IIHF states that “[b]odychecking is an integral element of the game. It is the most com-

mon method of gaining control of the puck. For a bodycheck to be legal, it must meet a series of criteria specified by these rules.” (37) Women’s and youth leagues generally sanction body contact with penalties. Dangerous or unjust behaviour is penalized by sending the player to the penalty box for a specific time frame, or to the dressing room, thereby ending the player’s participation in the game (IIHF 69). The penalties are called by two to four referees who oversee and sometimes may influence the outcome of a game.

After a warm-up, each “game consists of three periods of 20 minutes plus overtime and a penalty-shot shootout if required.” (IIHF 37) As opposed to soccer, the score clock is stopped every time the game is interrupted for a breaking of rules or the scoring of a goal, thus resulting in 60 minutes of game action. If the game is tied after the last period, the league may call for overtime and a shootout. The rules on overtimes and shootouts vary from league to league in terms of time, but overtime ranges from 5 to 20 minutes game action and is usually conducted as sudden-death, meaning the first goal scored will end the game. If no goal is scored, selected players from each team will take penalty shots against the opposing team’s goaltender in a 1-on-1 situation until one team has scored more goals (out of six penalties each or after sudden-death).

The rule book of the IIHF includes a total of 226 rules on the rink, players, equipment, rules, penalties, statistics and referee signals which would be far too complex to produce in this thesis, but the most important characteristics have been presented in this chapter to allow a fuller understanding of some aspects of hockey literature. In order to understand literature about hockey, readers and researchers should be at least somewhat familiar with the sport as certain elements of the sport, such as rules or the compilation of a team, are often major aspects of the texts. Without understanding their relevance in the sport, the implications of these elements used in literature cannot be grasped in their entirety.

1.1.2 Relevance of Hockey in Canada

Hockey captures the essence of Canadian experience in the New World. In a land so inescapably and inhospitably cold, hockey is the chance of life, and an affirmation that despite the deathly chill of winter we are alive. (Stephen Leacock²)

Stephen Leacock is not the only Canadian referring to hockey as a type of national sport or a typical Canadian pastime. The sports section of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) website lists the NHL as the first league to select for more detailed news and the scoreboard on the right-hand side of the page is preset to show the most recent NHL results (CBC *Sports*). The NHL page then offers an extensive view of news, statistics, results, teams, videos and background stories (CBC *NHL Home*), much more detailed than any other type of sports the CBC website reports on. For both readers and reporters, hockey thus seems to be the most important sport within the spectrum of Canadian sports, but this may be a result of the success of Canadian players.

Canada is home to the best hockey teams in 2015: the men's team won the gold medal in the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship, the boys won the IIHF World Junior Championship and the Women's national team came in second at the IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship and at the IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship (Hockey Canada 10). Both the Canadian men's national team and the women's national team listed first in the 2015 world ranking (IIHF *Men's*, IIHF *Women's*). Canada itself has more than 7,500 hockey rinks; the country is thus home to roughly half of the (registered) rinks worldwide (IIHF *Survey*). The country not only has the most successful players and plenty of opportunities to practice the sport, it also has a large number of professional and recreational players to choose from.

The number of players who are considered to be participating in the sport in Canada varies from source to source. For 2015, the IIHF lists 721,504 registered players (IIHF *Survey*) and Hockey Canada puts its number of members at 639,510 (16), while Statistics Canada gives a number of 1,298,000 hockey players in Canada for the year 2005 (*Most Practiced Sports*). The difference in numbers stems from various affiliations with a specific type of membership. It can be assumed that the

² This quote is used frequently in Canada, among others on governmental websites (Government of Canada *He Shoots, He Scores!*) and in articles (Vancouver Island University Press).

highest number includes players that participate in organized leagues, but also amateur players. The lowest number, that of Hockey Canada, lists all players that are registered with the organization from House League downwards, but some independent leagues exist. Therefore, the number does not represent all hockey players in Canada (Wikipedia *Hockey Canada*). The most accurate number seems to be that of the IIHF which represents all officially registered players who are allowed to participate in official leagues and tournaments in a given year. However, it has to be kept in mind that hockey is also played outside of organized leagues, by which reasoning the number given by Statistics Canada may also be valid. The number of players thus varies depending on the level of participation. Registered players seem to amount to roughly 720,000, while almost the same number of unregistered players enjoys the game outside of official leagues. The relevance of hockey in Canada is not only underlined by the large amount of players, but also by the fact that hockey is the sport with the second most players after golf (Statistics Canada *Most played sports*).

Hockey is seen as a largely male-dominated sport, but children, young adults and women are becoming more and more influential in hockey culture. In 2005, 11 % of all children aged 5 to 14 played hockey (Statistics Canada *Top 10*). The number of registered hockey players has been rising considerably, with an increase of more than 15 % in the last nine years, and an increase of over 25 % amongst female players (Hockey Canada 16). While hockey is still a niche for female players with a share of 4.4 % of all female athletes, it could be seen as a very common sport amongst men (23.3 %) and children aged 5 to 14 (22 %) who practice in sports (CBC *Hockey*, numbers from 2010). Roughly 12 % of all registered hockey players in Canada are female and 511,000 players, or more than 70 % of all registered players, are in U20 teams and thus to be considered children or young adults (IIHF *Survey*). However, there are no such statistics for the many casual players in Canada. It can only be assumed that a large number of former registered players continues on as casual players in unregistered teams, not playing in leagues³. Although hockey still seems to be a male-dominated sport, female players increase in number and the vast num-

³ In a short survey among ten female Canadian hockey players, reasons to quit hockey after becoming an adult may include family planning, relocation, difficulties in finding a new team, work commitments, or health issues, but all persons interviewed stated that they either continued to play casually, stopped only for a short period of time or want to start playing again as soon as they can.

ber of young players in organized teams and leagues underlines the importance of the sport as a childhood activity.

As seen above, the sport is not only favoured amongst professional players, but also a prominent leisure activity, both the rink on and off – in front of the TV. The world's most famous hockey league, the NHL, is still mainly a Canadian undertaking. Until 2015, Canadians made up more than half of all players in the league, reaching a low at 49.7 % for the season of 2015-16 (Seravalli). Although more than 80 % of all NHL players were born Canadian in 1980 (ibid.), the number is still impressive in 2015 considering that only seven out of the thirty teams participating are based in Canada (NHL *Teams*). The major league is also a main interest for many Canadians whether active hockey players or not. In 2013, the first game between the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Montreal Canadiens was seen by an average of 3.3 million viewers, but peaked at 9.2 million Canadians according to CBC (Perry). It is thus a safe assumption that several million Canadians are in one way or another interested in the game of hockey, may it be through active participation, watching broadcasts, or at the rinks. According to a 2012 survey, 52 % of Canadians describe hockey as an important “source of personal or collective pride in Canada” (Boswell). Although the same survey suggests that roughly two thirds of the population have not watched a NHL game from the stands within the five years prior which is interpreted as a lack of interest, the remaining number of spectators is still very significant; even more so considering Canada's geography and the low number of teams in the league (Boswell). Even if the NHL only reaches a third of the country's population, it can still be assumed that the level of interest is much higher for hockey than for other sports.

Hockey has not only been embraced by Canadians all over the country, it has also been referred to as a national symbol in writing and media. The sport of ice and sticks is frequently presented as a national sport and in a very positive light, as can be seen in the Canadian Encyclopedia.

Hockey is Canada's official national winter sport and perhaps its greatest contribution to world sport. Canada is considered the birthplace of ice hockey, and Canadians generally regard the sport as their own. Over the last century, Canadian men, women, and children have passionately participated in hockey at all levels and have avidly watched the sport with great interest nationwide. One could argue that hockey is the sport that has united Canadians the most, espe-

cially in international competitions. Canadian players form the backbone of many teams in the National Hockey League and overseas leagues, and Canadian men and women have had considerable success in international competition. (*Ice Hockey*)

While this quote refers to some of the arguments that have been presented previously, the overall tone of the excerpt could lead to the assumption that the importance of the sport is overestimated by the authors. However, the National Sports Act of Canada, passed in 1994, declares “the game commonly known as ice hockey [...] to be the national winter sport of Canada” along with Lacrosse as national summer sport (Justice Laws Website). The fact that a law has been passed in order to recognize the sport as Canada’s national sport underlines the importance that Canadians – or at least Canadian politicians – consider hockey to be part of the national identity.

The country’s national identity is not only represented in its laws, but also in writing about said identity and culture. A large number of humorous books include hockey as one marker of being Canadian. Roste and Wilson portray a hockey player on the front cover of their *Xenophobe’s Guide to the Canadians*, thus underlining the importance of the game. In the text itself, they dedicate a whole chapter to hockey, titled ‘Obsessions’. “All sports pale in comparison with hockey, the sacred cow of Canadian sport. Even adding ‘ice’ before the word hockey is superfluous. Hockey is not the most important thing in life, hockey *is* life,” is how the authors describe the relationship between Canadians and their national sport (38). Relevant allusions to the Canadians’ relationship with hockey are the interpretation of the Hockey Night in Canada theme song as “unofficial national anthem” (ibid.), the stereotype that “[e]very Canadian boy dreams of being a professional hockey player and of one day making it to the National Hockey League” (ibid.), and the expectation to know the most famous hockey players, which have freeways (and many other places) named after them (39). The authors claim that an ice rink was built in every village as one of the first communal buildings (40). Ferguson on the other hand takes a harsh approach and compares “[i]ce hockey and ICBMs. Missiles and rubber pucks. In Canada, hockey is war” (106). He states that “Canada has never been a world power, but this is only true as far as Everything Except Hockey (EEH) is concerned” (109) and gives a short recapitulation of the Summit Series between the Canadian and the Soviet national teams in 1972 which caused “two thirds of the population at that

time” to either watch or listen to the final game (109-114), and served the basis for “the real pinnacle of Canadian civilization [which] occurred on September 28, 1972, when Saint Paul scored that winning goal” (116). Although the comparison of hockey games to the cold war demands a very special kind of humour, Ferguson’s chapter underlines the importance of and identification with the game during unstable times. The approaches in non-fiction about Canadians can take a nostalgic and idealized turn or present heroic moments in the history of Canadian hockey as markers of civilization – either way, hockey is presented as a means of uniting the country.

When looking at humorous books about being Canadian, acting like a Canadian and becoming Canadian, hockey plays an even greater role. Colburn and Sorensen mention hockey on the back cover and in big letters as well as in the table of contents. They compare the territory of the country to that of the U.S. in terms of hockey rinks and state that more Canadians watched the 1972 Summit Series final than the moon landing in 1969 (21). Important dates in Canadian history include the first Stanley Cup in 1893, the 1972 win against Russia and Wayne Gretzky’s transfer to the LA Kings in 1988, according to the authors (24-26). Furthermore, in the enumeration of many Canadian inventions, hockey-related objects play a major role: air hockey, the goalie mask, ice hockey and the Zamboni were all invented in Canada (50-55). The chapter on sports is largely dedicated to hockey, with side notes on other sports and a mere page on curling (76-85), presenting it as the true Canadian sport:

In Canadian households, there’s no debating whether the kids should play soccer, baseball, football, or basketball. They get sticks for Christmas, and they play hockey. A thrilling hockey tableau even graces the back of the Canadian five dollar bill. (78)

The authors furthermore characterize hockey as “the common language of Canada”, followed by several hockey-related metaphors and their explanations (78-79) as well as hockey terminology for romantic encounters (80-81). The short book by Colburn and Sorensen thus features hockey on many of the 95 pages and readers will surely be convinced that the sport is indeed very important to many Canadians.

Other authors, such as Will and Ian Ferguson, portray hockey’s influence more subtly. In the book on *How to Be a Canadian*, they discuss the *Hockey Night in Canada*

theme song as national anthem (18), which seems to be a common topic, as well as the mullet and its nickname “the hockey haircut” (33), also included in Colburn and Sorensen’s presentation of hockey culture (82). The difference in presentation between the books is that Ferguson and Ferguson present hockey as important but on the decline as Canadian teams were much more successful in the old days, or, as they put it, “Canadians used to be real good at hockey. Now they suck.” (125) However, they give a sarcastic overview of the Canadian NHL teams and assert that “[h]ockey matters to Canadians. Canadians care deeply” (112-113). Consistent with previously discussed writings, books intended to give a guideline on how to be Canadian may choose either a very positive or a more critical approach to presenting hockey as Canada’s number one sport. What all these books have in common is the assertion that hockey is a very important topic in Canada.

In literary research, Blake describes hockey as a prevalent theme in Canadian life, as

it beclouds other cultural options or more serious issues. Hockey culture surrounds Canadians to the extent that even those who do not like the sport will recognize many of the allusions to great players or events such as Maurice Richard, Paul Henderson’s 1972 goal, Bobby Orr in general, or Don Cherry and his suits. (4)

However, Blake also reminds the reader to be cautious that hockey should not be regarded as the essence of the nation’s identity, as even though the sport is often associated with Canada, its relevance is often exaggerated (ibid.). Nevertheless, hockey is used as “an easy marker for, or symbol of, Canada” and a “point of entry to Canadian culture” (ibid.) as a common cultural pastime, invented and created by the people and not by nature (5). Blake claims that hockey is a unifying symbol as it overcomes difference in ancestry (e.g. of immigrants), time, language, soil, and climate (17-19). The game is thus not only important for Canadians, but also for immigrants who long to integrate and immerse themselves into Canadian culture. As a national symbol, the rules and material required for participation “are the same from coast to coast” (20), which allows every person all over the vast country to be a part of the same game and to have shared experiences. The difference in language and mind-set between Anglophones and Francophones is overcome on the \$5 bill, where a quote from Roch Carrier’s short story *The Hockey Sweater* states that “our

real life was on the ice” or “la vraie vie était sur la patinoire” (21). According to Blake, “[t]he game has a mythic presence in Canada, surrounding us with a hazy system of binding cultural symbols” and every Canadian is assumed to be a hockey player (22). One possible reason for such a large audience may be its accessibility and the low threshold of “the minimum comprehension required to watch and derive *something* from the game”, which facilitates the adoption of hockey as a national symbol among many Canadians (29). Although Blake describes hockey as a marker of Canadianness (38), it has to be kept in mind that individuals have different interests and that an affiliation to hockey is no prerequisite for being Canadian.

Being Canadian is often paired with watching or playing hockey, not only in print, but also on the Internet. Humorous and serious lists of Canadian stereotypes, most Canadian things, and things you should/should not do mention hockey in one or another way. The websites go from rescheduling a political debate because of a hockey playoff game to a Zamboni crossing sign, and to skates on telephone lines (Misener). Other lists mention hockey skills as a “totally Canadian [thing] that no other country will ever have” (Strutner), underline their argument of the polite and apologetic Canadian with a hockey picture (Rane), or list hockey as the number one Canadian thing that comes to mind on travel blogs (Justtravelous.com). Both Canadians and foreigners thus seem to value hockey as a very Canadian trait. One blog even sees hockey’s “place in the culture [...] closer to religion than a simple sporting pastime” and mentions the ubiquitous hockey rink, the early introduction to the game and the unifying quality of the sport (Wheneearth.net). Reid even cautions visitors to refrain from negative comments about hockey when speaking to Canadians and refers to the different attitudes of supporters such as Toronto Maple Leafs fans who will find such comments funny or Montreal Canadiens fans who will feel easily offended. It also seems that every Canadian has a strong opinion about the Torontonians NHL team, the Maple Leafs, which is either supported with an enormous amount of enthusiasm or hated equally passionately (Whatculture.com). All these lists of Canadian stereotypes, even if they are not based on scientific research, show that hockey is one of the first topics that come to mind when thinking about the land of beavers and maple leaves. It can therefore be concluded that hockey is perceived and presented as a national symbol by both Canadians and foreigners.

Many Canadians regard the assertion that hockey was invented in Canada as the ultimate proof of the national heritage claim. However, the various sources do not seem to agree on actual dates. Colburn and Sorensen set the first recorded game at “Christmas Day, 1855, in Kingston, Ontario” (52). Kränzle and Brinke mention First Nations playing hockey without skates in 16th century Quebec, but refer to William Fleet Robertson, who first wrote down rules for the game in 1878 (10-11). Lavall mentions the First Nations myth, but attributes the game to Dutch and English players in the 15th century. According to him, the decisive feature of the puck was introduced around 1880 and he names Montreal as the birthplace of the modern form of hockey (32). A different approach is pursued by the Society for International Hockey Research, which places precursors of hockey, shinty and hurling, in Scotland around 1600 and in Ireland in 1740, thereby claiming a European birthplace (*The Birthplace*). However, the report fails to put the different sports into context so that drawing any relation between hockey and its precursors is not possible from the data presented, which leads to the conclusion that even though similar types of sports may have been played in other parts of the world, the Canadian claim of having invented hockey cannot be fully refuted. Even more so, the Society marks a game on 3 March 1875 in Montreal as the first formal hockey game (*Report*), which could be seen as creation of hockey as we know it today, despite the fact that it most likely “emerged from a blend of old folk games played by native tribes and European immigrants” and can therefore not be called an invention per se (Hardy and Holman 22). The IIHF dates “structured ice hockey [...] in the mid-1800s in the eastern parts of Canada” where James G. Creighton brought first rules “from Nova Scotia [...] to Montreal in the 1870s”. The first pre-announced game played with a puck is recorded as having taken place on 3 March 1875 at the Victoria Skating Rink in Montreal and the first organized team as well as the first published hockey rules appeared in 1877 (IIHF *History*). Although the dates and names vary, all consulted sources point to Canada as the birthplace of hockey somewhere in the second half of the 19th century. It seems that even though hockey left its first hunting grounds and became known all over the world, it is not wrong in claiming Canadian nationality.

This present chapter has given three major reasons why hockey is important to Canadian culture: Firstly, there are many players and even more spectators of the game which led to its naming as the national sport of Canada. Secondly, various

sources from printed books to newspapers to posts on the Internet consider hockey to be a true Canadian sport and present the sport and the country as having a close relationship. Thirdly and finally, hockey can be considered to be a child of Canada with Montreal as its birthplace. It has been shown that hockey is not only a true Canadian sport, but that a large number of people identify with it and consider it a part of Canadian culture.

Hockey saturates Canadian life to an absurd extent[; it] is an easy marker for, or symbol of, Canada, and hockey is [...] often naturalized in Canadian thought as if it grew magically from the soil or ice. [...] There are reasons why so many Canadians feel passionately about hockey, and a logic or causality exists behind its having been adopted as a national game. (Blake 4-5)

1.2 The Literature: Canada, Hockey, and Young Adult Novels

In the previous chapter, hockey as a game and its relevance to Canadian identity and culture have been described. When the game of hockey is combined with literature, a nation and a specific target group, we arrive at the crux of this thesis: Canadian hockey literature for young adults. In this chapter, the separate building blocks of this complex term will be defined by looking at literature in general, Canadian literature, hockey literature, and young adult novels, which will in turn be divided into definitions of young adult literature and novels. In the final step, all of these definitions are brought together to merge into the main criteria for selecting primary books in this thesis: the definition of Canadian hockey literature for young adults.

1.2.1 Literature

The present thesis is a literary research paper and therefore primarily concerned with literature. However, literature is a very general term defining many things, among them prose, poetry, and drama, scientific writing, printed texts, or even a “body of written works produced in a particular language, country, or age” (MW *Literature*). In this chapter, the various notions of literature will be discussed and narrowed down in order to provide a concise definition for this thesis.

Cuddon gives an extensive definition of the term literature as

[a] broad term which usually denotes works which belong to the major genres: epic, drama, lyric, novel, short story, ode [...]. Traditionally, if we describe something as 'literature', as opposed to anything else, the term carries with it qualitative connotations which imply that the work in question has superior qualities; that it is well above the ordinary run of written works. (404)

In this definition, it becomes clear that the term literature can be approached in various ways, one of them being the limitation to certain genres, such as novel or epic, the other one being the limitation to works of good quality. Categorizing texts based on their quality always carries a subjective tone as such estimation is often a very personal matter (Peck and Coyle 220-221). In the definition of Cuddon, it becomes clear that the canon is always challenged, also by genres such as children's literature, which has "made this term vastly more comprehensive and far less indicative of aesthetic hierarchy" (405). It could therefore be simply said that the criterion of quality is not directly applicable to the definition of literature, especially not in the realm of young adult literature. Furthermore, a discussion of young adult literature or children's literature always carries the problem that the persons responsible for their categorization are usually not the intended readers and that these readers' opinions on whether such books could be called literature are often not taken into account or are considered invalid.

In addition to the approach through genres and quality, Abrams describes literature as "fictional and imaginative writings" (152). However, he adds that the term is further used to describe "any other writings [...] that are especially distinguished in form, expression, and emotional power" (152-153), thereby recurring to the notion of quality. He furthermore mentions literature as a term for all texts on a specific matter and the use of literature as an evaluative as well as a descriptive term (153). Although Abrams departed from a quite narrow and applicable definition, other possible meanings of the term mentioned illustrate the need for a concise definition of what is meant by literature in this thesis.

In the German tradition, Moenninghoff divides the definition of the term literature in three concepts. The first concept describes all written texts, the second comprises all texts that are discussed in literary studies, and the third concept describes all texts of a certain degree of quality, not necessarily of high quality (445).

As this thesis represents literary studies and is embedded in the tradition of such, this concept should be examined further. Moenninghoff enumerates various criteria for literature which always depend on the theory behind the studies: markers such as fictionality, and poeticity, classifications by paratext, or presentations in literary surroundings, as well as the expectations and behaviour of readers (445). Several of these aspects influence the understanding of literature as presented in this thesis.

Definitions of literature vary greatly and allow for a number of different perceptions of the term itself. For this thesis, a precise definition geared towards presenting selection criteria for possible primary texts is necessary. The notion of high quality, related in part to style and poeticity, seems to be outdated and not applicable to young adult literature (see e.g. Cuddon 405). Definitions as wide as the first and the third of Moenninghoff's concepts are not helpful as they present no true selection criteria other than their mere existence. For the purpose of this thesis, literature will thus be simply understood as *fictional written texts*, thereby synonymous with the term fiction. This definition allows for a selection of what would commonly be perceived as literary works without limiting the scope to a subjective estimation of quality. Furthermore, it excludes all non-fiction texts such as biography writing or primarily informative books. The definition also limits the scope to written texts, thereby eliminating videos, movies, audio files, comics, and graphic novels – all of which could in theory be understood as literature. However, the analysis of such works differs greatly from written texts; therefore, the focus on written texts appears to be crucial.

The following chapters explore other components of the term 'Canadian hockey literature for young adults' and refer – in their understanding of literature – to the definition given above, even if the term may be used with other connotations in the original sources. In order to facilitate the compilation of the corpus of primary texts for this thesis, not all literary texts described by the definition of the term literature above will be included in the analysis, an issue which will be further discussed in chapter 1.3.2.

1.2.2 Canadian Literature

On the first glance, Canadian literature could be interpreted as an unambiguous term as it simply describes literature from Canada. However, Canadian literature

becomes more difficult to define when it is looked at in more detail. The essential question circles around what makes a work of literature Canadian? Does a book have to be published in Canada, does the writer have to be born in Canada or does he or she have to be officially Canadian? Does the book have to talk about Canada? Does the language have to be marked as the Canadian variety? In this chapter, the definition of Canadian or national literature shall be discussed and rules for attributing the term 'Canadian' to literary works shall be established.

A first step to understanding the term Canadian literature is to define the geographical boundaries of Canada. As New points out, "stereotypes of Canada suggest a fierce uniformity – but even from earliest times, such generalizations have been inaccurate" (3), and Canadian culture is described as a vastly diverse field. For the purpose of this thesis, despite all the differences between Western and Eastern Canada, Anglophone and Francophone Canada, or even Old Canadians and New Canadians, the term Canadian will be seen as "of or relating to Canada or its people" (MW *Canadian*), whereby the notion of present-day Canada and its borders applies. Having laid out the foundations for Canadian literature, more precise definitions of the combined term will be analyzed.

Mezei defines Canadian literature simply as "the body of written works produced by Canadians", thereby focusing on the nationality of the author (*Canadian literature*). However, Smith presents a more cautious view and describes situations in which the "Canadianness" of authors who were only born in Canada, but moved later on, was heavily disputed. It thus seems that not even Canadians are in agreement on what makes Canadian literature Canadian. Smith also touches upon the question of Canadian content within a publication and describes such a definition as problematic, because "[i]t poses the obviously slippery question of who gets to define, in a nation of immigrants, what a Canadian 'sensitivity' is. As far as sensibilities go, Canadianness is uniquely international" (*Why do we struggle?*). According to the guidelines for the Governor General's literary awards, "[b]ooks must have been written or translated by Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada. They do not need to be residing in Canada." (Canada Council) It seems thus that the citizenship and residency of the authors is the single marking criterion for a book to be called Canadian. The very same definition is supported by The Canadian Encyclopedia (*Literature in English*). It can thus be said that for a book to be considered

Canadian, the author should hold Canadian citizenship and/or currently reside in Canada.

Although the definition of citizenship and residency seem to be quite clear in the context of eligibility for a national award, readers of a book are not always given the information necessary to determine whether either one of the criteria is applicable. The quest for an author's Canadianness is complicated by the fact that many authors have never hit bestseller lists or gotten media coverage, by the lack of information about authors on the websites of publishers and distributors, and by the unavailability or scarceness of secondary literature about the topic. For this thesis, a different approach shall thus be taken. The primary criterion for the identification of the national affiliation of a piece of literature will be the nationality, provenience and residency of the author. However, in instances where such proof cannot be found, the country of publication may serve as a marker for the nation in which the book was primarily produced. In times of digital publishing, some publications may lack this information. Secondary literature claims that "almost all of [hockey literature] has been published by Canadian authors" (Blake 7), which will be employed as a reason for including relevant works of unknown national affiliation if the themes within the text are seen as a valid addition to the thesis. When in doubt – and especially in the case of recurring plot lines or themes – the book in question will not be included in this thesis.

A second line of categorization can be found in Buma's discussion of Canadian hockey novels in which he states that the Canadianness of a text stems from the "predominantly Canadian characters and/or settings" within the text proper (21). Although paratext and an author's or publisher's nationality will, if available, give a much quicker answer as to why a book may be included in the corpus or why it should be acquired, the plot of the text is expected to confirm the first tendencies. If no information regarding the provenience of any persons affiliated with the publication can be found, the content of the book will be taken as an indication for national affiliation. The books in this thesis are therefore labeled as Canadian for two main reasons: national affiliation of persons involved in writing and publishing, and explicit references to Canada within the text proper.

In light of the points discussed previously, Canadian literature will be defined more distinctively in this thesis: *Canadian literature in the narrow sense describes all*

literary works written by an author who either lives in Canada or possesses Canadian citizenship (or both). Canadian literature in the broad sense describes all literary works that can be linked to the country of Canada, be it through the author's provenience or residency, the publisher, markers in language and content, or other information undoubtedly establishing a close link between Canada and the literary work. Within this thesis, a focus on Canadian literature in the narrow sense is deemed to be too limited as a result of the lack of information on some authors. However, potential primary literature will fall into the second category, thereby presenting close ties to Canada.

1.2.3 Hockey Literature

One swallow does not make a summer, and one puck does not make a hockey story. (Blake 7)

When researching hockey literature, finding examples of books which fit this genre is difficult for a number of reasons. Firstly, the content (or plot) of books does not have to be represented by the title or the cover art of a certain book. Secondly, titles rarely include the term hockey, which makes the search for adequate works even more difficult. Thirdly, not all hockey literature features and presents hockey as its main theme.

One possible access to a definition of hockey literature is through the books that are perceived as such. Online, books are categorized and labelled by readers and publishers, with one of the categories being hockey literature. Many retailers have categories by which their catalogue is sorted, some include headlines such as sports fiction, hockey fiction or similar⁴. The Internet is home to various websites for readers, sometimes establishing top 10 books for a certain topic or target group⁵. However, the selection of the books in these categories depends on the judgment of readers, publishers, or even on persons who have only read the title and synopsis of a specific book. Although the allocation to categories may be subjective, the books found on these lists generally center around the sport, even without a proper definition of the term. Hockey literature is thus a category primarily established by

⁴ see for example Amazon.ca and Indigo.ca.

⁵ see for example Amazon.com, Hunter, Goodreads.com, Pelettier *Best*, and the extensive collection of Pelettier's *Hockey Book Reviews*.

readers, book retailers, publishers, or other users on the internet without a proper definition of what a hockey book actually is.

To find a definition of hockey literature, the superordinate term 'sports literature' can serve as a point of departure. Delneo describes contemporary sports fiction as books in which sports play a major role, without further specification of said role. However, she also underlines that while some sports books center around sport "as the predominant theme", others "emphasize character development and relationships rather than focusing solely on" sports (663). At the same time, Oriard describes sports fiction as literature "in which sport plays a dominant role or in which the sport milieu is the dominant setting", while establishing that the protagonist does not have to be an athlete (8). Blake includes in his study works that "[contain] a considerable amount of hockey or commentary on the game, [have] no claim to factual, verifiable truth, and [lend themselves] to contemplation of the game's meanings", thereby giving his definition of hockey literature (8). It is especially important to mention that hockey novels can discuss a wide range of themes, not only those directly linked to sports (see Blake 12).

The previous descriptions of sports and hockey literature can be taken as basis for the definition of hockey literature as understood in this thesis, which will be based on Buma's definition featured in his monograph: The term hockey literature describes *all literary texts "in which hockey provides a central basis of plot action and/or a central theme or motif", including also texts in which hockey is only one among other main themes* (21). In this definition, it becomes clear that hockey literature revolves around the sport, but is not limited to this theme. Although the focus on the theme is straightforward, the second part of the compound term seems like a contradiction in itself as sports and serious literature are often presented or perceived as antagonists.

The given definition allows for an approach not focused on the perceived quality of a text, which ties in the fact that sports literature, or hockey literature, is usually not described as high literature, "[h]ockey belongs to low or popular culture, and for much of the twentieth century it was kept away from serious fiction" (Blake 23). This important side note comes from Blake, who states that for a long time, "hockey was too frivolous to be included in a literature" and that "hockey was relegated to the realm of trivial and children's literature" until 25 years ago (24-25).

This aspect has to be kept in mind as the term 'literature' often carries a connotation of quality and hockey can be seen as an element of "low or popular culture", which was thus not included in "serious fiction" for a large part of the twentieth century (Blake 23). Hockey literature thus seems to be a contradictory term in itself as "literary representations of [hockey as a national cultural symbol] seem to have left the reading public cold." (25) Although hockey is represented throughout Canadian media as a favourite pastime of many Canadians, literature had not taken up the national symbol for a long time. This has led to the assertion that even though "[t]here may be candidates out there for the Great Hockey Novel, [...] no single novel has been critically or popularly accepted as the literary essence of the game." (ibid.) In the light of this thesis, Blake's argument needs to be taken into account as it implies that there is no literary canon which has to be included and that the theme of hockey may be more prevalent among young adult literature as both genres are often regarded as low or popular culture. The realm of young adult literature makes the theme of hockey more accessible or allows the theme to be included in works of fiction. A definition of the realm follows in the next chapter.

1.2.4 Young Adult Literature

Having already defined literature, one may be quick to assume that young adult literature is simply the same, only for young adults. However, such a presupposition entails a number of additional questions: Who is a young adult? Is it literature *for* young adults or *by* young adults? Does it also include literature written for an unspecified audience? Does it also refer to literature written for an (adult) readership that simply happens to be read by young adults? Definitions of the term children's literature, which is very often closely associated with that of young adult literature, that can be found on websites underline the difficulty: The Wikipedia article defines children's literature as including "stories, books, magazines, and poems that are enjoyed by children" (*Children's literature*), while the Encyclopaedia Britannica sees it as "the body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people" (Fadiman), two entirely distinctive definitions that do not necessarily describe the same body of works. In order to define the term 'young adult novel', this section gives an overview of the most prevalent definitions

of young adult literature. In order to avoid ambiguities, the definition proper will be based on both German and English research.

Within the German spectrum, Ewers distinguishes three categories of young adult literature⁶: actual, intended, and specific young adult literature (21). The first group comprises texts that are *actually* read by young adults, the second group contains texts that are deemed to be appropriate for young adults by the general public and thus called *intended*, and the third group describes all texts that have been produced for young adults, named *specific* or *primarily* young adult literature (Ewers *Literatur* 21, English translations of the terms by Ewers *Fundamental Concepts* 19-20). The term 'specific young adult literature' ("spezifische Jugendliteratur") has been defined by Schikorsky as literary works that have been written and published for the age group of young adults (7), a definition that is also given in the same words by Weinkauff and Glasenapp (40). Ewers adds to this definition the notion that books have to be "demonstrably addressed to [...] young people" when they are first published (19). The main focus of German research thus seems to lie in the texts that have been produced specifically for young adults. Schikorsky defines the target group as young readers aged 12 to 18 (7). Complementing this estimate of the age group, Agnew and Nimon refer to the readership as "teenagers" (776). Seibert refrains from giving age limits, but defines young adults as persons after puberty, while children's literature is intended for children before puberty (27). Instead of assigning an age group to the genre, he discusses the difficulties in defining age groups and their blurry boundaries (31-35). Even though the three categories established by Ewers represent valid aspects of the term young adult literature, they are not applicable as selection criteria within this thesis as the corpus resulting from such limitations is impossible to determine and to limit. For the purpose of this thesis, stricter boundaries of the term young adult literature are therefore needed. Such boundaries may be possible when confronting the German research tradition with the English equivalent.

As this thesis is concerned with English literature, the English view on the definition of young adult literature has to be taken into consideration as well.

⁶ Ewers defines literature for children and young adults ("Kinder- und Jugendliteratur"), a definition which has been adapted for this thesis in the way that the reference to children's literature has been omitted in order to result in a definition of young adult literature only (*Kinder* 21).

McCallum defines young adult literature as “texts addressing an audience from about thirteen upwards, including books whose themes and writing strategies suggest that their audience is at the upper end of the teenage years” (214). In contrast to Ewers, McCallum focuses on the age of the readers and describes the texts in more detail, not only with respect to their intended function. In the light of Agnew and Nimon as well as Cart, the real readership of young adult literature may differ enormously from the intended target group of teenagers on their way to adulthood. According to KA and MN, “many of the novels are read not by teenagers, but by children in the 10-13 age group” (776) and Cart adds that many publications cover the age group “from fifteen to twenty-five” (785). In McCallum’s definition, there is no distinction made between who decides on the target group of the texts; the quality seems to lie in the texts themselves (“addressing”, *ibid.*). The approach is thus different from Ewers’ distinction as texts from all three categories fit into the corpus of texts described by McCallum. It has to be kept in mind, however, that in theory, textbooks used in schools as well as information brochures (e.g. on how to apply for university or a secondary school) could also be defined as young adult literature according to the given definition. Following McCallum’s article, he transcends into describing said texts as fiction. It can therefore be assumed that primarily informative texts and textbooks are not the intended text corpus described by the author (215-216).

The search for a concise definition of the term ‘young adult literature’ much too often leads to descriptions of the literature’s history and its main plot lines or themes rather than to a precise and on-point definition⁷. Cart also follows the path of a historical approach, but between the lines, young adult literature can be seen as “too mature to be regarded as a traditional children’s book but not sufficiently sophisticated for adults” and as targeting teenagers “as readers and consumers” (783). Through the historical approach, which underlines the different genres, themes, and features of young adult literature, it becomes clear that such characteristics cannot be used to define young adult literature as they could also be featured in children’s literature or in adult fiction (e.g. romance writing, paperback books, horror stories,

⁷ see e.g. Watson or Carpenter and Prichard.

sexual identity; 784-785, 787). Cart therefore underlines McCallum's definition in parts as he also describes the intended audience and the style of the books.

Only a handful of the definitions given seem useful in selecting the corpus for this thesis as research centered around young adults' reading habits rarely includes actual titles of literature. It is also difficult to identify which books are perceived as appropriate literature by the general public. However, the focus on the intended audience appears to be a useful criterion in that it is generally identifiable based on the text and not a matter of interpretation or subjectivity. For this thesis, young adult fiction will thus be described based on McCallum's definition which allows a selection of texts based on textual criteria without the need of secondary literature, publishers' information, or customer feedback. Furthermore, it seems impossible to set a specific age limit by which the appropriateness of a certain text can be judged after children have reached a certain level of reading competence, as children's development varies enormously among individuals. Children enter puberty at different ages and their interests and development vary according to social surroundings and support⁸. The age limit thus has to be defined loosely in order to describe reading habits and interests of young adults in general. For the purpose of this thesis, young adult literature shall therefore be defined as *all literary texts that address an audience of teenagers and can be identified as such*, thereby setting the age limit to a group between children's books and adult literature. It is assumed that young adult literature contains more elaborate texts that are perceived as novels and require a certain reading skill that could be set at around grade 5, or age 10. Although the term teenager defines the age group, the definition deliberately excludes adult literature that is read by students in upper secondary or children's books by focussing on the intended audience.

The definition stated above includes all books and texts that an educated person, such as the author of the text, educators, or publishers, would estimate to be written for young adult readers. It is not defined on what grounds such an estimate is given, as not all options are available at all times (e.g. paratext or categorization by author or publisher). Furthermore, the term 'teenager' is chosen to represent the age group as defined by McCallum and Schikorsky. There are two main reasons for a

⁸ A discussion of such development is left to the field of psychology and will not be approached in detail within this thesis.

departure from the term young adult in the full definition: On one hand, the development of young adults may differ greatly and result in the same book being appropriate for a 12-year-old and a 16-year-old, maybe even for a 21-year-old. On the other hand, it is mostly not possible to pinpoint a specific intended age for the reading of a certain book.

As all separate parts of the term 'Canadian hockey literature for young adults' have now been discussed in detail, the following chapter presents a summary of the main points stated and attempts a definition of the whole concept by combining all separate definitions.

1.2.5 Canadian Hockey Literature for Young Adults

In the previous chapters, numerous definitions for all separate elements of the term Canadian hockey literature for young adults have been established and discussed. In this chapter, all of these definitions will be brought together to construct a definition for this thesis.

In the previous chapters, literature has been identified as texts of fiction and has been narrowed down to fictional texts written for and identified as being written for an audience of young adults. All of these texts have to be clearly linked to Canada in order to qualify as Canadian literature, and they should ideally be written by a Canadian author or have been published in Canada. Finally, hockey literature narrows down the bulk of books to all those publications that feature hockey as one of their prominent themes. Canadian hockey literature for young adults (CHLYA) can thus be defined as *fictional texts featuring hockey as one of their prominent themes, which are written for young adult, or teenage, readers and exhibit a close relationship to Canada*, thereby combining all of the aspects discussed in previous chapters.

The given definition excludes all non-fiction books, limits the scope to written texts only and searches to encompass a broad spectrum of books in the relatively vague descriptions of the relationship to Canada and the exact role of hockey within the books addressed. It should always be regarded in the light of all points discussed in the preceding chapters and the points discussed (e.g. age group, quality of literature) should always be taken into account when referring to this definition.

1.3 The Rules: Method and Scope

The previous chapter has provided an extensive discussion of the definition of Canadian hockey literature for young adults. Although the general scope is set through this definition, the following chapter describes the method employed in the research and analysis as well as the selection criteria for the corpus. The first subchapter will focus on the path from the first drafts of this thesis to the selection of books and the theory behind the analysis of the books. The second subchapter will then elaborate on selection criteria that have been established and applied in order to build a corpus of texts to be included in this thesis.

1.3.1 Method

Although there are many approaches to literary analysis and even more literary theories in which this thesis can be embedded, this subchapter will focus on the general approach to analyzing the given corpus. Based largely on thematic literary analysis, this chapter is dedicated to describing the approach used for the analysis, instead of referring to various secondary sources.

The process of research for this paper started with a selection of secondary literature on hockey fiction, through which knowledge about previous academic publications on the topic could be acquired. With this knowledge as a basis, the general structure and possible points of interest could be established. In order to allow for an analysis based on a theoretical background, the main terms and concepts for this thesis were defined. Based on the research conducted up to this point, primary literature was selected. The works chosen were tested against the selection criteria presented in the following chapter and the corpus was thus compiled. In the analysis, the main focus was placed on themes, plot lines and motifs, which were compared and contrasted with the findings of academic research consulted before and during the reading of primary literature. The results and examples thereof were categorized and entered into the thesis.

The present thesis is thus based on elaborate and thorough reading, re-reading, and analysis of both primary and secondary literature and on cross-references between both types of literature concerned. Although the literature could be approached through various theoretical backgrounds and analyzed in a different

light, this thesis perpetuates the line of research that has been established by Blake and Buma in their literary analyses of hockey literature. In this way, the present thesis can be compared and contrasted to previous research without limiting the scope of analysis to a specific theoretical framework.

Although the description of the method behind this thesis does not result in an elaborate discussion of theoretical background, the author has invested not only time, but also diligence. In the following chapters, the approach to both literary analyses that have been taken as a basis for this thesis will become clear.

1.3.2 The Draft: Selection Criteria

Chapter 1.2.5 has laid out the general scope of the work with the definition of the term Canadian hockey literature for young adults. Such a definition is necessary to set the boundaries of this thesis, but critical decisions on the inclusion or exclusion of a specific text within this research have to be based on more than only the attribution to Canadian hockey literature for young adults.

The primary criterion for the selection of a text for this thesis is that it meets the definition of the term Canadian hockey literature for young adults. Books therefore have to be written by a Canadian author or exhibit a close relationship to Canada, they have to feature hockey as one of the main themes, they have to be works of fiction, written in form, and they have to be written for young adults. In order to make sure that such a categorization is valid, several steps were undertaken. The first step was to analyze paratexts for information on the points enumerated above. If such an analysis was not fruitful, further research on the author and the book in question was undertaken. In some instances, critical information could not be found (e.g. no information on the relationship to Canada in e-books), and the text proper was consulted to shed light on said information. The target group of a certain text could mostly be established through paratexts or research, as well as the inclusion of hockey. If the selected text was deemed to feature significant themes and plot lines that would otherwise not be mentioned, it was included in the list of possible primary texts.

As discussed in chapter 1.2.1, the term Canadian hockey literature for young adults includes, in theory, also plays and poetry. However, this thesis will be limited strictly to novels, as the analysis of texts in verse or dialogue differs from that of

novels, and as hockey literature seems to be understood as describing mostly novels about hockey. All texts that do not fit the criterion of a novel were dismissed in the course of the selection. The term novel is an important criterion and as such has to be supported by a concise definition. Similar to the definition of literature itself, the concept of a novel is difficult to define as many definitions seem very broad. Braun describes a novel as a fictional narrative in prose that is longer than a narration or a novella (658), thereby giving a rather vague idea of what a novel is. Abrams supports this definition and phrases his description of novels as “extended works of *fiction* written in prose” (197). In contrast to Braun, Abrams does not elaborate on the element of a continuous plot in his first definition, but only later refers to the novel as “an extended narrative” (197). Cuddon confirms the previous definitions, but places the length of a novel “between 60,000 words and, say, 200,000”, although such numbers may be misleading for and/or not applicable to young adult novels (477). In terms of classification, Cuddon clarifies that “no other form has been so susceptible to change and development” as the novel, which results in a wide variety of subgenres (478). It can therefore be assumed that the primary literature selected will show at least traces of subgenres other than sports literature. In order to be selected for this thesis, the primary works thus needed to be longer fictional narratives written in prose, without any further restrictions on style or subgenre.

Literature about hockey has been around for a number of years, but this thesis aims at current or recently published novels, written in or after 2000. The focus was set on books published as recently as possible, so that up-to-date research could be presented in this thesis. The primary literature considered in research thus includes works up to a publication date of the early months of 2016.

The criteria resulted in a selection of books written for young adults within the age group of lower secondary school, as hockey seems to be most prominent within this realm. Although many publications indicate the age group 8-13 on the back cover, the protagonists in the texts are generally in junior high school, thus on the upper end of the scale. It can therefore be assumed that the age indicated is a standardized category for books and that these books would most likely be written for teenagers who are the same age as the protagonists, thus indicating older readers. The criterion of the age group was thus not based on the given information on the

book, but also on the text proper as these modes of categorization allow for discrepancies.

The resulting list thus featured novels that matched the definition of Canadian hockey novels for young adults, and at first included a total of 46 independently published texts. However, not all of the texts were readily available. Only those texts that could be acquired and delivered within a reasonable timeframe were chosen for this thesis, which eliminated twelve books at random, depending on delivery process and status. Unfortunately, it was not possible to access primary literature through libraries, as the genre seems to be underrepresented both in Austrian and Canadian or U.S.-American libraries, so that all books had to be ordered, delivered and paid for. Although e-books were ordered in preference over printed versions when both editions were available and originally considered for the analysis, only books in print were finally chosen as these facilitate annotations and quick referencing, which reduced the list to eight books in total. At the same time, this step excluded all novels that were part of a series, which was added as a selection criterion as independent stories were preferred in the discussion. Out of the remaining eight books, two were written for more mature readers, while six novels described their target readership as aged 8-13, although, as discussed above, they focus on protagonists at the upper end of the given scale.

The main criteria for selecting primary texts could thus be summarized as genre, availability, functionality, and target group. All the texts were selected after a thorough analysis of both text proper and paratexts as well as additional research, if necessary. The corpus for this thesis is thus composed of six deliberately selected novels aiming at a readership aged eleven and above. Although the selection was based on strict criteria, the novels analyzed in this thesis can be grouped into three categories: boys' hockey novels (Guest's *Rink Rivals* and Vandervelde's *Ice Attack*), hockey goalie novels (Schultz Nicholson's *Too Many Men* and Danakas' *Brothers on Ice*) and girls' hockey novels (Schultz Nicholson's *Delaying the Game* and Hyde's *Hockey Girl*). Although five of these novels were published in the Lorimer sports stories series, they are entirely unrelated and differ in style, so that no connection can be established.

1.4 The Jargon

The present thesis is based on both German and English secondary literature. As both languages use distinct terms to describe literary concepts, the major terms relevant to this thesis shall be described in the following chapter.

The aim of this thesis is to provide a thematic study, centering on Canadian hockey literature for young adults. A **theme** can be described as the “central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly”, of a work (Cuddon 721). Peck and Coyle define a theme as “the large idea or concept it is dealing with” (165). In contrast to the seemingly unambiguous definitions, Abrams comments on the practice that theme and motif are often used interchangeably and that ‘theme’ applies to “a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to involve and make persuasive to the reader” (178). The general idea for the selection of primary works could thus be said to be the theme of hockey in Canadian young adult novels. However, novels may also exhibit further themes which provide the headlines for the categories given in chapter 3.

In order to underline the presence of a certain theme, **motifs** may be described in more detail and may thus be employed as evidence for the focus on a theme. Peck and Coyle define a motif as “a type of incident or image that occurs frequently in texts” (165), Abrams gives a more precise enumeration of “a type of event, device, reference, or formula, which occurs frequently in works of literature” (177). In contrast to the definitions given, Cuddon defines a motif as “[o]ne of the dominant ideas in a work of literature; a part of the main theme. It may consist of a character, a recurrent image or a verbal pattern.” (448) Seibert describes a theme as a contemporary category, while motifs constitute smallest units or acts within a narration (63). In this thesis, both themes and motifs will be discussed in unison as they are expected to be inherently linked to each other.

The analysis of the primary texts and the thematic categorization will be based in large parts on elements of the narrative that could be identified both as plot and story. A **plot** “is constituted by its events and actions, as they are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects”, while at the same time being closely linked to the notion of character, which will be discussed subsequently (Abrams 233). Peck and Coyle specify that “[t]o talk about the plot of a

novel, [...] we have to provide a fuller description of the work, taking into account the nature of the characters and the significance of the events" (122). It is thus important to focus on the plot of a novel, as this "provides some idea of the ways in which a particular novel is distinctive" (ibid.). Cuddon gives a more elaborate definition of the term in that a plot describes "[t]he plan, design, scheme or pattern of events in a [...] work of fiction; and, further, the organization of incident and character in such a way as to induce curiosity and suspense [...] in the [...] reader" (540). The main criterion for the plot is thus not only what happens, but also how it happens and how it is related to other events in the text, thereby representing causality. It is pointed out that such a plot may be very broad and include many works of literature, but the examples included in this thesis will provide precise reference to passages from primary texts.

Peck and Coyle claim that the knowledge of the **story** is essential for understanding "how much novels have in common in terms of the basic stories they employ" and for appreciating a certain novel (122). This story can be defined as "[t]he simple sequence of events in a novel" (Peck and Coyle 122). In contrast to these straightforward definitions, Fludernik notes that while the term story may refer "to the tale or the utterance," it can also be distinguished "between [...] story as motif and [...] story as plot" (161). Abrams defines the difference between plot and story as follows,

a plot is distinguishable from the story – that is, a bare synopsis of the temporal order of what happens. [...] It is only when we specify how this is related to that, by causes and motivations, and in what ways all these matters are rendered, ordered, and organized so as to achieve their particular effects, that a synopsis begins to be adequate to the plot. (233)

While the plot will be used to show relationships and causality between events and characters, an analysis of the story may provide a rough framework for categorizing novels that follow similar story lines, but different plots.

To refer to persons "portrayed in a narrative or dramatic work," the term **character** will be used (Cuddon 116). Although seemingly straightforward, this term is made explicit as the German literature employs both *Charakter* and *Figur* synonymously to refer to the English concept of a character (see Burdorf, Fasbender, and Moenninghoff 119 and 238), which may lead to confusion among German read-

ers. The “main character [will be] called [...] protagonist,” his or her counterpart is the antagonist (Peck and Coyle 91). Abrams elaborates on the character as being “interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by interferences” of the character’s dialogue and action (33). Characters may be either round or flat and may undergo a development throughout the novel (ibid.).

The present chapter has laid out the most important terms for the research. Although these terms are commonly perceived as general knowledge, especially amongst literary scholars, different (national) traditions of research and a potentially international or non-literary readership without knowledge of English terminology called for such a short overview. In the following chapter, previous research on the main themes of hockey, sports, and young adult literature will be summarized.

1.5 The Research: Previous Research on the Main Themes

A proper contextualization of primary texts calls for a broad base of secondary literature and potentially relevant research on the subject matter. This chapter is dedicated to important texts of academic research and will give an overview of the landscape of secondary literature. Depending on the relevance of the texts discussed, the summary of the main points will either be condensed or elaborated on. The first subchapter discusses research on hockey literature in general. Following this very thorough presentation of the most relevant literature, the second subchapter explores the relationship between sports and literature and elaborates on important themes discussed in this literature. The penultimate subchapter is concerned with themes in young adult literature. In the final chapter, a synthesis of the most important themes will be presented. All subchapters serve as the basis for further analysis of the primary texts and will be cross-referenced in detail in later chapters of this thesis.

1.5.1 Hockey Literature

Although hockey writing has always been immensely popular in Canada, until the 1990s fairly little scholarly attention was paid to the role of sports in culture. (Blake 5)

Within the last few years, two major publications on hockey literature have emerged from academic research, written by Blake and Buma. This chapter includes an elaborate discussion of these two titles and presents a number of smaller ventures within the field.⁹

The first monograph that was published on hockey literature is academic research titled *Canadian Hockey Literature* by Jason Blake. The publication is comparable to this thesis as it provides a thematic study of a number of literary texts on hockey, while at the same time referring to secondary literature. Blake focuses on several prominent themes within hockey literature, of those “Hockey as a Symbol of Nationhood”, “Hockey as Escape, Freedom, Utopia”, “Hockey Violence”, “National Identity” and “The Family Game” (12). In contrast to this thesis, Blake works primarily with literature for adults, but focuses on prose fiction (7). However, the combination of his research and the present thesis can result in a validation of the findings if these prove to be present in both corpora.

Blake approaches his study by laying out the importance that hockey plays in Canada (3-5) and characterizes the relationship between the sport and national identity as defining for Canadians (4-5). He emphasizes the need for more research on hockey literature and characterizes hockey literature as recent development (6) that has mainly been written by authors from Canada (7). The author gives broad definitions of sports fiction and defines the major plot line of hockey literature as the personal development of the protagonist who rises from underdog to hero (7-8). According to Blake, this specific plot line is prevalent throughout hockey writing in general (9), often with protagonists of limited outlook (10). In the first chapter, Blake emphasizes again the accessibility of hockey and its importance as a unifying symbol amongst “anglophones and francophones [sic]” that is “not universally adored [...], but [...] universally recognized” all over the country (21). Despite the

⁹ As this thesis is based primarily on the two publications named, the monographs will only be referred to by the authors’ last name, while the articles written by both researchers will be referred to by last name and title. Potential confusion is eliminated by the fact that following chapters do not refer to the articles, but only to the monographs.

unifying character, hockey has not entered into serious literature (23) and there is no “Great Hockey Novel, [as] no single novel has been critically or popularly accepted as the literary essence of the game” (25). Hockey as a marker of national identity is described, as it also represents the country internationally (32).

Of more relevance to this thesis are the themes discussed in chapters two to five. The first theme mentioned by Blake is hockey as fun, but also “as an escape from daily life that takes us into the free, limitless world of dreams” (39). However, he also presents literary works that show the contrary: hockey as nightmares (*ibid.*). Blake discusses the relationship between fun and rules, stating that less regulation is equivalent to more fun (40), and describes the NHL as the dream of parents and children alike (39). He explains that hockey novels are mostly concerned with character development and memories of childhood (43-44), while the hockey rink or game is often represented as a different world, as means of escape (45) or parallel world. One world presented is that of professional hockey (49), the other that of shinny hockey (56), both of which will be discussed in relation to primary literature. Shinny in particular is presented as an escape from difficult situations or for players that do not fit the criteria of competitive sports (59-61). Such parallel worlds allow players to try on identities (64-65) or go back to happy childhood experiences (77).

The following chapter focuses entirely on violence in hockey, thereby stating the juxtaposition to Canada’s image as peaceful nation. In the chapter, Blake argues that violence in hockey is depicted as harmless “because it occurs on the ice”, it works as a catharsis and thus prevents “more serious attacks” (79). Furthermore, the rules governing fights on ice regulate and protect and such altercations are often hidden in the language used to describe them (*ibid.*). In the course of the chapter, Blake describes “learning the unwritten rules that govern violence; violence as a public display; violence as a sort of justice; violence as a destroyer of idyllic play surroundings; and resorting to violence as a symbol of athletic failure” (*ibid.*). Finally, violence is shown as a means of winning and as an often necessary prerequisite in hockey (*ibid.*). The topic is compared to manliness (86-90) and put in relation to rules (103-108). It is important to note that only “few adult hockey novels [...] focus entirely on young people” (Blake 132), which may influence the importance or portrayal of violence in this thesis.

Chapter four centers on hockey and Canada, thereby connecting the country and the sport as a myth, often portrayed in fiction “as the essence of Canada” or “as a means of integration and becoming Canadian” (136). While this chapter is not of particular importance for presenting general themes in young adult fiction, the final chapter which deals with family issues is highly relevant. According to Blake, most hockey novels revolve around a father-son-relationship and hockey is portrayed as a connecting component, but can also divide and cause (financial) troubles (170). In the same chapter, Blake shortly addresses the underrepresentation of daughters or female players, but mentions orphan players who turn to hockey as a new family (ibid.) and sibling rivalry (204-206). However, the author also discusses negative topics such as over-identification with hockey and parents who fail to grow up because of hockey (196-204).

According to Blake, a cultural discussion of hockey is necessary for understanding hockey in literature (209). He states that there are plenty of hockey books published recently (ibid.), which are usually accessible only to a limited audience because explanatory remarks for non-Canadians, and thus non-hockey-persons, would make the works unnatural (211). For Blake, the question of possible readers thus arises as most books are not limited to a Canadian audience (213). In his well-rounded monograph, Blake critically discusses a vast variety of different topics in hockey literature and thus provides an excellent basis for the discussion of young adult novels in this thesis, as his findings will be used as a means of contrast and proof of themes found in the primary literature herein.

A newer discussion focusing on identity and hockey is Buma’s *Refereeing Identity*, which revolves around the two main themes of national and male identity as present in popular hockey literature. The author thus wants to show how hockey novels “inculcate and enforce the ideas of hockey-as-nation and masculinity-as-toughness.” (34) In contrast to Blake, Buma more frequently refers to children’s and young adult novels and claims that “[t]here is a great deal of continuity between adult-oriented hockey novels and their juvenile counterparts,” naming MacGregor’s *The Last Season* as the first publication of its genre in 1983 (21). In characterizing young adult novels, the author describes them as “more progressive” than adult novels, “especially on issues of gender” (22). In his first three chapters, Buma focuses entirely on hockey and the relationship to national identity, first as a means of

shaping Canadianness, then as a myth during difficult times, and finally as a means of unifying a country. More relevant to this thesis is the second part of Buma's research, which is based around male identity. In chapter four, titled "National Manhood", the author argues that "[h]ockey novels work to arbitrate gender identity in largely the same ways as they do national identity: by signifying within certain pre-existing frameworks of meaning [...] and reinforcing these meanings through repetitive rehearsal" (145), whereby the representation of gender is related to nationality. One of these meanings is that "representations of violent masculinity in Canadian hockey novels contribute directly to the ongoing tolerance of fighting within the game" (152), thus mentioning an important issue for this thesis, especially considering young adult novels. Blake extensively discusses the potential of hockey and violence as a marker of manhood as well as a means of education, integration into the team and the sports culture (156-186). In the following chapter, Buma touches upon similar topics as Blake with a discussion of the Bildungsroman, the image of the hero, family issues, hockey as escape, bullying, alternative masculine identities, and the ever-present discussion of violence and gender as well as the objectification of women (187-217). The final chapter centers around homophobia and homosociality, describing the marginalization of homosexual athletes and, in a large part of the chapter, the exclusion of women in hockey novels (218-241). Important topics that are further discussed are hazing as a means of acceptance into the team, and the description of women as objects and either groupies or wives (241-251). To present different approaches, Buma shows newer novels focusing primarily on women (251-261). Nevertheless, he states that "hockey novels reinscribe rather challenge the harmful assumption that masculinity must be contingent on strength, dominance, and competition." (263) In conclusion, Buma states that hockey novels continue the previous traditions, thereby indicating that the literature presents the game as a way of unifying Canadians and omitting individual or cultural differences (265). Furthermore, the novels do not present female players, but connect physical strength to manliness and to national identity (266-267). The topics addressed by Buma are similar to those discussed by Blake and show which of them are included in potential hockey literature, especially in relation to coming of age and gender issues.

In addition to the two recent major monographs on hockey literature, Dopp and Harrison collected various articles from a 2005 hockey conference in which they describe hockey as “carrying a story, often expressed in mythic terms, that people desire to be true about themselves and their place in the world”, thereby forming the connection between hockey and Canada (9). They underline that most of the Canadian texts about hockey are journalism and not literature and thus not prominently considered in literary and cultural studies (10). In one of the articles, Buma discusses, similarly to his own publication, identity construction in hockey novels, thereby focusing on cultural unity (*Save*). An important assertion is that “[t]he majority of Canadian hockey novels aimed at adults and young adults have been written since 1990, and it is striking how Canadian these novels attempt to be” (40). In his article, Buma shows that hockey is not essential as a marker of Canadianness, but that the connection is “arbitrary and artificial rather than natural and inevitable” (50). Not related to literature, Hartman observed and participated in women’s shinny hockey in Toronto and concluded that female players “express degrees of ambivalence towards mainstream hockey culture, noting its sexism, homophobia and culture of whiteness, and yet they are passionate about the game itself” (125). She describes that women often do not play hockey as girls, start a relatively inexpensive sport at a later part of time and rather partake in free play (126-127). Nonetheless, players are confronted with harassment and resistance by male players and resort to female games as their comfort zone (128-129). In the final pages of her essay, Hartman describes hockey as a sport played by women for a long time (133) and women’s hockey as often considered to be inferior to men’s hockey (136), but also as important “in queer women’s communities” (136). According to Hartman, all players face questions of sexuality and gender when playing hockey (137). The articles published by Dopp and Harrison include various other themes, some literary, others only related to the sport itself.

Hockey literature is often presented as an essential part of Canadian literature or Canadian identity. Two of these examples are articles by Blake (*Invention of Canada*) and Sundmark. Blake describes the impact of hockey in “identity politics, [...] how hockey is mythologized as the essence of Canada,” and its potential for finding idols as well as national identity (*Invention of Canada* 285). Similar to his book which was published two years later and has already been discussed in this chapter,

Blake draws a line between hockey and Canadianness. However, he criticizes the simple equation of hockey and Canada, stating that it cannot be the sole marker of Canadian identity and that it is also not the most popular sport in Canada (286). The essence of the article is a cautionary tale that hockey should not be seen as the essence of Canadian culture, as such a view may be overly simplistic and negate other cultural markers. Finally, Blake calls on the readers to critically reflect on the relationship between the sport and the nation (292). In contrast to Blake's focus on adult fiction, Sundmark discusses young adult and children's literature in the light of Canadian identity and hockey as a marker of such identity. Exemplifying hockey as a Canadian sport with the myth of its creation as well as the identification with and the popularity of the sport based mostly in Canada, he mentions various important dates in hockey history such as the 1972 Summit Series and speeches by famous hockey players (120). Three reasons for the success of hockey may be the connection to First Nations, the general accessibility regardless of class or ethnicity, and the possibility for relatively harmless rivalry between groups that are culturally, politically, and linguistically diverse (*ibid.*). Sundmark speaks against the image of a tough hockey player, which is linked to the raw life in the north and the goal of surviving, but rather sees hockey as a possibility to come together, to meet people (121). The author criticizes the lack of serious hockey fiction for adults, but mentions famous picture books for children and hockey series for young readers, the latter of which will be discussed in this thesis (122). According to Sundmark, series books "are good indicators of what hockey stands for" even though they "are generally written for fast consumption and with few literary pretensions" (*ibid.*). While praising the literary tone of picture books, Sundmark sees hockey books written for young adults as void of "high artistic and literary ambitions[....] the reminiscing tone[, and] street hockey. [...] The vocabulary is limited, the plot formulaic, the characters are set." (126) Despite reducing the plot lines and themes to very short remarks, Sundmark mentions several possible themes in young adult hockey books: customs and cultures, gender issues such as "girls or no girls in the line-up", honesty, toughness, masculinity, able-bodiedness, pain, injury, a hostile environment, team spirit, and "hockey as organised sport or free play" (126-128). The three main "values associated with hockey [are] toughness, individuality, and team spirit", which are present in hockey fiction at different levels of visibility (128).

Academic research on hockey literature is limited in quantity, but is in itself very thorough, thus giving an elaborate insight into hockey writing. Although the main themes seem to be violence and gender, common topics from sports and literature also find their way into the discussion. The detailed presentation of the main monographs and articles on hockey literature serves as the basis for further discussion of young adult hockey literature in chapters 2 to 4.

1.5.2 Sports and Literature

In addition to literature focused solely on hockey in literary environments, there are numerous publications which focus on various aspects of sports and their representation in the media and/or in literature. In this chapter, secondary literature about sports literature in general and about specific issues in sports will be presented to exemplify the directions in which research related to this thesis has ventured.

In Geßmann's bibliography on children's and young adult literature about sports and games, hockey books are not widely represented: Only four novels that deal with hockey in the widest sense can be found (242, 262, 283, and 288). The short synopses imply that the books give information about hockey while at the same time telling a story related to the sport. It has to be noted that the most recent book listed was published in 1971 and that bibliographies of English publications will show a different importance of the game. German discussions of sports in literature follow up shortly after the bibliography and include discussions of specific authors such as Musil, themes such as cultural identity, media, and the spirit of play, and sports from boxing to football and ball games in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Fischer *Sport und Literatur*). A different approach is taken by Court, who collects examples of sports presented in texts and categorizes them according to the sport present, simultaneously focusing on both literary and non-literary publications with the intention to provide a reading list for upper secondary students. However, this discussion does not include one literary example of hockey fiction, only mentioning field hockey.

Several publications within the German tradition of research show interest in various themes in sports literature, two of which shall be presented in short. Leis shows common themes such as war, death, work, spectators, love, and sports as parallel world to reality, which he finds in numerous works of German literature. In

contrast, Fischer researches the topics of a sports hero, girls in sports, and gender play, thereby focusing on the staging of these topics in literature. The author strives to show sport as representation of society and to explore the male and female gaze in different works of literature, also showing successful women, the representation of men, and the relationship between sports and war. Both publications focus on similar topics, with Leis using a broader approach while Fischer rather focuses on themes that seem more relevant to this thesis and to sports literature in general. German publications are of importance to this research as they suggest that the themes in sports literature could be universal and not only present in one language or tradition of research.

A similar approach is taken by articles collected and edited by Tadié, Mangan and Chaudhuri, who combine themes such as story-telling, body image, nationalism, overcoming colonization, gender, spectators, ethnicity, and specific sports such as cricket, football or cycling. In the prologue, Tadié describes the “relationship between sport and literature” as follows,

[I]terature may shape our perceptions and reactions to sport as much as sport may inform our ways of reading. Literature often conceptualises the place and role of sport in culture and society. [...] Sport studies have investigated the relationships between sport and society, education, gender, class etc. To look again at these relationships through the prism of literature enables us to change our focus and to assess the centrality of sport in culture. The literary text elicits perceptions of historical transformations, an understanding of the ways in which an essential social, cultural and political phenomenon such as sport is appropriated and transformed. [...] The language of literature sometimes offers a finer understanding of sport because it allows the reader to penetrate the consciousness of sportsmen through the artifice of fiction. (7)

According to Tadié, literature and sports should not be seen as separate fields, but they can establish new meanings in combination and the literary setting may direct the readers’ attention towards elements of the sport which they have never realized before. Studying sports literature is therefore not only fiction, but also always a partial representation of reality. It shines a light on what we experience every day, but fail to realize outside of fiction. Chaudhuri underlines the similarity of these two fields in their function “[a]s mimetic practice, as aesthetic object, as imaginative release”, by which both become “an important means of understanding human societies” (173). Although Tadié, Mangan, and Chaudhuri’s collection of essays is not

directly related to hockey, the articles therein provide a general impression of popular topics discussed in sports literature and underline the potential benefits of discussing sports as they are presented in works of fiction.

A number of English publications show interest in the analysis of the presentation of sports in specific genres or authors, such as McDonald's report of sports in F. Scott Fitzgerald's works, in which he focuses on social identities, social status, and idols formed through sports, thereby returning to the German line of research. Furthermore, the discussion of sports in a specific genre and national literature can be seen in Fotheringham's discussion of sport in Australian drama. Analyses of themes within a specific genre or national body of works appear to be frequent, yet often regarded as a niche in literary research.

The research on sports in literature is often limited to specific authors or genres, but a majority of publications seem to indulge in the idea of thematic analysis of literary works. Although sports literature is frequently dismissed as paraliterature, i.e. popular fiction, which may be a cause for its niche status in research, several publications venture into the field. It has to be kept in mind that many publications, such as those by McDonald, Fotheringham, and Leis, focus entirely on the representation of sports in what is considered to be high literature, thus not including popular sports literature. However, it is important to address such literary discussions as both literature and sports are part of the general culture, as described by Tadié. In contrast to literary advances and supposed high culture, the following chapter focuses on research within the realm of sports, thus adding another layer to the discussion of sports and literature.

1.5.3 Themes in Hockey and Sports

Research and publications on sports do not only focus on the presentation of sports in literature or themes presented therein, there is also extensive research on specific topics within sports and sports culture itself. As hockey literature can be seen as a representation of hockey culture, the most prevalent themes in hockey and sports research shall be made clear.

In a collection of articles, Fuller shows various aspects of violence in sports, among others also examples and studies on hockey violence, which shall be discussed in the following paragraphs. The fact that the first chapter, titled "Sport

Violence Per Se”, focuses entirely on hockey violence is noteworthy. In one of these articles, Atkinson describes the incident of a young hockey player who died after falling on the ice unprotected in a fist fight (15). After his death, a survey revealed that only two thirds of the persons interviewed favoured a ban of fights “in minor and amateur hockey”, while a large number persisted that fighting was a crucial element of hockey and should not be banned (16). Atkinson criticizes that research has not yet paid attention to victims of hockey violence and the possibility that, although committed on a sporting ground, these may be crimes with legal consequences (17). Violence on hockey rinks is one of the instances where such attacks are seen as legal and usually not followed by criminal charges (17-20). Violence often entails victimization and is expression of “dangerous masculinity” (21-22), summed up as “the philosophy of dangerous masculinity is a privileging but brutalizing code of conduct within the world of professional sport.” (27)

Holman et al. research the connection between watching hockey games and domestic violence, concluding that

[w]hen power and control form the basis upon which relationships function, the sport environment becomes a medium in which aggression is condoned and nurtured, masculinity is valued and encouraged, control and dominance are rewarded, and winning or being the best are symbols of self-worth. (35)

Despite the high level of violence in hockey, the study shows no relationship between watching hockey and reported cases of spousal violence (36-37). In the second part of the study, several interviewees mention sports as a matter of female empowerment, of making boys more violent through sports, and of making girls overcome their perceived limitations (37). However, a number of persons interviewed identified hockey as too violent (ibid.) and hockey may be seen as a place of socialization, which sometimes may include violence (40). Robidoux and Bocksnick describe spectator violence in minor hockey, stating that the parents watching frequently cheer for their children’s violent behaviour on the ice (52-55) and that women are “generally tolerated by the men but are perceived as illegitimate in the context of hockey.” (57) The article concludes that the aggression is understood as “an inevitable consequence of the game” (58), which underlines the findings of the previous articles described.

The publications on violence in sports includes further discussions of masculinity, nationalism, gender issues of various kind, race, and language connected to various sports such as football, X games, boxing, and rugby (Fuller *Violence*). Another publication by Fuller brings together various articles on gender issues, discussing uniforms and objectivity, victimization, female athletes in the media, analyses of the language used by fans and spectators, homophobia, heterosexism, and, in general, women in the male domain of sports (*Global*).

In his investigation on gender in hockey discussions on the internet, Svensson departs from the notion that men and women are often defined by their differences although they often do not exhibit stereotypical characteristics (108). On the investigated website, one instance shows the condescending attitude of a male writer towards female posters whom he believes to possess inferior knowledge about the sport (113-117). However, the discussion does not yield any fruitful results in describing the attitude of men versus women and vice versa as a result of the small sample.

The most extensive collection of papers and speeches is provided by Kratzmüller et al. and focuses on the construction of identity through sports, thereby touching upon topics such as separation between male and female athletes, socialization, minorities, body and its image, cultures, gender issues of various types, audiences and fans, sports in literature, national or local identity, sports and society, women in male domains, images of athletes, identification with sports, representation in the media, sports as resistance, sports as a means of globalization, disabilities, and many other topics. Although the papers deal with many of the themes presented in this thesis, their elaborate discussion of the topics exceeds the scope and space provided herein and do not include a discussion of hockey, as a result of which they shall only be referred to in this short note.

Research on issues of interest in sports and especially hockey show that major themes can be summarized as follows: gender, violence, socialization, (sports) culture, national culture, identity, images of the athlete, language, and homophobia, with the first two themes most present in hockey research. Violence seems to be the theme most extensively discussed in relation to hockey, with analyses of national identity formation and gender issues lagging behind. This chapter has shown that

even in non-literary research, these themes can be identified and discussed in the same way that they can be extracted from literary works.

1.5.4 Themes in Young Adult Literature

Themes in young adult literature are not only presented in monographs, but are also included in many definitions of young adult literature. To bridge the gap between the previous chapter of issues in the intersection of sports and literature and the current chapter of themes in young adult literature, Delneo's entry on sports in young adult literature will be summarized and followed by further discussions on themes in the defined area of literature.

Delneo gives an overview of the most popular sports represented in young adult literature and talks about baseball, softball, basketball, boxing, football, soccer, and swimming. She presents sports as part of the teenagers' lives and thus as an essential element of the portrayal of regular activities and problems (663). Protagonists in sports fiction have to deal with overcoming the fact that they cannot, for whichever reason, participate in sports, reasons being medical issues, confrontation with authority, or dramatic changes in the lives of the teenagers, e.g. caused by the death of a family member. Too often, the books tell the story of an athlete who has to quit playing his or her favourite sport and selects a different career path. Young adult novels that do not belong to the genre of sports fiction also frequently include elements of sports. Although sports literature features sports "as the predominant theme", "[m]any [sports] fiction authors choose to emphasize character development and relationships rather than focusing solely on [sports]." (663) Themes and motifs in sports literature include important games or events for a certain type of sport, having the opportunity to participate and succeed at such events, time travel, sports injuries, broken dreams, family issues, spare time activities, bullying, becoming a hero, friendship, solving conflicts, historic events, racism, social class and related problems, sports as a "ticket to a better life", the sport as a different world, becoming a professional, adapting to rules of society, death, bad influence of sports such as boxing, psychological problems such as depression and suicidal thoughts, overcoming failure and losses at sports competitions, integrating sports into the daily life and organizing as well as find balance between the two worlds, love, and especially the conflict between success and relationship, the possibility of

overcoming the role of the outsider through sports, respect, domestic violence and bullying (663-665). Sports novels for young adults are often concerned with coming of age, competition and the thrill of the game, personal growth and development, overcoming setbacks and fears, and succeeding as a girl in a male-dominated field (665).

Carpenter and Prichard state that teenage novels are most often concerned with feelings and the relationship with “the adult world” and parents, sexual identity such as homosexuality and first advances to the topic, family issues such as divorce and stepparents, as well as death (518). Interestingly enough, the authors state that teenage novels are marked by “shrillness of tone and predictability of character development” and that the American teenage novel differs from the British in that it focuses more on adolescence (519). It has to be kept in mind that the article in this publication has been written in the 1980s and that it refers to the literature published at this time.

Agnew and Nimon mention that early young adult fiction featured themes such as marriage, but that relationships have since been a constant theme in novels. The authors give an overview of the history of young adult literature in terms of themes and explain that kisses could be found in novels as early as in the 1950s. Current fiction is concerned with “romance, relationships, and the difficulties of family life” and refers to real life. Themes frequently discussed are the quest for identity, fighting against authority, building autonomy, setting own values and finding new relationships (775). More recent literature exhibited themes such as teenage pregnancy, sex, sexual abuse (and therefore violence), school life, death of loved ones, sometimes even politics, adult society, running away from home, emotions, changes of the body, but mostly friendship and overcoming difficult situations (776-778). Many books exhibit a pedagogical or moral tone and seek to support young adults (ibid.).

In his article about young adult literature, Cart mentions the themes of first love, science fiction, romance, career novels, sports and adventure (783-784). Further themes are “adolescent alienation”, teenage sexuality, adolescent life, class, and pregnancy (784). Literature was expected to be authentic, honest and relevant to young adults (784). Cart claims that the “less-skilled writers” turned to the problem novel in the 1970s, which was more concerned with potential problems than with

literature (784-785). He points out that “by the late eighties, the average age of protagonists had begun falling from seventeen to as young as twelve”, which may have had an influence on the themes present as well (785). Furthermore, the readership of many young adult novels is currently considered to be in the age range from 15 to 25, which results in a less visible boundary between teenage and adult fiction (785-786). A newer development is the rise of “fantasy and historical fiction” (786). Yet, the most important theme of young adult literature has always been that of the outsider as it aimed at “giving faces to [young adults] who were, for whatever reason, outsiders” (787). Although the outsider is a very prominent theme in young adult literature, Cart identifies two groups of outsiders that are not represented in the literature concerned: “gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth; the other is newly immigrant teens, especially Latinos” (787). Interestingly enough, young adult literature thus perpetuates the hidden groups of hockey literature, although not as an underrepresentation of female protagonists.

Cart is not the only researcher with thematic ties to works summarized in previous chapters. In a historical approach to young adult literature, Ryan also mentions novels referring to careers, family, school life, current events, freedom and adventures, mystery, sports, science fiction, gangs, isolation, self-acceptance, abuse, morals, violence, eating disorders and prejudice, thereby confirming many of the themes previously discussed (791-792). Although such lists of topics include a rather large and undefined array of possibilities, it is interesting to note family issues, sports, and general problematic topics in these enumerations.

In Canada, young adult literature showed similar themes: adventure of survival, struggle against authority, then turned to “love, loss, families, and relationships” as its main themes (Settingington 127). Further themes are daily life, family history, history in general, Canadian regions, but also “the universal themes of self-discovery, family dynamics, social experience, and the difficulties encountered when growing through the teen years” (127), thereby meeting more general descriptions of prominent themes. In agreement with previous lists of themes, science fiction and fantasy seem to be current bestsellers (128). In a more detailed view, themes such as “self-esteem, sexual, physical and psychological abuse, and the ever-important issue of finding one’s way and place in the world” are dominant today

(ibid.). Interestingly enough, hockey and sports literature are not mentioned at all in the list of themes in Canadian young adult literature.

In Seibert's extensive discussion of themes in children's and young adult literature, the focus lies on the definition of this literature and its categorization into genres. However, themes such as anti-Semitism, nuclear war, Third World, Third Reich, drugs, holocaust, Native Americans ("Indianer"), colonies, war, migration, racism, language, and cultural identity are mentioned (206). In terms of motifs, Seibert mentions alter ego, outsider, doppelganger, distance from parents, flying, siblings, sickness, life threat, searching for a mother, rebel, searching for a father, and conflicts between fathers and sons – among others (205). Although the title of the publication leads to the assumption that an extensive discussion of themes is included in the book, Seibert presents a number of literary works and does not include a list of themes that could be referred to in this thesis. In contrast to Seibert, Ewers underlines the similarity in themes between adult and children's or young adult literature – a notion important to this thesis (*Fundamental Concepts* 159). In terms of potential themes, he lists "religiosity, nature, modern individuality, morality and conflict with norms, upbringing and education, (first) love, marriage and family, adventure and finally age and death" (ibid.), thereby coinciding in many points with themes mentioned in English research. Departing from the difference in themes between the English/American and the German line of research, it can be assumed that themes are in general highly culturally and/or nationally marked in that they represent what authors see as important, often relating to history, although these experiences may coincide with those of other nations and traditions. It seems thus that the discussion on themes relies heavily on the selection of the corpus of potential literature, whether limited to high literature or generally addressing fiction, and sometimes also communal experiences such as history.

The entries on young adult literature in reference books proved to be an excellent source of themes in these publications. Furthermore, they can be combined into a best-of list of the most relevant themes in young adult fiction through cross-referencing. The most prominent themes in both young adult and sports novels for young adults seem to be quite similar, such as family, friendship, overcoming difficulties, death, coming of age etc. However, sports novels tend to relate these themes to more concrete situations within the sports culture itself.

1.5.5 Getting Ready: Thematic Commonalities

In the last subchapters, different approaches have been taken to shed a light on research focusing on hockey, sports, and literature in various combinations. This chapter aims at a short summary of topics, thereby laying the groundwork for the following chapters of in-depth discussion of primary literature.

In the discussion of hockey literature, the themes of violence, gender, identity, family, and nationhood seem to be prominent among other minor threads. Coinciding with a common approach in young adult novels, the development of a protagonist could be seen as a form of growing up, of emancipation. In relation to such development, the interpretation of hockey as a means of escape seems to fit the discussion of young adult literature, which readers may consult to break out of their daily lives. The discussion of professional careers and success can also be seen as a main interest of young readers who may be on the verge of deciding on a future to pursue. In the light of hockey as Canada's national sport, the theme of Canadianness will be of some interest, but not the main focus of the discussion as national identities do not appear to be discussed in depth in young adult literature and could therefore be less present in the corpus chosen. The themes discussed in the analysis of hockey literature therefore could be present in young adult literature as well as they certainly seem of interest to the readership.

Many themes discussed within the research are intertwined: gender issues can be discussed in relation to gender roles, omission, family relationships, but also violence and identity. Similarly, also violence can be linked to family, Canadianness, professionalism in sports, but also to growing up and the construction of identity. The main themes identified by Sundmark, toughness, individuality, and team spirit, are related both to growing up and identity construction. However, toughness may also refer to violence, which makes the discussion of individual themes without relating them to each other difficult.

In accordance with the research on hockey literature, gender, identity construction through heroes and violence seem to be present also in general research on literary representation of sports. Research within the field of sports underlines these findings, most prominently referring to violence, gender, masculinity, identity, sports culture, and socialization. Such themes are also present in young adult sports

literature, but the focus here lies on overcoming problems such as non-participation in sports and failure, relationships, dreams, bullying, becoming a professional, family, and love. However, the main themes seem to be growing up, competition, personal development, overcoming setbacks and fears and overcoming limitations of gender roles. Research on young adult fiction not related to sports discusses similar topics and complements previous findings within research on sports literature, hockey literature, and sports in general.

Overall, several prominent themes have been identified and can be expected to be present in Canadian hockey literature for young adults. The following chapter shows how hockey is represented within young adult literature. In chapter four, the themes of identity, rules, growing up, family, gender, and several minor themes will be discussed based on this chapter and in connection to both primary and secondary literature.

2 Opening: Representation of Hockey in CHLYA

In a first step, the representation of hockey and its variants in general will be discussed in order to display how hockey literature is drafted, which level of importance hockey plays in these novels, and how professional sports and dreams influence such representations. This chapter is seen as a short introduction to the world of hockey novels and several principles directly related to the sport therein, such as the strong focus on hockey, activeness of the player, the connecting power of hockey, and various forms of hockey displayed.

2.1 The Focus on Hockey

All hockey novels have been chosen for their primary focus on the game. They all include one or more protagonists who play hockey and describe their experiences related to the game and their everyday lives. Without exception, the novels portray hockey games in detail, using the jargon of the sport, and describe various game plays. The strong focus on the sport requires intimate knowledge of the sport and its tactics as readers who lack such knowledge may have difficulties following the story.

However, there are a number of implications based on the theme, which will be discussed as follows.

Hockey games and plays are described in detail in hockey novels, which require an intimate knowledge. Explanations or descriptions of terminology are generally not included, as can be seen in an excerpt from *Brothers on Ice*, where the boys' team is playing the final minute of a game,

With a minute remaining on the clock, Nabil took a penalty trying to prevent a Gopher forward from getting a *breakaway*. It was a necessary penalty, but now our team had to play to the end of the game *shorthanded*. The Gophers regrouped and went into their *power play* formation. They passed the puck from one player to another, patiently waiting for a crack in our *defence*. [...] The *forward deked* around him and shot a pass to the *centre*. With heavy traffic screening Trent, the centre let loose with a *wrist shot*. Dropping his shoulders, he pushed in for the *flick shot*. Trent fell into the *splits*. [...] He stopped the puck with his left leg, then, on the next *rebound*, with his right leg. [...] Instantly, he bounced back up, found the puck amid a sea of green and yellow jerseys, looked down the ice, spotted Alex cutting for a fast break, and zipped a perfect pass off the blade of his stick to a point directly in Alex's path.

Alex speeded to the puck, *dipsey-doodled* in front of the Gopher goalie, sending him tripping over his skates to stay with him, then deposited the puck into the back of the net.

The *red light* went on, the *buzzer* sounded. (Danakas 102-103, emphasis added)

This excerpt underlines the prevalence of hockey terminology and sports jargon in hockey novels, where games are meticulously described. Readers without previous knowledge of the sport, its rules, and strategies, will not be able to follow the descriptions of the games and may miss relevant events that are discussed later on in the novel. In order to understand hockey novels, readers have to be or become invested in the sport.

Hockey most often the only sport paid attention to in hockey novels. In Hyde's *Hockey Girl*, it is described as "*real sport*", as opposed to softball, which the boys consider inferior to hockey (11). While no other novels mention sports other than hockey, the team in this story is a softball team at heart, which shows a transgression and change among the players. In many hockey novels, characters loving the sport are portrayed as normal, while non-players are sometimes considered wimps (Guest 2). Although Blake claims that "[h]ockey fiction often focuses on high-level players whose entire identity is determined by the game" (49), most of the players

in young adult books are average to good players, rarely aspiring to join the NHL, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.1.4. However, their lives are all certainly heavily influenced by hockey, which is analyzed in chapter 3.1.5.

Every sport draws the attention of both players and spectators, but there seems to be a difference in appreciation between the two groups, as protagonist Tara puts it, “I had a new appreciation for the game now that I had played myself. It sure is easy to sit in the stands and yell when you’re not the one going flat out and trying to control the puck, too” (Hyde 61). In young adult hockey novels, protagonists are generally players, not spectators, but their role as spectator is seen when they comment on games or watch other teams (see Hyde and Guest). One of the main differences described is that Tara considers being involved in the game easier because a player can influence the game, while a spectator can only watch (Hyde 65). It can thus be concluded that the protagonists are usually very active participants in the game who take matters into their own hands, while parents remain in the stands, on the outside. Chapter 3.2 shows which roles parents, siblings, and coaches assume in hockey novels.

One main theme in hockey novels is that the sport is frequently presented as a connecting feature, even if the characters involved are competing against each other. Kip in *Hockey Girl* describes the girls’ team his team has a bet against as “not the enemy”, even offering to help the girls because he loves the game (Hyde 86-87). Hockey can thus overcome rifts and opposition. In Guest’s *Rink Rivals*, hockey is seen as a means of integration as the parents in the novel encourage both boys to join teams in order to find new friends (7), but it is also seen as an opportunity for Bryn to impress a girl at his school (11). Although not used as a factor of integration for foreigners, the brothers are new to the area and thus, hockey could be seen as a means to connect to the new community, which will also be discussed in chapter 3.4.1.

In this chapter, some implications for using hockey as a binding force, as part of identity, and as active participation have been shown. While this chapter could only give an overview, these general ideas appear throughout the discussion of hockey novels for young adults and will be mentioned again in this thesis.

2.2 Regulated Hockey vs. Shinny

When hockey is discussed, the focus is most often on regulated games, organized teams and leagues, and strict rules. However, several hockey novels display a different side of hockey, that of shinny, a less regulated, more casual variant of the sport. As Blake puts it, “[m]uch hockey writing expresses a longing to escape the restrictions of organized hockey by playing a different variety of the game” (Blake 56). Whether such observations are valid for young adult hockey novels will be analyzed in this chapter.

In hockey novels, the organized game is often presented as stressful, especially when it comes to a shootout, the last resort in a tied game to select a winner. In *Brothers on Ice*, this part of the game is characterized as “all about pressure”, as an early lead in shooting and scoring first will put pressure on the other team as they have to score as well (Danakas 77). Although this scene refers to a scrimmage among the boys, it is viewed as tough competition. The detailed descriptions of the games the protagonists are in underline the stress experienced by the characters through their writing,

Sam lost sight of the puck. He shuffled back and forth. Where was it? Suddenly, he saw it in front of him. He decided to go down and pounce on it, but just as he got to his knees, a Cumberland player swiped at it with a back-hand shot, lofting it in the air. Sam was already halfway down and didn't have time to get up. The puck cruised over his shoulder. It made his stomach sick to see the puck in the back of the net.

Why had he gone down? It had been years since he'd made that kind of mistake. [...] Sweat dripped down his face. [...]

Sam held his pad firm against the side of the net and his stick on the ice, ready for a bad-angle shot. But the Giants' centre skated behind the back of the net. Sam saw the Giants' winger open in front of him. Where were the Kings? Why weren't they on this man?

“Cover the man out front,” he yelled.

Sam positioned his body in front to stop the possible shot. Suddenly, he realized the centre behind the net wasn't going to pass the puck, he was going to go for a wrap-around. Sam slid across the net.

The Giants' centre pushed the puck by Sam's stick and by his pads. Sam thought he had it. The ref blew his whistle and made the motion.

Goal.

Sam moaned. He'd let a goal in on a wrap-around. He hadn't done that since Tyke hockey. (Schultz Nicholson, *Too Many Men* 90-91)

Similar descriptions of stressful and demanding games can be found in all hockey novels analyzed. When hockey is organized, games are portrayed as stressful. However, the representations of organized and casual play can converge. In Vandervelde's *Ice Attack*, shinny played on the pond on Saturdays is seen as unofficial practice of the organized hockey team, and scrimmages can bring an air of shinny into organized hockey.

Within the realm of an organized hockey team and a well-structured practice, a scrimmage can be interpreted as very similar to shinny hockey. According to Blake, a "delightful play atmosphere can only occur when hockey becomes more like shinny" (77), which is shown in one of the novels chosen. While the novel *Brothers on Ice* features only regulated hockey within the story, the team gets excited when the coach announces a scrimmage in the practice in order to work on game-like situations (65). Although the coach will act as a referee, penalties will not be taken, and players will not play as hard as against an opposing team. In the novel, the coach motivates the boys and raises the stakes as they are competing for the line they will play on. Such a decision puts pressure on the goalies as starting goaltenders usually stay for the game and depend on their teammates to score in order to win (68). For Troy, this friendly competition thus decides whether he will play a whole game or watch it from the bench. However, all players are excited about the impromptu game and the fun times playing, thus somewhat entering the realm of Blake's more joyful and less restricted hockey.

Shinny can serve as an opportunity to join the game for players who are usually not allowed to be on the same team in regulated hockey such as girls and boys, children of different ages, or players of different skill levels. "[T]here are few instances of girls playing organized hockey with boys [and] opposite-sex siblings will be limited to playing shinny with and against each other." (Blake 57) Although no instances of siblings playing shinny are described in the novels chosen, the female coach in *Hockey Girl* is allowed to join her father's and brothers' hockey game after she scores two goals within ten minutes in shinny. Departing from these first experiences, she goes on to play at university, thus transcending into the professional realm (Hyde 76). Girls and boys meeting on the ice while playing shinny is portrayed as easy, both in *Ice Attack* and *Hockey Girl*, in which girls and boys skating together is "nothing special", because "[at] first, you notice them, but after a few minutes we're

all just hockey players”, thereby underlining the equality achieved on the pond (Vandervelde 76).

While organized hockey is mostly portrayed as being played on indoor rinks, casual forms of hockey can be played in various locations. Backyard rinks can be found in many hockey novels, which are used for unofficial practices, meeting friends, or just a leisurely skate (Hyde, Vandervelde), therefore confirming Blake’s statement that shinny is played mostly “in public arenas or [on] naturally frozen bodies of water” (57). All characters portrayed in the selected novels are members of an organized team, but “those who play organized hockey often play shinny on their days off” (56), a statement which applies to all novels mentioned in this paragraph. Players also resort to street hockey played against the wall when they are lonely. In *Ice Attack*, Alex plays street hockey in a machine shed on their farm. While he shoots on a painted goal by himself, he comments on his moves as a TV commentator would (49), ideally absorbing the game and entering a world of his own.

Hockey novels for young adults focus primarily on organized forms of hockey, underlining the stress that comes with them. However, casual forms of hockey such as street hockey and shinny are present in a number of novels, mostly depicted as a relaxed atmosphere and as an opportunity for players to join the game outside of organized structures.

3 The Game: Prominent Themes and Plots

It is important to note that the literature is not only concerned with the game, but also with fitness, friendship and other topics that occur within regular hockey teams and practices (Blake 50). This chapter discusses three main themes, identity, family issues, and gender issues. Within these larger themes, several subchapters will focus on specific subthemes such as identity construction, rules, balancing hockey and other duties; family relationships, influence of parents; female players, manliness, and other female figures such as hockey moms. The final chapter elaborates on other recurring themes such as Canadianness, community, changes, failures, violence, injuries, competition, and hockey goalies.

Blake describes the standard narration within hockey novels as personal narrations by one protagonist and a “first-person narrator” which underlines that the players “are especially limited or naive in outlook” when it comes to literary works (10). However, the works analyzed for this thesis show a majority of third-person narrators (Guest, Vandervelde, Schultz Nicholson *Delaying* and *Too Many Men*). Yet, the limited outlook may be seen in the descriptions of hockey games, where the focalizer of the protagonist becomes apparent. Although Blake’s claim that protagonists in hockey literature are never superstars but everyday persons is valid for young adult literature, the protagonists rarely show signs of intellectual, moral or physical damage or handicap (11). As a rule, young adult hockey novels are about overcoming specific obstacles, such as fitting in with a new team (Schultz Nicholson *Delaying the Game* and *Too Many Men*, Guest), handling failure and rivalry (Danakas, Vandervelde), or fighting for equality (Hyde). Despite claims that hockey novels are most often about players and their success in the game, as discussed in the reviews of secondary literature in chapter 1, this does not always hold true in young adult literature. In contrast to adult literature, which focuses on older persons, young adult literature presents teenagers as protagonists. These characters may venture for a professional career, but currently mostly participate in the sport for fun rather than in a competitive fashion. Players striving for the big leagues are Kaleigh in *Delaying the Game*, Sam in *Too Many Men*, and Troy in *Brothers on Ice*, while Tara in *Hockey Girl*, Alex and Bill in *Ice Attack*, Evan and Bryn in *Rink Rivals*, and Trent in *Brothers on Ice* see hockey mainly as a recreational sport rather than a possible career option.

According to Blake, the irony in reading hockey literature is that the reader’s knowledge exceeds that of the protagonist, who is never a caricature “of the proverbial dim-witted hockey player”, which leads to a “sadness [that stems from] watching them stumble through life” (11). Also in young adult literature, the protagonists are often facing a conflict of interest or a struggle which they have to overcome. In contrast to adult literature, teen readers might not necessarily know how the tale will end in the same scope that adults generally do, but they may look to the story and the protagonist as a means of self-help in similar situations.

The general tone of hockey novels for young adults is thus also common in other books for young adult readers, as discussed in chapter 1.5.4. While the main

thread of narration is now laid out, a more detailed view on narrower themes and motifs will be taken in the following chapters.

3.1 First Period: Identity, Rules and Growing Up

3.1.1 Hockey, Identity, and Growing Up

Like sports, fiction is a key moulder for identity and community. (Blake 12)

Blake links sports and literature to identity construction and thus to one of the main themes within young adult literature. In addition to only being a part of building identity, “[s]ports are widely believed to reveal character” (44), thus establishing a bidirectional relationship between sports and identity. This chapter discusses various issues related to identity that have been found in the novels reviewed.

Hockey is often portrayed as a hobby or even an obsession, thus inherently defining a character’s identity. As Blake describes, “[h]ockey fiction often focuses on [...] players whose entire identity is determined by the game” (Blake 49). In *Brothers on Ice*, Troy identifies with hockey, plasters his walls with hockey posters, while his brother only plays hockey because “it [is] a big deal in [their] family” despite his lack of passion for the game (Danakas 20-21). Both share the same hobby, but the value they ascribe to the sport differs, which indicates that the level of influence of hockey on identity may vary. Troy is protective of his position in the net and fears that another player might take this spot from him (33). When his brother volunteers, he feels betrayed as “he knew how much being goalie meant to me. That was something that belonged to me. He had no right.” (34) For Troy, hockey is not only a sport, being a goalie is part of his identity, part of who he is as a person. As Blake put it, “[a]lone on the ice, he is pure self, purely individual”, blending identity and sport (75). In a game, Troy becomes one with it.

As I pushed myself up, I saw that a thin layer of frost whitened my pads and I felt great, connected to the game. The net belonged to me, and if anybody wanted to send the puck into it I would make sure they’d have to work plenty hard. (69-70)

Some players seem to over-identify with the sport and thus interpret other characters stepping in as intrusion into their territory, potentially damaging their

relationship with hockey. However, hockey may also influence the behaviour of certain characters.

Hockey seems to be a lifestyle that overshadows different parts of life, which leads to the protagonists developing “character in ways that might not be positive” (Blake 44). In *Rink Rivals*, Bryn hides his musical talent, withholds his Cree heritage, and starts to play hockey only to impress a girl (Guest 12-13), thereby giving up a large portion of who he is. Although hockey is not part of his identity, he only has minor difficulties fitting into the team. Trying to play hockey is well-respected, although Bryn does not play well (15). Interestingly enough, when he listens to music in his head, Bryn turns into an ambitious hockey player, even managing to score in his tryout (16). The boy thus manages to draw from his real passion and talent and is able to use it to his advantage to improve his hockey play, yet hides his true love for music. Unfortunately, Bryn is not able to perform that well when his music, or his true identity, is missing (33). Similarly to his brother, Evan takes his spot as enforcer on the Nighthawks although he does not enjoy brute force, and has to “live up to the tough guy image he’d given Craig Carpenter”, the team captain, in order to stay on the team (24). Both brothers thus assume different identities that are closely connected to hockey, but not to their real selves. Furthermore, their camouflage can be seen as having a negative effect on their lives, but according to Blake, a main part in finding one’s identity lies in trying out various personalities, playing dress-up or imitating role models (48), so that their journey into different personalities may very well be a part of growing up and a natural process of finding out what they truly love.

One depiction of hockey as a part of identity is the sporting of specific logos. These logos are equally recognized by the characters and sometimes the only form of expressing one’s passion as all other logos and texts are forbidden in schools, while hockey logos are accepted (Hyde 20). Sporting a AAA team logo, designating the highest possible league at this age, is seen as “the ultimate status symbol” and entails numerous privileges (23). Wearing a hockey outfit does thus not only mean that the person is expressing his or her identity or preferences, but also that other characters recognize, understand, and accept the implications that come with such a preference. Sporting team logos can also be seen as an expression of acceptance and belonging within a team. In both boys’ and girls’ hockey books, the players feel the

need to defend their love for the sport. In *Hockey Girl*, although the players are at first reluctant, they realize that they actually have fun playing games and working hard (60). In the final pages of the book, male protagonist Kip describes them as playing softball in the off-season and thereby accepts them as hockey players (134). Although the girls do not get the same respect the boys do in their AAA sweaters, they proudly indicate their support of equality and are seen as part of a much larger team, that of women standing up for their rights.

Hockey players are usually portrayed as very dedicated to the game, investing spare time and money in hockey decoration for their rooms (Danakas), or giving everything they have for the game. In Hyde's *Hockey Girl*, the only chance for the girls to continue playing the season lies in playing six games in eleven days. Instead of giving up facing such a tough schedule, the girls reply that they can handle such hectic times because they cannot give up (136). However, it has to be noted that their main motivation for such a commitment is not only their love for hockey, but also the threat that they would have to act as the boys' cheerleaders if they lost the bet against them (ibid.). Commitment seems to be one of the main traits of successful hockey players, which Kaleigh's team partner in *Delaying the Game* explains, "[c]ommitment off the ice is as important as on the ice. [...] It builds character" (Schultz Nicholson 77), thereby indicating that success only comes when a player is truly committed to the game, not only on the ice, but also with the team.

In most novels, the players are expected to spend most of their time with the team, not only during practices and games, but also off the ice. In *Hockey Girl*, both the boys' and the girls' team often appear in groups, with the "Three Stooges", the first line of the boys' team, always around (Hyde 9-10). In *Ice Attack*, the players expect everyone to come to the pond on the weekend to practice and play (Vandervelde 25, 28). In Guest's *Rink Rivals*, this commitment extends to illegal activities and protagonist Evan first bases his identity on being part of the team, thus relegating his true identity "to team identity" (Blake 48). However, he realizes that although he loves hockey, his team's values are not the same as his and therefore they are not part of his identity (Guest 98). In quitting the team, he leaves the Night-hawks, but he has much many positive character traits to offer which define him (ibid.). In just the same way, his twin brother Bryn understands that he wants to come clean with his crush and admit to his heritage and true passion (100-101).

While many novels emphasize the sense of belonging and the identity constructed in relation to hockey and the team, some protagonists see a difference between their own identity and the one conveyed through the sport and decide to favour their own.

The important ingredient in a successful hockey career is passion for the sport. When passion is missing, the players are not happy pursuing their sport. In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh scores a winning goal, yet she lacks passion for the sport and her father criticizes that while she goes through all the movements, there is something lacking (Schultz Nicholson 97). Dangerous traits that counter team spirit are sporting an attitude and not making an effort as they limit the interaction between players and thus stand in the way of forming a team (98). Another very important quality for a hockey player is being a team player as no hockey game can be won single-handedly (103). The novels thus emphasize “[t]raditional arguments for sports as a means of personal development [which] are that they teach the player to handle defeat, as well as the importance of teamwork, effort, and adherence to rules and conventions” (Blake 198). All these aspects are important to the construction of a character’s identity, as is how they work in groups.

A large part of identity is the positioning within a group and finding one’s place in the process of growing up. Similar to other parts of society, hierarchies also exist in hockey teams, and players have to find their place in the team in order to cooperate. In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh only respects comments by “good coaches, her father, and now, of course, [her crush and great player] Shane”, with whom she practices (Schultz Nicholson 76). She would take comments by her team captain into account, but she certainly does not take advice from other teammates well (ibid.). However, as the novel progresses, she begins to listen to her teammates, too. In this development, she grows more mature, thus confirming that “[h]ockey is valued, then, as a means to some particular moral or vocational end, and is often seen as the central component of a protagonist’s *Bildungsroman* progression toward adulthood and maturity” (Buma 158). Although hockey is seen as a place where such values are exhibited and required, the exact development is usually not described in detail (Blake 44). Group dynamics and growing up can thus be seen as important concepts within the literature.

All young adult hockey novels analyzed illustrate the step into adulthood or at least a development of the characters into more mature individuals in relation to various character traits. According to Buma, the “thematic of fair play, hard work, discipline, civic duty, and toughness as constituting manhood” is frequent, and the novels often “depict hockey as the rite of passage through which these values are best achieved” (163). Values called for in hockey novels are thus “hard work, discipline, toughness, and collective responsibility from young hockey-playing men” (Buma 163). In contrast to the discussion in secondary literature, young adult novels seem to make no difference between girls and boys as they demand the same values, which has been shown in this chapter and will be further discussed in the following chapters.

3.1.2 Rules and Penalties

Sports and games such as hockey are constituted by rules, as described in chapter 1.1.1. In hockey novels, rules – and in relation to this also penalties – play a major role within the plot. These rules are not exclusively pointing towards the action on the ice and the game itself, but also towards behaviour and manners.

One aspect of growing up and following rules is to learn how to discipline yourself. In *Brothers on Ice*, readers get an impression of how players have to stay focused, which could be seen as one side of discipline.

Of course, I wasn’t about to count my eggs before they hatched. I’d been in enough tight games in my career as a goalie to know that you can’t let up until the final buzzer sounds, and I wasn’t about to play this game, even though it was only an intra-squad-scrimmage, any differently. (Danakas 73)

Rules thus do not only apply to how a game is played, there are also rules and expectations about how a player should behave in order to play well. In hockey novels, the mental focus on the game, the discipline that brings motivation, and the willingness to work hard in order to win are portrayed as main character traits of players, thus constituting a rule for successful playing.

In relation to discipline, characters in novels indicate that wrongdoing should be reflected upon and penalties for unjust behaviour should be accepted, thus showing maturity through understanding rules and their violations and learn from them. In *Brothers on Ice*, Troy punches Trent because he feels betrayed and his teammates,

who witness the fight in the locker room, are shocked and stay clear of him, yet Troy understands that what he has done was wrong. Even though the coach wants him to play the game, Troy refuses to take his spot, confesses what he has done and opts for finding his brother instead of participating in the game (Danakas 120-123). He therefore penalizes himself for what he has done, displaying honesty, fairness, and understanding of the rules that come with living in a community.

The players in hockey novels also experience rules and penalties off the ice in a metaphorical manner. In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh goes to the movies instead of spending time with her team, which is penalized by the fact that her family and her team bonded while she feels like an outsider (Schultz Nicholson 94). When she goes to see her crush Shane instead of watching her grandmother, the old lady wanders off, resulting in a frantic search with a silver lining: not only does her grandmother come home, Kaleigh also realizes who her friends are (114-121). In *Too Many Men*, Sam tries to handle everything on his own, which puts so much pressure on him that he gets pulled from the game his idol attends (Schultz Nicholson 93). Similar situations occur in all other hockey novels for young adults that were analyzed. Although the rules for life off the rink are less clear than in hockey, a violation is followed by punishment in one way or another.

Rules do not only define societies, they also constitute a framework for hockey games and as such penalize behaviour against the rules, which is the reason for the prevalence of penalties in hockey literature. In hockey, “[t]he rules are clear, understood, and accepted even by the penalty-takers” (Blake 45). Penalty calls are sometimes opposed, but at times described as necessary, “Nabil took a penalty trying to prevent a Gopher forward from getting a breakaway. It was a necessary penalty” (Danakas 102). Players thus have to assess whether an opponent could make a dangerous move, and whether taking a penalty and playing shorthanded for two minutes as a result of this penalty is less of a threat. If the opponent had a very high chance of scoring, as it is the case in a breakaway situation, a penalty is deemed necessary. In the majority of hockey novels analyzed, penalties play a role, most prominently in Schultz Nicholson’s *Delaying the Game* and Guest’s *Rink Rivals*.

Although penalties are called by referees, the girls seem to be quicker to question the calls and to reflect on penalties taken. While penalties in boys’ hockey are usually accepted for what they are, the captain in *Hockey Girls* argues with the refe-

ree about a bad call and ends up sitting in the penalty box for “unsportsmanlike conduct” (Hyde 48). Nevertheless, some players see penalties as necessary to winning the game, especially checking and driving players into the boards (49). In addition to the questioning of penalties, Kaleigh wants to dispute a call by the referee in order to remind him to respect fairness in the remaining periods of the game (Schultz Nicholson *Delaying* 105). When she ventures to discuss the call with the referee, he dismisses her as not being a captain and calls a penalty on her, which is immediately followed by the threat of a suspension by her team captain (ibid.). While Kaleigh sees her interference as necessary and as “thinking of the team”, her teammate Taylor interprets it as a dumb penalty (106). Both girls’ novels thus display a critical approach towards penalty calls, while none of the boys’ books make note of such actions.

As the girls face tougher rules on body contact and thus have fewer means to stop opponents without risking a penalty, their game is sneakier than that of the boys. While boys can resort to bodychecking, the girls get jabbed, poked, and rammed – when the referee is not watching (Hyde 50). Although violent attacks and brute force is forbidden, the girls find a way to obstruct the other team. It could be discussed which form of hockey is seen as fairer, but taking into account how the games are represented in the girls’ books, male hockey with open attacks is interpreted as being fairer than concealed attacks by girls.

The transition from boys’ to girls’ hockey is difficult to make for some girls because they have learned to play with body contact and experience a hard time playing less physically. Kaleigh, the female protagonist in *Delaying the Game*, manages to score three penalties in her first period playing for a girls’ team, while she has had the same number of penalty minutes during the whole last season with the boys (Schultz Nicholson 8). The girl bases her spite for the girls’ game on the fact that “[t]he non-checking game had too many rules that were different from the game she played with the guys” (10). Kaleigh has to move from body-checking to stick-checking, which remains the only option to separate an opponent from the puck (18). Girls’ hockey is often described as a different type of sport, and hockey novels seem to support this distinction. While there are additional rules to girls’ hockey, the players consider it hockey as soon as they have adapted to the play.

Not only referees can penalize players, coaches can also make decisions to exclude players from the game or limit their participation, “there are [thus] less formal ways in which the institution of the team works to impose social discipline on its members” (Buma 244). In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh has to stay on the bench instead of going out with her line, noting that “[i]n all the years she’d played hockey she’d never been benched” (Schultz Nicholson 9), thereby indicating that penalties called by referees seem to be much more common than those enforced by coaches. In the same story, the coach again threatens to bench her if she continues with malicious comments about her teammates (39). In addition to the rules provided by official rule books, coaches thus demand further conformist behaviour by the players. Those who do not play to their satisfaction do not get a chance to play and there is no chance to overrule these decisions.

On the ice, violence is considered a breach of rules, but hockey players are expected to uphold other values as well. In Hyde’s *Hockey Girl*, the coach pushes the players to rely on skill instead of resorting to unfair play, and traits such as “self-discipline and commitment to the game” are valued highly (91). The game can therefore be seen “as a moral or vocational training ground” (Buma 167), teaching players to adhere to the values described in the introduction to this chapter. Within the game, a reward for following the rules or a punishment for disobeying usually follow suit through penalties, comments by coaches or teammates, and actions such as benching.

The aggressiveness of teams can result in a penalty call, yet not every violation of the rules is penalized by referees. According to Blake, unwritten hockey rules are that hockey is a rough sport in which a certain level of aggression is required (53), which may be a reason why some penalties are not called. In *Rink Rivals*, Evan is ordered to take out the opponent’s forwards, even if he takes a penalty for it (Guest 39-40). He sets his first target and takes him down with what would have been 2 minutes for tripping, but the referee does not see and call the penalty, and then checks another player who appears to be seriously hurt, again without a call (40). At his third target, he uses a cross-check that sends the opponent flying and finally goes to the penalty box for this offense (41). In another game, Evan is secretly hit by a defenseman and faces a penalty when he retaliates with a fist to the helmet (84). Although Evan has second thoughts about the amount of violence used and admits

that “the Nighthawks had taken a lot of unnecessary roughing penalties”, he describes the violent game of the team as characterizing “the big league” (41). It is disputable whether such play can be seen as a means “for making difficult young boys road-ready and socially acceptable” due to excessive force, but in the further development of the novel’s plot, Evan realizes that such overly aggressive play is not his style, thereby “improv[ing] the moral fibre of a young man” (Blake 70). Although not every penalty is called, players realize that they have violated the rules and sometimes act on this realization.

Rules and penalties constitute the game of hockey in the same way they constitute every society. Although the main focus of rules presented is on the game and thus on rules on the ice, the representation of violations and their consequences extends to life off the rink as well. It seems thus that one of the main themes in hockey novels for young adults is teaching readers to obey rules and accept the punishment or penalty that comes with violating such rules. However, as some penalties in hockey are deemed necessary, maybe violating the rules is also necessary off the ice, at least presenting a valuable lesson to learn.

3.1.3 Hockey as Escape and Freedom

Blake describes sports as “a distraction, a respite from the real world that is a secluded area in which the player [...] is not subject to the vicissitudes of real life” (45). However, this theme is only marginally present in the hockey novels analyzed in this thesis. Although hockey is occasionally displayed as a different world and a possibility to leave the other life behind, Blake’s claim that “[e]ntering a hockey arena means passing into another realm of existence in which the usual societal rules do not apply” (45) mostly exceeds the descriptions found in the novels.

One possibility of escape from the non-hockey world is using the game as a place where catharsis can happen within a secured space. While hockey violence is often presented as a means of blowing off steam, playing itself can serve the same purpose. Girls’ hockey books present shooting the puck and practicing slap shots as a means of catharsis, calling it the “[b]est therapy ever” (Hyde 99-100). Although the players do not mentally enter another world through their play, they use the strength needed for slap shots to vent their anger, thereby escaping from a general

society in which hitting something with a stick would be considered excessive violence.

Several novels take this idea further and discuss the game or practice as a different world, and describe the necessity to focus entirely on what happens on the ice. In Hyde's *Hockey Girl*, Tara does not remember the last minutes before the game; her memories and narration start with the first face-off (146-147). Coach Helen calls on them to "play the game for [themselves] and not worry about the outcome", thereby referring to having fun and enjoying being on the ice without thinking about all the things that are going on in players' lives (147). This different world on the ice can be read as an extreme focus on the game itself, representing dedication and concentration of the players. In *Ice Attack*, Alex "ignore[s] everything going on beyond the boards. It [is] what [happens] on the ice that [matters]" (Vandervelde 19). His experience on the ice is described as otherworldly, "[f]aintly, as if from another world, Alex heard the encouraging screams of the spectators" (21). When an exclusion of the life outside of the rink is not accomplished, the game will be hindered by a lack of focus. In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh is unfocused and does not get into the game. It seems as if she has not arrived at the rink mentally (Schultz Nicholson 103). While the players are not entering a different world, they shut out everything that is not of relevance on the rink, thus creating a secured space in which only hockey matters. Both novels do not present the creation of a different world, but rather convey that the only thing players should think about during the game should be the game itself.

Instead of representing a refuge from everyday life, hockey novels for young adults employ the theme of hockey as another world and as a representation of focus on the game, thus representing mental stability and commitment. Hockey is therefore not a different world, but a situation with set priorities and the possibility for catharsis.

3.1.4 Hockey as a Career

Protagonists in hockey novels dream of hockey as a potential career, with the ultimate goal to play in the NHL, which purportedly is what the hockey dream is all about (Blake 39). According to Blake, skill does not matter in many narrations, but what is more important is "the dream of success" (59). This chapter focuses on the

descriptions of hockey as a career choice within the novels analyzed, but also on the players' skill and the mentioning of popular players.

Many protagonists of hockey novels dream of a career in hockey, but there are several exceptions. One exception within the realm of hockey as a career is that of the girls in Hyde's *Hockey Girl*, who play hockey during their off-season in softball to stay fit and thus are not interested in playing professionally. Interestingly enough, this novel also features a male protagonist who does not see his future in hockey. Kip is pressured into a hockey career by his father, but would much rather use hockey as a means to receiving a scholarship in order to pursue his real dream to become an engineer. Although he admits that he loves hockey, he sees the obvious risks and dangers, as "[i]t's a pretty unstable business and besides [...] I wouldn't mind keeping all my brain cells" (111). This novel underlines that hockey can also be seen as a means to fulfill other goals, whether they relate to health or vocational success, and that not all players strive to make the highest leagues.

In young adult hockey novels, the dream of hockey is not limited to making the NHL. Shane in *Delaying the Game* is asked to try out for the under-17 Team Canada, thus facing the possibility of joining a national team, equivalent to the biggest honour a hockey player of his age can achieve (Schultz Nicholson 71). However, Shane dreams of making the NHL as well and sees a good chance for this dream to come true, if only for obtaining a scholarship (72), thereby pursuing the same mature approach as Kip. It could be argued that girls' hockey books cannot present hockey as potential career as only women playing in the Women's National Hockey League can earn enough money through playing hockey alone¹⁰. However, making the national team can be seen as the fulfillment of the female hockey dream. Kaleigh dreams of making the Olympic team and thus has to join a girls' team as only playing within the female realm will enable her to pursue her dream (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 17). She is very committed to her goal and well-supported by her family, which enabled her to attend a hockey camp with a female hockey star, Cassie Campbell (ibid.). The dream of hockey is thus not always defined as making the NHL, but participating in a

¹⁰ see e.g. Wyshynski's report on Janine Weber, an Austrian player in the NWHL, "The unique thing about the NWHL, in contrast with the Canadian Women's Hockey League, is that young girls can now not only dream of playing at the next level but also get paid for it."

national team is seen as one of the highest achievements for young boys and female players.

Not all books mention professional hockey, possible hockey careers, or professional players. *Ice Attack* is such an example. The boys' team is not described in detail, so the reader does not know which level the boys play at. In the entire novel, there is no mention of NHL players or dreams of careers as professional hockey players. However, the missing display of such dreams does not imply that the boys have no passion for the sport. Although they do not aim as high, they "[love] everything about the game" (Vandervelde 65). Within young adult literature it seems possible that players participate in the sport for fun or recreational purposes without following the hockey dream, thereby displaying the sport outside of its usual connotations of professionalism.

In many novels, the dreams of becoming a professional hockey player represent a blend of reveries and career planning, comparable to teenagers dreaming of becoming an actress or actor, or a firefighter. Although *Rink Rivals* makes no mention of a possible career in a professional league, Bryn feels as if he is in the Stanley Cup playoffs in his last game when he sports brand-new equipment (Guest 102), indicating that playing in these leagues would be desirable. In *Too Many Men*, Sam dreams about "a hockey scholarship or a chance to make the NHL" (Schultz Nicholson 70), but his dreams are not elaborated on. It can thus not be determined whether he actually strives to play in the NHL or whether such thoughts are only daydreams. The only person on the verge of breaking into professional hockey that appears in the novel is a goalie from the Ottawa 67's, but he also has plans for a career other than hockey (82). Instead of portraying great players as heroes or otherworldly, the goaltender is supportive of Sam's miserable game and tells him to work with such bad games (99). Sam is tougher on himself than professional players are (100), but he dreams of being on the Ottawa 67's someday, hedging this thought with a "maybe" (114). Also in *Brothers on Ice*, Troy dreams about "being as good as Dominik Hasek one day" (Danakas 101) and about playing in the NHL (111). In this novel, it becomes clear that this is his career of choice and that he aims at making the league. Although the dream of hockey is portrayed frequently, it is sometimes not certain whether these are real goals or only vague fantasies.

References to real hockey players that are taken as role models occur frequently, among those Dominik Hasek (Danakas 10) and Curtis Joseph (78). For the boys, being compared to a professional NHL player is a great compliment. Troy is called “The Dominator” by his friends on the team and in school, thereby directly relating him to Dominik Hasek (101). In contrast to Buma’s claim that “there is no celebration of female hockey heroes” (266), in girls’ hockey books, professional female players are also mentioned, among them Cassie Campbell (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 17), Hayley Wickenheiser, and Danielle Goyet (93). These references to real players can be seen as “a truth claim”, but also as an indicator of unity, as readers will recognize these names (Blake 139).

Although “recent hockey fiction rarely depicts professional leagues as a utopia” (Blake 40), few protagonists see their future in these leagues. While the NHL seems to be one source of inspiration for the players, a number of hockey dreams can be identified as reveries by teenagers. The majority of players takes a very mature stance and wants to get a scholarship by playing hockey or simply have fun.

3.1.5 Playing Hockey, School, and Other Duties

All hockey novels for young adults discuss the balance between playing hockey, school, and other duties the players have to respect. Most novels focus on the difficulty of and sometimes failure in finding an equilibrium between these duties, which does not seem to be present in adult literature. This chapter discusses various difficulties encountered by players and the problems that arise from having to prioritize.

One rule that players have to respect is that their team comes before all other activities, especially when these activities relate to skipping practice or other team duties in order to enjoy themselves. In *Delaying the Game*, such an activity is Kaleigh’s date with Shane at the movies (Schultz Nicholson 89-91), which she prefers over watching her old team’s game with her new team. Her absenteeism is instantly penalized as her team nemesis Amanda bonds with her grandmother (94). The novel illustrates that the team has to be the top priority, even when other activities seem very attractive. It is thus of special importance to participate in off-ice activities as well to bond with the team.

A main problem for protagonists arises when they have to help what they feel is too much in the household. In Vandervelde’s *Ice Attack*, protagonist Alex relies on

his parents to give him a ride in order to meet his friends, which causes a rift between him and his team. Although Alex would like to join his teammates, he has to help on his parents' farm. As he does not attend the team's unofficial practice sessions on the pond, he is not seen as a committed member of the team (25). Another player who has to help around the house is Sam in Schultz Nicholson's *Too Many Men*. When his mother is confined to bed due to a broken leg and his father leaves for a business trip, the three boys have to manage the house by themselves. As both older brothers have busy schedules, Sam struggles to finish all his chores (43). When he arrives at his practices, he is exhausted (ibid.), which heavily influences his play (47). Sam is one of the few players whose exhaustion is portrayed through his play – when he is well-prepared, he plays great, but when he is exhausted, he loses games during practice and hates himself for playing badly (49). The work at home does not only influence Sam's hockey, but also his grades at school as he forgets to do homework and has to miss a tutorial because he has to make lunch for his mother (58-59). However, his teachers are quite generous and understanding in this situation (59). Due to the extra workload, Sam even falls asleep in class (ibid.). However, he still does not tell his mother that he feels overwhelmed with all the work (61). Before his big game in front of a professional hockey player, he forgets about his rituals, feels tired and is even pulled from his position after letting in three easy goals (87-93). The workload thus heavily influences his hockey – not the other way round. When Sam gets too overwhelmed, he phones his school, calls in sick and goes to see a practice of the Ottawa 67's (108, 114). In these examples, it is not hockey that is detrimental to the protagonists' well-being, but the workload they meet at home. As they both have to prioritize work at home over their other activities, their hockey playing suffers.

All protagonists in young adult hockey novels are attending school and difficulties in balancing school work and hockey influence many stories. Interestingly enough, such references are not found in girls' hockey novels. Most boys complain about the workload between school, homework, tests, and hockey, often described as exhaustion. In *Ice Attack*, Alex is glad that he does not have a game coming up as he feels too tired to work hard at practice due to his stressful schedule (Vandervelde 16), and in *Rink Rivals*, Evan's grades are not as good as they used to be when he starts playing in his new, more violent team (Guest 55). It seems thus that hockey is

often the reason for exhaustion, causing players to face challenging schedules and having to prioritize, and thereby risking failure in other realms.

When children choose hockey as their main hobby, all other interests seem to fall by the wayside. In *Rink Rivals*, Bryn struggles to find a balance between hockey and music. While he loves music and wants to enter the Protégé program at his school, a very competitive position (Guest 5), he gets lost in hockey and misses important appointments for his application with the music teacher (33). Even though he has talent and may be able to enter a piano competition, his teacher warns him that he has to stay dedicated, work hard, and practice in order to succeed – a tough call considering he works hard to play hockey as well (36). Bryn therefore has to keep up with hockey through extra practices, rehearse hard for the piano competition, and maintain a B+ average in school. He believes that he can succeed in all three ventures if he works hard enough (38). However, he soon realizes that his schedules clash and that he has to find an excuse not to attend his piano recital for the big competition (45). Nevertheless, he is accepted into the competition (61). When Bryn decides to stick with hockey for a while, his brother tells him how badly he plays hockey and that he has to listen to music in his head in order to play well, “[a]s soon as you stopped listening to your tunes, your head stopped bopping up and down and your skating went into the toilet. First, last and always, you’re a musician, Bryn. Turn the music back on” (79). Players who would like to pursue interests other than hockey in their spare time thus have to make a tough decision. It seems that having two hobbies simultaneously is not possible without compromise and that concentrating on one passion is considered stressful enough.

Although focusing on teenage readers and possible discoveries of first love during puberty, relationships are rarely seen in hockey novels. The only boy’s novel which mentions relationships is *Too Many Men*, where one of the goalies quits playing because his girlfriend does not like hockey (Schultz Nicholson 21). All other male protagonists are seemingly not very interested in pursuing romantic relationships at the time of the story. In contrast, both girls’ hockey novels portray their protagonists falling in love, yet their pursuit does not seem to affect their schedule or focus on priorities such as school and hockey, except for Kaleigh’s date described earlier in this chapter (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 89-91). Finding a partner may thus be

deadly to a hockey career or it may not affect it at all, but it does not seem to be a main theme in young adult hockey novels, especially not in those focused on boys.

It has been shown that all protagonists face difficulties in juggling various duties, but it is noteworthy that detrimental effects of preferring one activity over the other are prevalent only in boys' hockey novels. Being overly focused on hockey may have a negative influence on development in school or a potential career, while facing a high workload at home compromises playing hockey. The importance of balancing different interests and duties seems to be a major theme within hockey novels for young adults.

3.2 Second Period: Family Issues

3.2.1 Family Relationships

3.2.1.1 Children and Parents

One main theme within young adult literature and thus also hockey novels for young adults is that of the relationship between children and their parents. According to Blake, hockey depicts various family types alongside the stereotypical family: that of a one-child family, those including affairs (99), etc. This chapter explores various problems and issues protagonists face in the relationship to their parents.

Similar to other children, protagonists in hockey novels may have a stronger relationship with one of their parents. As Blake claims, the typical hockey family is usually shown as a father-and-son relationship (170), thereby sidelining the mother. In *Brothers on Ice*, the boys feel more connected to their father, who runs a store for sports cards and collectibles, but they realize that their mother is the one who puts food on the table because of her well-paid job (Danakas 54). While the father indulges in boy-like behaviour, the mother could be described as a grown-up. Although their relationship to the father is stronger than to the mother, both parents are presented as important. However, an imbalanced relationship towards both parents seems to be common.

In some families, the relationship between parents and children is determined through the love of hockey, where the love for the game is seen as a uniting factor. In Hyde's *Hockey Girl*, Tara hopes that her playing hockey will change her status within

the family as her hockey loving brothers are more respected than she is. However, her pursuits are still not taken seriously. When she reminds her father that she cannot make an appointment at a Christmas breakfast due to hockey practice, her father is shocked, even though practices and games are the only thing marked in ink on their calendar and are thus more important than all other appointments (97). Tara tries to convince her brother to help, but the father protects the son and offers to go alone, which Tara comments as “don’t even try the guilt thing on me [...] How many times had I had to take an extra turn at dishes so Stephan or Will could get to their games or practices on time?” (98). Her parents, especially her father, thus value their son’s interest in hockey higher than their daughter’s, which seems to be an issue of gender rather than an issue of hockey. In contrast to Tara’s discrimination, Kaleigh receives support from both of her parents and her father offers motivating comments on her play (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 35). Although hockey seems to be a binding force between parents and children (Blake 171), there are sometimes other structures within the families that determine relationships, such as gender.

Having a hockey player within the family usually influences everyone within the family at least partially. While many players are portrayed as independent from their families, e.g. Tara in Hyde’s *Hockey Girl*, Kaleigh in Schultz Nicholson’s *Delaying the Game* or both protagonists in Danakas’ *Brothers on Ice*, sometimes the children depend on their parents, especially when they live outside of the city (Vandervelde 74, and Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 113). The problem of extensive travelling is also discussed in *Rink Rivals* where both boys play for different teams and thus need a massive amount of chauffeuring by both parents (Guest 7). In *Too Many Men*, Sam’s family lives one hour from the rink, thus always requiring a driver in order to get to games and practices (Schultz Nicholson 27). It is therefore true that “[h]ockey places singular sporting demands on the entire family” (Blake 174), which can be very stressful for parents and the family because of the travel and the costs involved as well as the time necessary (175). One main issue in the relationship between parents and their hockey playing children is the amount of time needed to take children to the rink. However, the novels analyzed contain no instance in which parents complain about this investment.

Parents are often portrayed as the source for good advice and support when needed. In *Ice Attack*, Alex tells his father about being bullied by his friends and his

father makes him question his behaviour during the game and tells him to work hard to fit in again (Vandervelde 60-61). A similar situation of giving advice is seen in *Delaying the Game*, where Kaileigh's father underlines the importance of supporting teammates (Schultz Nicholson 93). It seems thus that parents, especially fathers, in hockey novels are always helpful when their children are facing tough times.

The relationship between parents and children is not prominent when such relationship is smooth, but problems become visible when characters experience trouble within the family. Vandervelde's *Ice Attack* is the story of a friendship that almost falls apart. The reason for said difficulties cannot be found between the friends, but lies in the family of Billy, the antagonist. Protagonist Alex cannot understand why their friendship is falling apart, he is angry at his mother for letting Billy stay at their house while his parents are on a skiing trip (79). His mother seems oblivious to the fact that Alex and Billy have not been on good terms lately (81). However, his old neighbour tells him that Billy's parents are separated and Alex understands that the skiing trip is a way for them to reconnect and maybe save their marriage (86). Finally, Alex decides to confront Billy and learns that he is jealous of the perfect family, of his animals, and a close encounter with a girl. Billy is devastated by his parents' fights and does not care about hockey anymore because all he wants is for his family to get back together (91). Families in hockey novels are thus also a reason for problems in hockey and friendships. Having stable relationships within the family seems to be the basis for success in hockey and in finding friends.

Where the bond between children and parents breaks, the children's lives change dramatically. The only characters which are portrayed as being left alone by their parents are the team members of the Nighthawks in *Rink Rivals*, who end up committing felonies and using excessive force. Craig, captain of the Nighthawks, describes that his father "left a long time ago, and [he] never [sees his] mom for longer than it takes for her to yell at [him] to get out of her sight" (Guest 81). A good bond with the family thus seems to prevent children from developing bad habits.

Hockey novels show that children need parents and their support, even if they are already fairly independent. Although Sam's parents in *Too Many Men* are generally supportive, he feels responsible and does not want to let them know that he did not play well due to his exhaustion (Schultz Nicholson 50). Particularly when his mother has a broken leg, "he [can't] make her feel worse than she already [does]",

even if he feels like crying and telling her about the miserable game, and puts “on a brave face for her” (101). In order not to upset her, he lies and tells her that he was “happy with how [he] played” (102). His mother seems to respect his opinion very much and considers him an independent person as she does not ask about his failures, but about how he felt about his playing (ibid.), “Sam was happy with how he played. [...] That counts for a lot” (112). When Sam realizes that he cannot carry the weight of the world on his shoulders alone, he confesses to his parents and tells them everything. His father then gives the advice that he has “to take help when people offer. It’s exactly like playing hockey. You make a great save and one of your teammates has to be in the right position to pick up the rebound. You have to work together” (122). Although children want to be independent from their parents, hockey novels show that it is sometimes better to talk to them for advice.

The novels discussed show a relatively strong bond between parents and children. Problems within families heavily influence the children’s well-being, but hockey only rarely has a strong influence on relationships within families. The families are generally portrayed as very helpful, supportive, and understanding, with no problems caused by hockey.

3.2.1.2 Siblings

Most protagonists are siblings, and usually all of them play hockey. It is thus not surprising that rivalry, competition, or fights between siblings are main themes within hockey novels. There seems to be no standard model of relationships between the children, although most novels focus on difficulties between siblings caused by a rivalry in hockey, as “[t]he tightly circumscribed ice rink necessitates confrontation or co-operation between the brothers” or siblings (Blake 189).

Similar to team spirit, siblings are a powerful force when they manage to work together. In Danakas’ *Brothers on Ice*, two brothers of approximately the same age find themselves on the same team, competing for the same position, goalie. While the older brother, Troy, has been in the position ever since he started playing (21), his brother has been forward (51). The older brother feels responsible for correcting his sibling, which his brother characterizes as, “[y]ou’re too high pressure. You’re worse than Dad” (31). Both brothers used to get along fine before – they would talk for hours before they fell asleep – but with the new competition within the team, the

good relationship between the two seems to have disappeared and Troy is jealous of Trent talking to his friends (87-92). Although Trent tries to remedy the lost connection through the gift of a sports card that Troy had always wanted, Troy refuses the offer by ripping it apart (92-94). After a fight between the two in the locker room, Troy seems to have overcome his anger as he chooses to look for his brother instead of playing the game he loves (123). In their soothing talk, Troy even offers to change to another team to bury the hatchet (129), but Trent wants him to stay so they can challenge “each other for the starting position” without pushing either brother off the team (130). The coach supports their decision in that he allows them to stay in one end of the ice, “practising in the same net,” instead of playing against each other (141) and they show off their connection in a mirroring drill which exposes their close connection. “[W]e anticipated each other’s next moves so well [and] he seemed to be inside my mind with me because he’d mirror it back no problem like he’d just thought of the same move too” (142). The ultimate proof of their power as a pair of brothers can be seen when both guard the same net at the same time and no player is able to score against them, thereby indicating that the two of them can overcome anything if they work together (144). Being able to co-operate thus strengthens the relationship between siblings and paves the way for success.

One source of competition among siblings is the fight for attention as in some instances, the hockey crack takes the role of the preferred child in the family. In *Hockey Girl*, Tara is often overlooked and even describes herself as “being invisible” because both her brothers and her father are crazy about hockey, yet not utterly successful in playing (Hyde 14). The fact that Tara is less appreciated by her father causes a rift between her and her brothers as they compete for his attention. Although the protagonist sees hockey as a means of integration and acceptance within her own family, she cannot overcome the difference in gender. However, not all families experience such competition among siblings. Both brothers in *Rink Rivals* are respected equally by their parents, although only Evan breathes hockey, while Bryn is not interested in sports at all (Guest 2). The boys are very different from each other. While Evan looks like his Cree mother, Bryn resembles his white father (13). However, in order to impress a girl who shows interest in hockey, Bryn starts playing for a team and hides his passions, he tries to imitate his brother’s hobbies (12). His brother Evan also assumes a tougher identity, so both brothers are strik-

ingly similar in their pursuits. The two care about each other and Bryn warns Evan to be careful so that he does not get hurt. However, Evan does not want to take any advice from his brother (27). Nonetheless, he does everything in order not to have to hurt or check his brother when their teams face each other (50-51). Although the boys sometimes fight (52), Evan is impressed with his brother's improvement and tells him so (53). When Evan commits felonies, Bryn feels that he has to protect him and decides to talk to him to prevent possible jail-time (63). Ultimately, both twins are excellent sources of advice for each other. Although Evan has made a bad choice with his team, he advises his brother that hiding his Cree heritage, playing "fifth-rate hockey and maybe [ruining his] piano career forever" is not the right way, either. Evan realizes that Bryn only wants to impress a girl and cautions him not to risk a potential career for her (74). Still, Bryn misses one more piano practice for hockey (77). When his piano instructor calls, Evan pretends to be their father, takes the call, and protects his brother from their parents' reaction to his actions (87). In return, Bryn covers for Evan when one of his teammates orders hockey equipment worth a fortune with his father's credit card (92-94). As a reward for his good play, Evan packs the new equipment for Bryn (102). In contrast to the competitive nature of relationship in Hyde's *Hockey Girl*, Evan and Bryn always find a way to cooperate. Although the personality of the protagonists certainly has an influence on their relationships, the parents are not only bystanders, they may even cause such rifts as Tara and her brothers have to compete for attention. It is thus not the fact that a child plays hockey, but rather the attitude of the parents that determines how well the children bond.

In difficult situations in particular, the bond between siblings seems to be strong. In *Too Many Men*, Sam and his older brothers have a partly difficult relationship and fight frequently. His older brother, Brian, who is described as an avid learner, teases him, however, his oldest brother, Andy, helps him with his heavy bag (Schultz Nicholson 8). In contrast to his brothers, Sam is described as selfless (9). When they are left alone to care for the house and their injured mother, they try to manage the chores between them (54). However, all three of them do not succeed in cleaning the house properly (64). Brian invites one of his junior league friends to watch Sam's hockey game and tells him to plan and manage better. However, he asks Sam to do his share of work as well and refers to shared duties as teamwork, thus

indirectly also referring to hockey (83). When Sam forgets about homework, Brian even helps him out by doing it with him (105). The mother's injury thus joins the brothers together and their bond grows stronger because of the challenges they face.

Relationships between siblings seem to be a major theme in hockey novels, mostly focused on the advantage of co-operation. The novels show that players can advance and learn from working together with their brothers or sisters.

3.2.2 Ambitious Parents

Blake refers to overly ambitious parents who pressure their children into playing hockey without paying attention to the children's preferences (196). However, the novels analyzed only marginally touch upon the theme of parents that are over-zealous, and the examples are limited.

Primarily with fathers, it can be seen that they seem to ignore potential threats to the wellbeing of players. Kip in *Hockey Girl* explains that his father would not let his son miss a practice or a game, even if he was feeling unwell (Hyde 99). He is therefore happy that his doctor stands up for him when he cannot play due to a concussion. Kip's father plans for him to pursue a career in hockey while the boy wants to become an engineer and only use his hockey playing as a means of receiving a scholarship (111). While his father still believes that he will follow his dreams, Kip is already planning on how to confront him and tell him that he has different goals, although this will certainly end in "World War III in [their] house" (ibid.). Kip is an example of what happens "[w]hen parents sacrifice other activities by expending too much in time, money, and effort for their son's career[:] they kill the play spirit" (Blake 65). Even though Kip still enjoys playing, he has realized that hockey is not a good career choice and not what he would like to do professionally. One positive aspect of including such overly zealous parents in the stories is that protagonists can relate the experience in their own family to that of such children and realize that other players may have it worse than they do (Hyde 99). It has to be noted that Kip's father is the only instance in which such behaviour is exhibited in the novels discussed, as parents are usually supportive rather than putting pressure on their children.

Most parents in hockey novels are generally encouraging in a positive way, limiting their encouragement to a healthy amount. An example of limited encour-

agement can be seen in *Rink Rivals*, where the parents encourage both boys to participate in hockey teams. While they do not push them to their limits, they aim to stretch their boundaries, as one of their sons has never played hockey before (Guest 5). Their mother, on one hand, supports the sport as she believes competition will be fun and “[i]t would also be a great way to meet and make new friends” (7). Their father, on the other hand, sees the boys’ hockey playing as a dream come true (ibid.), thus relating his own feelings to his sons’ dream of hockey. These parents can therefore not be seen as the prototype of ambitious parents, they are rather trying to find possibilities for their sons to integrate into their respective teams and schools quickly.

Hockey novels for young adults primarily portray parents whose enthusiasm for the sport and their children’s participation lies within healthy limits. Only one instance of an overly ambitious parent has been found in relation to a character who is not the protagonist within a story. It seems thus that the novels in general display a well-balanced relationship between parents and their children’s hockey.

3.2.3 Coaches as Fathers or Family

Hockey players are not only shaped by their families; within teams, coaches often assume the role of a parent. Coaches discipline, educate, penalize, and help players. They thus often face the same difficulties as parents.

Similar to families, coaches and team members build a relationship and bond through their working together. In Danakas’ *Brothers On Ice*, the players feel betrayed because Coach Price left the team to coach little girls, which the boys oppose (23). Their protest can be seen as similar to children reacting to the separation of their parents, as they feel left alone. The protagonist, the older brother Troy, is sure that Coach Price would only have let him play, while the new coach, Coach Priswell, prefers his brother and “want[s] Trent to be his goaltender this year” (95). Troy is reluctant in accepting a new coach, which is once again comparable to the situation of having to adapt to a new stepfather or stepmother within the family. Relationships between coaches and players can thus be similar to family issues.

Coaches are often regarded as being similar to fathers as they are mostly male, even on girls’ teams. When the players in Hyde’s *Hockey Girl* are faced with their new female coach, all girls are reluctant to accept her as a valuable professional.

However, Rachel, who has ties to the coach, explains that “[t]here are women coaches at every level of hockey, right up to the national Olympic team, even if we’ve never had one here because we happen to live in a hick town with caveman attitudes” (71). Having a female coach seems to be very unusual, but turns into a very similar relationship as can be found with male players and male coaches. Another element comparable to a father figure is that players generally look up to their coaches. These coaches are generally portrayed as good players, yet sometimes they seem to have chosen the path due to an injury, which is the case with the coach in *Hockey Girl* (Hyde 76). Coaches can thus be seen as father figures, possessing both skill and knowledge to teach players how the sport is played.

One role of the coach is that of a referee within the team, thereby partly educating the players and partly reprimanding them for unjust behaviour. When Kaleigh criticizes her coach’s reaction to her play, she becomes mutinous and the coach threatens to bench her (Hyde 39). Generally speaking, coaches are portrayed as strict, but fair, “He’d be in trouble for missing two practices, but never mind that. Coach Sheffie was fair. He’d bawl him out, maybe make him skate a few extra rounds and work him a bit harder, but he probably needed that anyway” (Vandervelde 65). Again this illustrates family hierarchies and relationships, in which the parents usually assume the role of a referee.

Coaches do not only penalize players, they also support them and try to encourage them. When Coach Dave phones Kaleigh’s house, she anticipates a negative comment about her play, but the coach reassures her that she is a valuable “asset to [the] team” and that he realizes how much effort she put into the latest game. Furthermore, he acts supportive in telling her she should not blame herself for the outcome (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 111). Similarly, after a loss of the Lakers in *Ice Attack*, their coach praises them for making the other team work hard and indicates that hard work is more important than winning a game (Vandervelde 23). Coaches are also portrayed as supportive in cases where the players struggle with other issues in their lives, such as when Sam is exhausted from working at home in *Too Many Men* (Schultz Nicholson 47). Instead of yelling at the boys, coaches are thoughtful and take care of the players’ situation. In the same way that parents commend and encourage their children, coaches do so with their players.

Not all coaches in hockey novels are involved in the sport. Even though he is not a hockey coach, Mr. Boothby, “vice-principal and Music Department Head of the school,” assumes the role of a coach towards Bryn and gives him important advice (Guest 36). He senses that Bryn has his mind on hockey as well and warns him that he will have to make a choice in the future which he will not like (37). Bryn has several father figures that help him on his way – his father, his hockey coach, and his music teacher.

All coaches portrayed seem to assume the role of a parent, mostly comparable to that of a father, because they are usually male. The protagonists look up to them, ask for advice, and follow (or protest) their coaches in much the same way they do with their parents. In the relationship between coaches and players, boys’ and girls’ hockey novels show no difference in behaviour, whether the players are male or female. The coach thus can be seen as a father figure and as reflecting similar issues that families face.

3.3 Third Period: Gender Issues

3.3.1 Girls Playing Hockey

There are very few fictional works that depict females who actually play hockey, and of these, even fewer – if any – focus on hockey as a family tradition. (Blake 207)

In this thesis, out of the six novels that were rather randomly selected because of their availability, two portray female players. Although Blake claims that “[g]ender issues, like racism, are rarely portrayed directly in hockey literature [and that if] they do appear, it is usually as a peripheral element of the story” (206), the fact that one third of the corpus selected focuses heavily on girls questions the validity of such statements. It could be said that female players do not seem to be as underrepresented in young adult literature as they are in adult novels. Yet these novels exhibit certain differences to boys’ hockey books. Against the rule that jargon is generally not elaborated on, in Hyde’s *Hockey Girl*, the meaning of a turnover is explained, thus maybe countering lack of knowledge of female readers (7). In this chapter, issues and themes related to female players will be discussed. Although some overlap with other chapters in this thesis is expected, this chapter highlights the female realm.

In all girls' hockey books, male players play an important role. While the girls' team in *Hockey Girl* establishes a competition against a boys' team throughout the season and is heavily focused on these boys, the female protagonist of *Delaying the Game* feels more at home with the male style of playing and falls in love with an older hockey player. Tara in *Hockey Girl* also falls for a player on the boys' team, although the teams are competing against each other to win a bet (Hyde 45). It seems thus that even when the girls are protagonists, they are never portrayed without reference to the boys.

Playing style between boys and girls differs enormously due to separate rules that prohibit body contact in girls' hockey. As opposed to men's hockey, which is often characterized through violence, girls' hockey is described to be "all about [s]kating, passing, making plays" (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 55). In terms of body contact, female protagonists are driven by different motivations than boys. The rules for girls' hockey also influence how contact or moves connected to it are interpreted by the players. In *Hockey Girl*, Tara perceives a turnover "as a dirty, underhanded kind of thing to do" although it is a legal move (Hyde 7). To her, "[h]ockey seem[s] to be full of sneaky tricks and attacks, like the elbows that would ram into [her] chest, face, or shoulder when the ref wasn't looking" (8). In contrast to boys' hockey, where violent attacks are often expected, girls' hockey thus seems to be closer to backstabbing, as body contact is still used, but always well-hidden. In *Delaying the Game*, protagonist Kaleigh misses the tough boys' game as "[s]he liked the hard-hitting game, the fast pace, the slapshots that could zip past a goalie" (Schultz Nicholson 10). Although the style of playing is different between girls' and boys' teams, hockey is still described as a tough sport, maybe even more so in girls' books as they interpret all attacks as violent and a potential penalty, while boys' books accept some moves as necessary penalty or legal.

A prominent theme is harassment of the girls by male players. In *Hockey Girl*, the boys of the opposing team harass a player sitting on the bench verbally in stating that they would love "for her to slam into [them] that way" and that girls should wear less padding as "[i]t hides all the good parts" (Hyde 9). Although the book is written for young adults, it already exhibits the often sexually oriented comments by men used to put female players in their place. The novel can thus be seen as an instance of "hockey as an erotic spectacle" (Buma 211). At first, "the women's game

quickly becomes an object of ridicule for the novel's male characters" (228), but when the girls prove their dedication and passion for the game, the boys gain respect, watch their games, and even support their fight for equality (Hyde 132). While the beginning of the story shows a disrespectful attitude of male players, the novel also underlines that people can evolve and change their attitude.

While boys are usually presented as hockey cracks from the very beginning, girls have the opportunity to start playing later in life. The players in *Hockey Girl* only start playing at a higher age, thereby not fulfilling the Canadian destiny to start playing as soon as they can walk (Hyde 13). As they still perceive themselves to be a softball team, they are not serious "about the sport, but definitely serious about this game" (50). Female players seem to have a greater liberty in playing hockey as they do not have to follow the strict competitive path.

Some female players are portrayed as rather masculine, living and breathing hockey, spending spare time playing or practicing (Schultz Nicholson *Delaying* 10), thereby being closer to the male stereotype of a hockey player than to the female version that is usually described as not as committed. Of course, Kaleigh is well-respected by male players and is considered to be one of them by the boys (ibid.). For her, as for every male player, "[b]eing hit with a vicious bodycheck is a sign of acceptance and equality" (Blake 89). In the new all-girls team, the two players who grew up playing male hockey are considered the best players, thus underlining the rather competitive character of boys' leagues compared to girls' teams (23). Those two players also distance themselves from the other girls as they prefer hockey over boys (31), thereby adhering to "[t]he qualities and characteristics necessary for successful athletic competition[, which] are still predominantly associated with men and masculinity" (Buma 226). There are thus girls who could be described as masculine rather than effeminate characters, especially when they grew up playing in a boys' team and when they lived the hockey lifestyle.

Female players face discrimination in various forms, as they are often presented as of inferior value to male players. One form of discrimination is the allocation of inconvenient ice time both for practices and games in *Hockey Girl* (Hyde 18), as their practices are usually set at 5 a.m. (57) and games as late as 11:30 p.m. (79). Of course, the first team ordered to cede their ice time to participants of a tournament that is relocated to their arena is that of the girls (108), thus forcing the

team to forfeit all games and basically to end its season. The players realize that their team will always be seen as inferior to boys' teams because they have the opportunity to become professional players and enter the NHL (113), thereby confirming that girls are seen as different and "less talented" (Blake 60). Yet, Tara states that such discrimination is not prone to hockey, but extends also to other fields, as the same treatment also occurred when they were playing softball, "[i]t didn't matter what sport we played or how well we did, we girls were always second best" (Hyde 113). Her teammate Rachel criticizes that neither men nor women stand up to such discrimination (114). In their discrimination within the realm of hockey, the girls face the same difficulties as women outside of the rink.

Another sign of the consideration of girls' hockey as less important is that it is perceived as less interesting. One indication of such values is that the girls' games are generally only attended by a small number of parents (Hyde 28), or "three or four mothers" (61), and that their teams are not well-known. "He was all about hockey and could rhyme off every team in the area – except his own sister's," is how Tara criticizes her own brother's judgment (42). A display of the lesser value of girls' teams can be seen when the coach leaves to coach a male team and suggests that maybe one of the parents could take over his position (59). The girls perceive this as an insult because only little kids' teams are coached by parents. Although families are generally portrayed as being supportive, gender discrimination extends also to this realm. Tara's father wants her to help at a Christmas breakfast instead of going to hockey practice, while she always had to step up in the household when her brothers were playing hockey (97). The protagonist identifies this as a "double standard" and wishes for her mother to take her side and defend women (98). The novel thus confirms Blake's claim that "[p]articularly in competitive hockey circles, the daughter often slips from memory" (208). Both spectators and families therefore seem to value boys' hockey more than girls' hockey and the difference can be seen in the dedication to and attendance of games.

Boys and girls are seemingly different as only coaches in girls' hockey books wait to enter the dressing room. While in boys' books coaches enter and exit the locker room whenever they want, sometimes also leaving the door open, doors are usually closed in girls' books and coaches knock before entering. The girls always call out "decent" to signal for the coach to enter (Hyde 26 and Schultz Nicholson,

Delaying 28). Interestingly enough, the girls in *Hockey Girl* retain this behaviour even when their coach is a woman (Hyde 91). Another issue is that of body odour or vanity as the girls in *Delaying the Game* take a shower after their game – a disturbing thought for protagonist Kaleigh, who cannot imagine “everyone staring at her body” (Schultz Nicholson 11). In comparison with the boys, the girls are described as not as interested in analyzing the game they just played (12), thus indicating that they care less about hockey than the boys. A description of such a locker room scene after the game in which the players goof around and review their game can be found in *Ice Attack* (Vandervelde 5). Boys’ and girls’ hockey thus not only differs on the ice, but also off, as the behaviour in the locker room is inherently gender-specific.

Hockey novels sometimes follow a larger agenda, such as the fight for equality. *Hockey Girl* tells the tale of a rebellious team which wants to show the boys that girls can play hockey as well, resulting in a fight for equality (Hyde 117), not only in hockey, but also at the gym (119) or at bridge meetings (122). Protagonist Tara designs a shirt with an equal sign to protest and her campaign is successful, as these shirts are worn by all girls around town (121) and even by her mother (122). However, she is met with criticism by her brother Will (121) and by her father, who claims that “the guys have a chance to make a career out of this. For you girls, it’s just a hobby,” thereby describing a very real situation for almost all female players worldwide (ibid.). However, in this situation, Tara’s mother supports her, stating that “[w]omen’s hockey has a national team [...] They’ve won gold or silver at every international competition they’ve ever entered” (ibid.). In this statement, Marion refers to facts, but the father’s reaction clearly indicates that such success is worthless if it is accomplished by women, as he states that “you can’t compare that to the NHL” (ibid.). The final point for why women’s hockey should be supported is directly related to the father’s response, “[a] girl has a better chance of making it to the National Team than a boy does of making it into the NHL. On those statistics alone we should be letting all the girls play and cutting the boys’ ice time back” (ibid.). It is easy to imagine the faces of disbelief described in the novel after such a stern comparison. An extraordinary twist in the story comes when even the boys’ midget team wears equality shirts at the board meeting to stand up for women. This novel is thus a prime example of “books [that] build powerful pathos for their maligned female players, and rely heavily on their young readers’ senses of justice. By making it

abundantly clear that women can play the game well and that gender discrimination isn't fair, these novels challenge the idea that hockey should be a male preserve" (Buma 234). *Hockey Girl* is thus a rebellious novel that succeeds in its attempt to challenge the "male preserve" that hockey is perceived to be (Hyde 264).

Knowing the gender of the players "is not obvious to the naked eye, even if tradition has taught us to see a boy or man behind the mask" (Blake 87). In hockey novels with male protagonists, female players are rarely featured, which is why they are portrayed as a sensation. In *Ice Attack*, the boys discover that the opposing team's goalie is a girl,

"The Ranger goalie is good though. She sure stopped a lot of our shots." Alex stopped in the middle of the sidewalk. "She? Did you say *she*?" Bill nodded with a superior smile. "Their goalie is a girl?" Alex squeaked. "No way! [...] I would have noticed. I was *this* far from the goalie dozens of times." [...] "But you weren't expecting a girl. You never looked, did you?" (Vandervelde 8)

Alex' surprise when finding out that he played and scored against a girl shows how unusual such a situation is to them. However, it also indicates that they have not noticed a difference in playing style or skill, so that girls are taken as equal players. The boys continue to muse about how having a girl on the team would affect the play (ibid.). While Bill seems to be happy about an all-boys team, Alex knows that his friend would like to have his crush, the coach's daughter, play with them (8-9). Having a girl on the boys' team thus indicates a special challenge, but within boys' books, female players are limited to the position of the goaltender, and thus rarely appear.

Hockey novels for young adults in which girls are protagonists can be described as a political statement as they generally "explore the gender politics of girl's hockey from the perspective of female protagonists and in light of the obstacles and difficulties that many young women face upon entering the game, even [...] on all-girls teams" (Buma 233-234), which has been described extensively in relation to the two books selected. It has to be noted that "[o]ther children's hockey novels have been more direct in their portrayals of female protagonists who manage to succeed in hockey despite the cultural sexism that continues to structure the game" (233). However, *Hockey Girl* makes a bold statement in favour of equality and against discrimination, thereby following the trend that "Canadian sports novels in the late 2000s [...] depict strong and athletic female characters" (Hyde 258), that are "both

skilful and tough" (233), on the way to making "female athleticism [...] both normal and natural" (259). Girls' hockey novels thus seem to fight for equality and try to break the male dominance in the sport through the portrayal of many strong female characters.

There seems to be a noteworthy difference in the importance of female characters in young adult novels as opposed to adult literature. According to Buma, "it is in their depictions of the relationship between women and hockey that adult-oriented hockey novels differ most significantly from their contemporary children's counterparts" (233). While women are excluded from adult hockey novels, girls seem to be received well, thus implying "that young girls might play (and even succeed in) hockey, but that when the game gets serious (read: adult) it's time for women to step aside and let men do their thing" (Buma 234). Such a comparison can only be established through secondary literature as this thesis does not analyze the relationship between adult and young adult novels. However, it is an important point to note when reference is made to the large number of female protagonists within the corpus of this thesis.

This chapter has shown that girls are not as marginalized in young adult literature as women are in adult hockey novels. While they face discrimination, hockey novels for girls strive for equality and as such follow a political agenda. The protagonists are thus tough and strong girls that are equal to boys in their skill and ability to play hockey. While they are often perceived as less important and different from male players, hockey novels tell their stories of successfully overcoming discrimination.

3.3.2 Hockey and Manliness

Manliness seems of major interest to research in hockey literature. Both Blake and Buma extensively focus on masculinity and male body image in their works. Blake claims that "hockey fiction is saturated with statements about the required masculinity" (83). Although Buma states that "[h]eroic masculinity, [...] as associated with toughness and collective responsibility, remains largely the domain of adolescent- and young-adult-oriented hockey novels" (192), the novels analyzed only partly support this statement. Manliness can rather be found in body image, perseverance, and courage.

Hockey itself can be seen as a marker of toughness. Generally speaking, a hockey-loving person is considered normal and boys who prefer hobbies such as music over hockey are described as “wimpy” (Guest 2). This is also one of the reasons why Bryn’s father encourages him to play hockey (5). Boys (and also girls) who play hockey are considered to be manly and tough, which in return makes those that do not participate unmanly.

Body image appears to be of much interest to the protagonists in hockey books for young adults. In Danakas’ *Brothers on Ice*, Troy wonders why he cannot train for a six-pack, “no matter how many sit-ups” he does every day, while his brother shows muscles although he is “still kind of skinny” (22). A major issue for boys presented in hockey novels is their size. Protagonist Alex in *Ice Attack* resents that he is of short build and interprets his shortness as weakness (Vandervelde 1, 4). However, he tries to compensate for his weakness through working on his speed (4). Both novels thus show that it is not enough to hide the body behind equipment in order to pump “up the player’s profile” (Blake 87). While Blake further claims that “[i]t is partly because of this concealment that, for all its emphasis on physicality, body image and size are less important in hockey literature” (ibid.), hockey players seem to be utterly concerned about their size, even though they try to compensate for it. Body image and size are thus still discussed in young adult novels and may be interpreted as important to the protagonists.

A further indication of manliness or toughness is carrying the heavy hockey bag, a requirement for both boys and girls. All boys in the narrations carry their hockey bags themselves. While it would be expected that female players would complain about the heaviness of their bag, the girls carry the load in exactly the same way as the boys do (e.g. Hyde 35) and show no difference to the other sex in terms of carrying weight. It is thus not surprising that “[o]ne cannot immediately tell the men from the boys, or even the men from the women” in hockey (Blake 87). However, in *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh has a wheelie bag and thus does not have to carry the heavy equipment (Schultz Nicholson 76). Although such a bag could be seen as too female with male players, Kaleigh is portrayed as a well-respected player and maybe even too much on the masculine side for the girls. The girls see themselves as being equal in that they have skills, drive and commitment as well and are

do not consider themselves to be inferior to the boys (Hyde 74). Girls are therefore presented as equally tough in their behaviour and their play.

Although “sports culture promotes traditional concepts of masculinity, including violence and aggression” (Blake 81), not all hockey players seem to fit the stereotypical image of a tough player. The male protagonist, Kip, in *Hockey Girl* is one of these unusual players. Kip plays tough on the ice, but he avoids confrontation off the ice, both with his teammates (Hyde 84) and with his father, who happens to be one of the officials for the hockey board (110). However, he decides to stick to his opinion and is the first male to wear an equality shirt and thereby impresses Tara. His behaviour is certainly seen as unusual, as Tara mentions that he will be teased (126). However, when the boys’ team’s ice time might be affected by a Junior A team moving to the city, the whole team decides to support the fight for equality (127). Kip shows backbone when he wears the shirt at the Board of Directors’ meeting, where his father and many others clearly see his statement (128, 132). Kip’s support of the girls can be seen as proof of courage and dedication, which in turn is often seen as a male trait. In the end, Kip avoids violence and aggression, but he is still seen as a masculine figure as he speaks up and voices his opinion.

Manliness and masculinity in young adult hockey novels thus have their roots in playing hockey, the discussion of body image, carrying a heavy load, and showing courage. Interestingly enough, all these traits could be referring to both boys and girls, thus in some way contradicting the terms manliness and masculinity, and rather referring to maturity.

3.3.3 Hockey Moms and Other Women

All young adult novels feature both mother and father in their family setup, although they are not always on good terms with each other. The fact that girls are not prominently featured in the majority of hockey novels raises the question whether and how women, or mothers, are portrayed in these texts.

In hockey novels, mothers almost vanish, while fathers are more involved in their children’s hockey pursuits. As a rule, the father is obsessed with hockey, while the mother is more distant from the sport. In *Hockey Girl*, the mother watches games at the rink, but only when she has hot coffee, thereby indicating that she would not give up everything for hockey (Hyde 14). The mother is also concerned about the

children's well-being and health, while the father is described as solely focused on success without grasping potential health problems in the future (41). The mother's lack of interest in the game could be seen as a representation of a mother "in the background as an archetypal maternal figure" (Blake 99), which is how mothers are generally depicted in the novels analyzed. In most novels, the father is portrayed quite frequently, while the mother vanishes completely or has only very limited mentions (Schultz Nicholson *Too Many Men* and *Delaying*, Danakas, Guest). The only novels in which mothers are more prominent are Hyde's *Hockey Girl* and Vandervelde's *Ice Attack*, in which the mother is oblivious to the fights between her son and his former best friend, thus being a reason for potential friction. Women thus seem to be immensely underrepresented in hockey novels, possibly due to the lack of identification with the game.

In general, mothers are shown as less important, but they can certainly free themselves from this role. Blake states that "[d]espite changes in recent years, female family members are most welcome if they play supportive roles" (208). Although the supportive role seems to be standard in the texts analyzed, Tara's mother is an example of a development from an oppressed to an empowered woman. When Tara faces discrimination within her family, she wishes for her mother to stand up for her, "[i]t occurred to me that Mom could try saying something to stick up for us women, for a change" (Hyde 98). Tara's mother is a perfect example of the obedient wife who does not want to get in the way of her husband and her sons. However, when her daughter fights for equality by sporting one of her t-shirts, the mother confronts the male half of the family, stating that the girls actually have better chances at reaching professional level than boys, as there are simply too many boys who compete for a small number of spots, thereby leaving her husband speechless (121). In standing up for her daughter, the mother emancipates herself from her supportive and passive role and becomes an independent character with her own opinions.

In contrast to rather passive mothers, in *Too Many Men*, Sam's mother not only runs the household and keeps the family together, she is also very interested in hockey. When the parents have a car accident and his mother is sidelined with a broken leg (Schultz Nicholson 32), the boys have to take over the household and her lack of support becomes difficult for them (36). However, she is described as "his

biggest fan”, always keeping tabs on his games and schedule, and even sporting “a sweatshirt that said *Hockey Mom*” (41). Although the majority of mothers are portrayed as rather minor characters, they can love the sport and support their children in much the same way as the fathers do.

Even though hockey novels for young adults show some exceptions of more prominent female characters, mothers are sidelined in many narrations. Blake’s statement that women are mostly present in their supportive roles thus seems to be true for young adult novels as well.

3.4 Overtime: Additional Themes and Plots

3.4.1 Representation of Canada and Canadianness

Both Buma and Blake focus extensively on the relationship between hockey and Canada, thereby asserting that “playing (or even watching) hockey is a symbolic affirmation of being Canadian” (Blake 36). This chapter discusses whether such a relationship can be found and which elements of Canadian culture and nature are present in hockey novels for young adults. In general, all hockey novels discussed are set in Canadian villages or cities, thereby also establishing an affiliation to Canada.

Knowing how to play hockey or how to skate is seen as an intrinsic quality of every Canadian, as Blake describes, “Canadians learn to skate even before language skills develop. We are purportedly born with a hockey stick in our hands” (170). In *Hockey Girl*, knowing how to skate is seen as an innate quality of residents in the little town of Cartwright, “kids in Cartwright laced up and hit the ponds, the arena, and even the frozen Nith River as soon as they could toddle” (Hyde 14). Although Blake claims that “[t]he times are long past when rural Canadian children learned and played most of their hockey on backyard ponds or rivers” (Blake 175), hockey novels for young adults still propagate these circumstances as many of the characters in the books have their own backyard rinks, among others Alex and Bill in *Ice Attack* (Vandervelde 4, 7), or the towns have ponds which freeze over and are used by the players to practice (e.g. Hyde 44). Furthermore, every household in the town has old hockey equipment lying around, which makes it easy and uncomplicated to start playing (20) and shows the importance of hockey as part of the Canadian iden-

tity. Hockey novels thus seem to continue the portrayal of hockey as an innate quality of Canadian citizens. Characters have easy access to rinks and equipment, which is underlined by their ability to skate.

Typical Canadian weather often seems to influence the stories told. In *Ice Attack*, protagonist Alex is snowed in during a blizzard and thus cannot come to a game and practice (Vandervelde 56). However, his teammates mock him as the snow plows in the city were running and they do not seem to understand that road conditions outside of densely populated areas are often too dangerous to allow for driving (ibid.). Ponds are expected to freeze over, thus establishing a setting within the cold Canadian winter. Despite the fact that the Canadianness of such weather is not made explicit, they illustrate (stereo)typical Canadian conditions.

Buma claims that “[h]ockey novels are also somewhat invested in the idea that the game works to unify Canadian peoples,” but states that “the range of racial and cultural difference these novels explore is relatively limited” (265). Despite this claim, First Nations play a major role in several hockey novels, among those *Rink Rivals*, in which the protagonists are half Cree (Guest 13). Interestingly enough, although Kelsey, a girl from Calgary, makes negative comments about them, the attitude of the Quebecois towards First Nations is described by Bryn as “[up] there, people were just people first. After that they were smart or not so smart, good or bad, then, if there was nothing else cool about them, Indian or white” (ibid.). The North is thus portrayed as very open-minded when it comes to different peoples living together, while the Prairies display a different attitude. Also his brother Evan mentions that it does not matter whether a hockey player is “Indian or white or green or purple” (21), indicating that all players are equal. However, the half Cree family is the only instance in which different races or peoples are shown. It can thus be assumed that only a limited number of novels discuss these issues.

Hockey novels for young adults do not overtly claim Canadianness and do not describe anything as being typically Canadian. However, the relationship of the protagonists towards hockey and the climate indicate a strong bond to Canada in addition to the setting in the country.

3.4.2 Community and Team Play

A number of novels feature a discussion of hockey as part of identity construction, as a means of belonging to a specific group. The themes of community and team play are thus inherently inscribed in sports fiction with a focus on team sports. This chapter focuses on the chemistry among players, the power and importance of team play, integration into a new team, personal success versus success as a team, positive and negative effects of communities, and hockey teams as new friends for life. As Buma summarizes, “hockey can be a healthy and beneficial way for men to establish friendships and community in an often alienating and impersonal society. But hockey can work to divide as well as to unite” (218). In the present chapter, these issues will be discussed.

Both girls and boys see hockey as a means of finding new friends and as a possibility to connect and integrate into society (see Hyde 13). “The idea that hockey works to create camaraderie, trust, friendship, and solidarity among men [and women] is a frequent trope in Canadian hockey writing” (Buma 218). Hockey also has the power to connect characters that are at first considered opponents, such as Tara and Kip in *Hockey Girl* (Hyde 87) or Kaleigh and Amanda in *Delaying the Game* (Schultz Nicholson 128). For some players, hockey constitutes an environment in which they feel at ease. Evan in *Rink Rivals* describes hockey as “the only place [he] felt he really fit in” (Guest 6). While he does not fit in well at school and rather remains an outsider, he considers the hockey team his friends (ibid.). In *Too Many Men*, Sam finds new friends within the team who also happen to be in his school (Schultz Nicholson 12, 26, 57), essentially forming a connection through hockey. Although hockey teams are not united without hard work, hockey seems to both influence players and make building friendships easier.

One of the major plot lines within hockey novels seems to be success through team play. When the players act as a team, they succeed. “You girls have terrific energy as a team and it’s a team effort that will win this”, is how Coach Helen motivates the girls to give it their all (Hyde 147). And sure enough, this team effort pays off and the girls win the game and their bet against the boys.

As can be expected in young adult novels, not all groups play well together, especially when a player enters a new team. In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh feels

excluded by her teammates who do not talk to her or say “nasty things about her” (Schultz Nicholson 10). Protagonist Alex faces a similar situation in *Ice Attack* after he is made the scapegoat for his team’s loss. While some of his teammates try to protect him from harsh comments, the boys criticize him for his lack of team play and his selfishness, and accuse him of losing on purpose (Vandervelde 24-25). Although Alex refrains from talking back and thus prevents a fight, he cannot understand their hateful reaction towards him because they should be a team. His former best friend seems to have taken the lead in accusing him, which troubles Alex (25). Despite hockey as a supposedly connecting factor, “the ice rink can also be a place for contesting and asserting a group’s sense of self, sometimes in antagonistic and often in aggressive ways” (Blake 26). When players do not connect, they struggle both on and off the ice.

Within the team, lack of team play can be seen when protagonists feel left alone and when individual players become visible. In *Brothers on Ice*, Troy is of the opinion that his line-up does not support him in the way he would like to, as “[a] goalie can do only so much with an inexperienced defenceman in front of him,” (Danakas 68) through which his brother’s team is at the advantage. A team is not composed of only a single player, so one single person cannot be at fault for a loss. However, such sports require team members to work together and to support one another. As such, “hockey novels see the real and imagined fraternity of the dressing room both as a rationale for collective responsibility and as an area of respite from the pressures of individual effort” (Buma 145). When the team works together as a group, no individual player takes the blame and no player carries the weight of the game on his or her shoulders.

Connecting with a new team is often presented as a struggle for protagonists in young adult novels, especially when they want to shine in order to impress someone, such as Kaleigh, who desperately wants to score to be respected by her crush Shane (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 56). When the reader sees the game through the eyes of the protagonist, personal success often weighs more than the team’s win. While Kaleigh was well-integrated in her old team, she does not seem to fit in with the new team, becoming more of a selfish person, not helping the team, and ultimately not succeeding (84). When she cannot identify with the team, she lacks passion for the game and does not enjoy it (97). Team spirit is not only a reason for success, but also

the basis for personal well-being and joy. In order to fit into a team, players have to overcome their attitude and work hard to be part of it (98). The team finally connects when Kaleigh needs their help in finding her lost grandmother, when her team captain states that the team has to stick together both on and off the ice (120). The connection with the team is required here in order to resolve a difficult situation. When teams have to work together and struggle to make something happen, friendships are established.

As in every team, not all players can be superstars. This realization is often hard to take for teenage players. One such instance is found in *Delaying the Game*, where Kaleigh's father praises players that act primarily in a supportive role, setting up goals and plays for top scorers (Schultz Nicholson 93). If such support is not given, selfish plays may happen and result in losses. When Alex in *Ice Attack* decides to keep the puck and go for the goal alone instead of passing to his former best friend, he is tackled, loses the puck and the other team manages to score in the last few seconds of the game (Vandervelde 21-22). These examples show that players have to put the team before their own goals, as underlined by Alex' father, who tells his son to reflect on the reason for his lack of team play and advises him that putting himself before the team is not a good idea (60). Support and sharing are seen as qualities of friendship, as Billy hands Alex his beloved stick with whom no one is allowed to play (94-95), seemingly a sign that Billy wants to give their friendship another try, which both boys agree to (97). Team play can thus only be established when players embrace their supportive role and are willing to let other players shine, even if they are not best friends.

Team spirit is not only a reason for success; it also causes the players to feel happier and to enjoy the game. Teams in which the players know each other well are portrayed as vivid and joyful, underlining the "strong sense of camaraderie" (5). At the same time, the boys are providing feedback for each other, criticizing mistakes they made in a non-offensive manner (ibid.). The description of the team is therefore comparable to the portrayal of "professional hockey as a tight circle of comrades" (Blake 51). Friendship and community can be seen as influencing the behaviour and well-being of protagonists.

In contrast to a healthy team spirit, a team's community can also lead to problems when the group demands certain behaviour. "Simply by being in and around

the team, by participating in its behaviours and fulfilling its expectations, individual players are confirming and conforming to the pre-existing standards of knowledge and power that govern team-culture” (Buma 241). While such an adaptation to a team generally results in supportive relationships, not all teams exhibit such well-disposed communities. In Guest’s *Rink Rivals*, both brothers undergo serious changes in order to fit in: Bryn hides his real interests and starts playing hockey to impress a girl, and Evan even becomes a violent enforcer in the roughest team in the league. However, it is exactly this type of rough play that gets him respect, “[h]e laughed and joked with [them] as if he’d been on the team for years. Craig thought he was great, a real asset to the Nighthawks” (41). The integration into the team causes Evan to let go of his schoolwork and he suddenly finds himself involved in fights (55) and shoplifting incidents (56-57). Evan’s team is a perfect example that “[i]n hockey culture, young players and rookies are often subjected to humiliating, degrading, and even abusive ‘punishments’ by veteran players” (Buma 242). In order to impress the boys, he spends his savings on items his teammates want (Guest 56), spray-paints a statue (59), and is caught skipping school (61). However, he sees these actions as an initiation rite and considers himself “part of their group now”, which fulfills his need for belonging (60). As Buma puts it, “belonging in the team collective requires conforming to its assumptions and expectations” (241). Evan seems to follow this requirement until, when his team captain wants to set him up to hurt his brother’s team captain, he quits the team and tells his captain that he refuses to play “rotten hockey” (Guest 97-98). *Rink Rivals* tells the story of a team which exerts negative influence on the protagonist (Guest). Although Evan is aware of the bad reputation of his team, he still tries to fit in and become part of the community. His is a cautionary tale about giving up one’s identity and values only to become part of a group.

Team play is not only limited to life at the rink, but also extends to other parts of life. Hockey players are expected to join their team for meals (Hyde 34), unofficial practices (Vandervelde 25), watching other games (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 75), or even illegal activities (Guest 56-59). If the players do not obey this rule, they lose their status within the team. This happened to Alex, who cannot attend practices and is therefore seen as traitor and is harassed by his teammates (Vandervelde 56), and Kaleigh, who faces criticism for going to the movies instead of watching a game with

her teammates (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 75). In order to become part of the team, players have to sacrifice their spare time and spend it with their new circle of friends.

Without team spirit and a sense of belonging, protagonists often lose interest in playing hockey, as described by Vandervelde in *Ice Attack*, when Alex faces harsh comments and sidelining within the team, which makes him wonder why he wanted to play this sport in the first place and whether he should give it up (27, 62). This effect of a lack of team spirit and community is also indicated in other hockey novels for young adults, thus illustrating the need for such community.

In general, hockey novels struggle with finding a balance between individual and communal identity, described by Buma as follows,

[a]lthough the institution of the team often appears to establish friendships and mediate relationships between men, the idyllic male community promised by the myth is disrupted both by the game's culture of competitive individualism and by the coercive requirements of belonging, a fact which hockey novels rarely acknowledge. (268)

However, in contrast to Buma's statement, such discussions seem to be rather frequent in hockey novels for young adults. Team play and community are tightly connected to friendship, thereby establishing a tight link to general themes in young adult novels.

3.4.3 Changes and Adventure

In relation to the age of the protagonists, facing puberty, change and adventure are frequent themes in hockey literature for young adults. The changes may relate to hockey, to surroundings, to friends, or to falling in love. Adventures are tightly connected to such changes as they represent a change of usual habits and an exciting venture into unknown territory.

One major change in hockey novels is the transfer to a new team. In *Delaying the Game*, Kaleigh tries "to fit in but nothing [she does] works" (Schultz Nicholson 109), thus not succeeding in overcoming the changes. Although she would be able to play on her old team, she has to join a girls' team in order to work towards playing on Team Canada. Her father advises her that she has to distance herself from last year, to "let go". Kaleigh does not only have to adapt her physical play, but also her

“mental game”, which will, if she overcomes these obstacles, make her a better player and a stronger character (ibid.). Changing to a new team generally entails adapting to a new community, as is also shown *Too Many Men* and *Rink Rivals*. With the transfer to a new team, players do not only meet new people and a new surrounding, they also have to adapt to a new group and maybe change their behaviour or mentality, which may result in a feeling of giving up one’s identity.

Change can also come through relocation, which upsets previous structures and sometimes even calls for joining an unknown team. Protagonist Alex in *Ice Attack* used to live in the city with his family, where he was always close to his friends and hockey (Vandervelde 13). Since he moved away, he has to hurry in order to catch the school bus (5) and cannot enjoy his social life as much as he used to. The distant location of the farm he now lives on makes it impossible for him to go to the pond with his friends as his parents need to give him a ride. Change thus may also be portrayed in a negative way. In *Rink Rivals*, the two brothers Evan and Brynley move from the small town Whapmagoostui, Quebec, to Calgary, Alberta, because their mother has found a new job in the city (Guest 1). In *Too Many Men*, Sam’s family moves to Ottawa (Schultz Nicholson 7). With Sam’s move comes the change to a different league. In Calgary, he played on a AAA Bantam team, while in Ottawa he then starts on a AA team, thus in theory moving down the ladder (12). When children move from one city to another, they face difficulties caused by change. Not only do they have to find new friends, find their way in a new school, and become part of a new community, they also have to try out for hockey teams, a stressful situation, and need to bond with their new teams as well.

Even though relationships between players and girlfriends or boyfriends are not addressed in boys’ hockey books, they play an important role in girls’ novels. In both Hyde’s *Hockey Girl* and Schultz Nicholson’s *Delaying the Game*, the protagonists are attracted to boys for the first time, thus showing signs of growing up. This sudden interest in boys can be described as a change in the girls’ identity. It has to be noted that such focus is only present in girls’ books, which constitutes an important difference as it seems to be a theme considered to be more relevant to girls than boys.

Part of hockey culture and playing hockey is also the joy of experiencing what could be called an adventure. For Troy and Trent in *Brothers on Ice*, such an adven-

ture is a tournament in the US, which means that the whole team goes on a road trip, stays at a hotel and experiences a few days without families (Danakas 64). Road trips seem to be frequent in hockey novels because Kaleigh's team from *Delaying the Game* is also very excited about their road trip to a tournament in Saskatchewan (Schultz Nicholson 127). Another adventure players experience is a boot camp with the teams (Schultz Nicholson, *Too Many Men* 19), where the players get to know each other and where they work on their skills (21).

Change and adventure seem to be two themes of interest in hockey novels for young adults. This chapter only discussed very prominent changes not found in other chapters such as relocation or transfer to a new team. Minor changes such as within in a relationship, a friendship, or relating to family structures are addressed in their respective chapters. When taking these into account, change itself seems to be one of the main themes in young adult hockey novels.

3.4.4 Failure and Victory

With hockey being a competitive sport, hockey novels are prone to portraying both failure and victory within their storylines. This chapter ventures to assess the issues connected to this representation, such as coping mechanisms, overcoming failure, perception of failure, and personal growth.

One main theme in young adult literature is the discussion of how characters cope with failure. In *Brothers On Ice*, the younger brother wins against the older brother in a shootout. While the younger brother's team celebrates its goalie, "falling all over him as if he were some sort of lucky charm", the older brother is on the verge of crying and reacts with rage,

I leaned all the way into the net and flicked the puck as far away as I could. Then I took my stick and whacked it hard against the goal post. The blade of the stick splintered off the paddle, hanging from a single piece of hockey tape, like a broken bone. (Danakas 86)

A different reaction is shown by Alex in *Ice Attack*, who questions what happened and what he did wrong directly after the game. While his mind races, the team is quiet in the locker room, "each [player] lost in his own thoughts" (Vandervelde 23). In the aftermath of the loss, the teammates start picking on Alex and blame him for the loss. Alex, instead of defending himself, does not talk back and wonders where

the team support has gone (25), stating that they had “lost before” and that he never experienced such reactions (27). Apparently, a team’s weakness starts showing when they face failure. The correct way to overcome failures portrayed in hockey novels is accepting and critically reviewing the loss, learning from it and improving the play. Although Kaleigh feels that her coach always picks on her, her father advises her that she has to be open to learning and that hard work is the only way to get better at the game (Schultz Nicholson *Delaying* 35). Learning from mistakes is also discussed in *Ice Attack*, where Alex’ father describes how to use such situations and make them a strength, “The game you’re talking about is history. It can’t change. But if you feel you handled it wrongly, you can see to it that it doesn’t happen again. We all make mistakes. It’s whether we learn from them that matters” (Vandervelde 61). While failure can lead to aggression, the right path to overcoming and working with such obstacles is to analyze them and to use them to one’s advantage. Hockey novels thus educate readers on how to act in similar situations.

Failure can be presented as a subjective feeling and interpretation. When Kaleigh is criticized by the coach for not mastering a drill, she interprets such reactions as failure (Schultz Nicholson, *Delaying* 35). Having “been assistant captain and second in the scoring race” in the previous year, being benched and only another player now, unable to fit in, she experiences her new life as a step backwards, thus also feeling like a failure (104). Failure, and in relation also victory, can be very clearly defined when relating to results of a game, but they can also be prone to subjective perception and interpretation, thus escaping logical definitions.

The connecting characteristic presented in dealing with difficulties is the focus on overcoming them. In *Ice Attack*, an additional opponent guarding Alex only motivates him to work harder and his team follows his lead (Vandervelde 70-71). Even though Alex doesn’t score, he is still happy with his work as he has given his everything and played well (71). A major source of motivation seems to be the pep talk (ibid.). As a result of the victory, the team returns to the tightly connected group of friends they once were and team spirit is found again (72). While failure seems to bring out the worst in teams, victories push them to their best behaviour. Hockey novels refrain from focusing on players who break under the pressure of a loss or failure, but rather show how such a defeat can be overcome.

Victories and failures are not only met on the ice, hockey novels also tell stories about personal growth. In *Rink Rivals*, Evan realizes that he has made many mistakes, but that by quitting the abusive and excessively violent Nighthawks, he has made a step in the right direction. He realizes that “[w]hen he [looks] at the big picture, the cheap thrills he’d experienced hanging out with Craig and the guys really [don’t] stack up with his family, his future and the way he felt about himself” (Guest 98). A different type of personal failure is described in *Too Many Men* when Sam does not make it into the line-up for his first game with the new team. At his old team, he was starting goalie every year, thus being number one (Schultz Nicholson 17). For Sam, not even being backup is a serious failure and he fears that this will be his future for the next year (18). When Sam ends up being backup goalie again after a bad game, he manages to turn his failure into an advantage, “[t]he time on the bench had actually been good for Sam, especially since he was new to Ottawa. He wrote notes on all the players” and their play, supported by his father (123). Instead of seeing the other goaltender as a rival, he starts to support and help him (124). Sam takes his spot and the team wins (127). After the game, Sam shows his maturity and how much he has learned when he calms down the other goaltender, who is upset with how he played (ibid.), “I’d never been pulled from a game until I moved to Ottawa. [...] It felt awful to be pulled. But I learned a lot by watching. It did me a lot of good”, to which both agree that they will have the same experience plenty of times, but that “[i]t’s how [they] deal with it the next day that counts” (128). Both players use failures to their advantage and show that they have grown with them, thereby displaying signs of maturity.

The themes of failure and victory traverse hockey novels for young adults. However, failure represents a much thoroughly discussed theme as overcoming difficulties is elaborately portrayed within the novels. Victories generally entail positive results such as the development of team spirit, which is less frequently discussed within these novels.

3.4.5 Competition

The theme of competition is closely connected to victory and failure. In hockey novels, competition is not only seen among teams, but also among team members or siblings.

Rivalry among siblings seems to be a prominent theme in hockey novels dealing with sibling relationships. Danakas' *Brothers on Ice* is as such a story of rivalry and competition between siblings: the younger brother Trent surpasses his older brother Troy not only in height (16), but Troy also sees him as a threat to his love of hockey. The ultimate proof of this surpassing comes to Troy in the moment where his brother wears "the number 1 on the back of his jersey", a sign for being starting goalie in most teams (99). Out of spite, Troy criticizes the lack of knowledge his brother has, "I saw him preparing the crease for the game, using his stick like a kind of shovel. That wasn't the right way. His skate blades would do a much better job. He was no goalie. He didn't know the tricks of the trade" (99). However, after a game, Troy realizes that his brother is great at what he does, yet he decides to "win [his] spot on this team back" (103). The rivalry in *Brothers on Ice* is limited to hockey, but other forms of sibling rivalry can be found in Hyde's *Hockey Girl* where Tara competes against her brothers for respect and acknowledgement from their father. In Guest's *Rink Rivals*, the brothers not only wager a bet, they also compete against each other on opposing teams. It seems thus that in all novels where siblings are of approximately the same age, some sort of rivalry or competition is unavoidable.

Not all novels present hockey as a primarily competitive sport. In some stories, hockey is perceived as a means of staying in shape (Hyde 32). However, this seems to be the exception as the girls in the narration want to beat the competing boys' team and thus also start to see hockey as a competitive sport. In their competition, they all work together and squeeze in extra practices to improve their game (93). Ultimately, the competitive character of hockey pervades all hockey novels for young adults.

Within teams, tryouts at the beginning of a season are a major source for competition among players. When boys and girls start playing in a new team, they have to compete in these tryouts, where a coach will assign them to teams depending on their skill level. For Sam, the tryouts are an obstacle to overcome and he is afraid that as a new player, he will be seen as the fourth goalie, and thus as unlikely to play any games at all (Schultz Nicholson, *Too Many Men* 10). He is worried that he might not make the team at all (ibid.). Likely as a result of the competitive nature of the game, players often seem worried about their performance. In the novel, Sam seems to be very strict with himself, not only on the ice (67). Although Sam is exhausted, he

still wants to play the next game (69). Competition is not only a source for stress, but also a reason why players might not respect their limits and try to push themselves harder than is healthy.

Even though competition may take on various forms in hockey novels, either among family members, team members, or opposing teams, it is a major component of the narration and can be identified as one key element of hockey fiction. Competition is mainly found on the ice, but also stretches to relationships and family, thereby influencing characters outside of hockey rinks and are thus of potential importance also to non-players.

3.4.6 Violence

“Writers of hockey fiction seem most concerned with violence” (Blake 78), and hockey novels for young adults seem to be no exception in that. Violence in hockey literature takes on many forms, from legal aggressive play to body contact, intentionally violent play, violence off the ice, violence in girls’ hockey, and non-physical forms of violence such as harassment and bullying.

One form of violence often portrayed in hockey novels is that of legal violence, or body contact play, which male players are confronted with for the first time in their teenage years. As Buma describes, one function of hockey novels is “to referee some forms of violence as acceptable and others as excessive” (185). In Danakas’ *Brothers on Ice*, Troy is worried about his little brother entering the age of “first exposure to bodychecking” (21) and hopes that he will “learn to play more aggressively” (25). Of course, in his first body contact, Trent goes down and causes his brother’s group to lose (30). Troy knows that “aggression and a certain type of violence are demanded” on the rink (Blake 81) and wants his brother to play well and fit in. Blake claims that “[s]ports like [...] hockey celebrate aggression because tackles and bodychecks are allowed by the rules” (ibid.), thereby indicating that players are required to adhere to the rules and adapt to the violent nature of the game. As violence is legal, it is often described in relatively neutral terms and physical play is presented as necessary, “he had to get physical to free himself up, he slammed Mitch into the boards with a clean and efficient bodycheck and scooped the puck away” (Danakas 70). In *Rink Rivals*, violence is seen as part of “hockey in the big league” (Guest 41) and Evan defends it as “that’s the way hockey is played down

here" (42), thereby indicating that the sport involves some degree of violence when the players move to competitive leagues or particular regions. Within legal boundaries, "most aggression in hockey, including bodychecks and incidental or minor stick violations, would not qualify as violence to most fans or players," as they are seen as "an intrinsic component of the game" (Blake 91). However, as opposed to adult literature, this does not refer to illegal violence as shown in fights. While Blake claims that fights are essential elements of the game, this does not hold true for young adult novels, probably related to the stricter rules in youth hockey.

Not all teams feature violent players, but some make use of enforcers. In Guest's *Rink Rivals*, the Nighthawks are described as a very violent team, not only on the ice. When Evan introduces himself, the team captain notices his dark skin and comments that "Indian kids play rough hockey," thereby indicating that Evan would have to play rough in order to fit in (21). However, Evan does not like playing violently and replies, that "[i]f you want to win, you play *tough* hockey, and there's a difference [...], you've got to be able to take it as well as dish it out" (ibid.). Both admit to a certain amount of violence in the sport, but refrain from using excessive force. When confronted with the team on the ice, he plays hard to secure his spot on the team, checking his teammates during practice (22). His "becoming a man through hockey violence means establishing individual toughness, but it also means learning to deploy that toughness in the service of the team" (Buma 173). Even though Evan seems to follow their rules, he still prefers using "his brain when on the ice and [doesn't] like dirty plays" (Guest 23). Evan is a prime example of the fact that "[b]eing a hockey player or fan means physically or intellectually confronting violence" (Blake 78). Looking at *Rink Rivals*, violence can be an assumed identity, not an inherent characteristic. Both Evan's father and his brother know that it is not his true self and they do not support his rough play and give him feedback that he should not go down this path of violence (Guest 42). Evan himself is troubled by the thought that he "really wanted to hurt the guy" who played sneakily and caused him to take a penalty. The realization that he is "turning into a true Nighthawk" makes him shudder (84), as he wants "to play hockey, not hurt some guy who's just out there doing his job" (91). He strongly opposes hurting other players (ibid.), and is thus criticized for lacking aggression when he is not willing to "take one for the

team” (Blake 53). Evan can be seen as one of the “literary examples of characters who are alienated by hockey that is too rugged” (79).

Violence is not always used by choice, but sometimes, the players are pressured to play a certain way and need to decide how much force to use or whether to attack at all, as “[i]n hockey, the line between harmless aggression and physical violence is thin” (Blake 81). In *Rink Rivals*, Evan takes on the role of the enforcer and as such is given the task of taking out his own twin brother, Bryn, when they play against each other (Guest 50). However, he knows that Bryn is no danger to the team’s success and uses his superior skills to score a goal (51). This move is not welcomed by his team captain, who scolds him for not following his orders (52). While it is true that “[i]n hockey novels as well as the game itself, bullies are the aggressive players who harry and pester opponents through physical contact and intimidation” (Buma 192), not all players who employ force do so unprompted. Sometimes, violence is only a reaction to another player’s provocative behaviour (84). Violence often seems to be expected, but not necessary. Players who refuse to use force when playing on a violent team immediately lose respect.

Not all violence in hockey novels occurs on the ice. In *Brothers on Ice*, the older brother Troy, who feels betrayed by his younger brother, Trent, reacts violently to his brother wanting to borrow parts of his equipment and punches him in the face, causing his brother to start bleeding (Danakas 120). In contrast to violence on the ice, this type of aggression is portrayed as harmful and dangerous. In Vandervelde’s *Ice Attack*, Alex feels betrayed by his former best friend Bill, who teases him. Alex is furious, he “want[s] to punch that taunting face, get it away from him, beat it back, but he clenche[s] his fist, [grits] his teeth and [closes] his eyes to get hold of himself”, thereby describing the strong willpower it takes to refrain from punching his teammate (26). The reason for Alex’ composure is that he could face consequences after such an attack, as “[g]etting kicked off the team or being expelled from school was a risk Alex wasn’t willing to take” (ibid.). In *Hockey Girl*, protagonist Tara gets attacked by the opponents after leaving the locker room, only to be rescued by a friend of her coach (Hyde 93). Although she only accidentally hits one of the team’s players with her hockey bag, she is scared to death in the mash-up and fears being trampled to death (93-94). While clashes on the ice are generally seen as a characteristic of the

game, violent tendencies off the ice are usually portrayed as dangerous and not justified.

In contrast to the boys' leagues, protagonists in girls' hockey novels seem to counter or dislike violence (Hyde 7). Despite the ban of body contact, protagonist Tara experiences "elbows that would ram into [her] chest, face, or shoulder when the ref wasn't looking" (8). Within the girls' realm, violence thus takes on other forms than on the boys' teams, but it is still present. As opposed to male players, female ones are instantly penalized for body contact, even though Tara tries to avoid hitting an opposing player (ibid.). In contrast to many boys, Tara is disappointed in herself for taking a penalty in the final minutes of a game because she sees the attack and the penalty as unnecessary (8-9). However, her team's opponents take violence or attacks as valuable means of winning the game, although body contact per se is not allowed in the league (49). Interestingly enough, Buma calls for allowing body contact in female leagues as well, as "[r]ather than constituting or contributing to a player's masculine identity, stopping an opponent with a clean bodycheck should be seen as part of the gender-neutral requirements of the game, a purely physical act that can be accomplished effectively by both men and women" (Buma 263). However, such propositions obviously clash with the rules of women's hockey, thus representing a utopia. Female protagonists only rarely voice a preference for tougher play, the only example within the corpus being Kaleigh in *Delaying the Game* (Schultz Nicholson 10). The ban on violence thus seems to establish a different attitude towards violent actions and girls are more prone to thorough analysis of their actions as a result of their refusal of violence.

Verbal comments which are aimed at characters in order to harass or discredit them could also be interpreted as a form of violence. In Vandervelde's *Ice Attack*, Alex' teammates constantly punish him for not attending their unofficial meets at the pond and for allegedly distancing himself from the team, although he would like to show more commitment. The players are led by his former best friend Bill, who encourages them to mock Alex about his farm work with the sheep. The bullying extends to school and his spare time, as Alex is hit with a taunting note during class and bullied throughout the school day.

Instead of playing street hockey on half of the parking lot as they usually did [...], a bunch of guys with Bill at their helm seemed determined to make life miserable for Alex, constantly attacking him. They jeered him in class; they taunted him in the hall; they bothered him on the school ground. Feet or sticks suddenly appeared in front of him or between his legs so that he was constantly tripping and falling. He felt clumsy, his body bruised and sore. (58)

Alex sees dropping out of the team and switching schools as the only chance to escape such bullying (62-63). The novel drastically shows how hurtful verbal violence and bullying can be – maybe even more hurtful than physical violence.

The discussion of violence in hockey novels can be seen as an educational means of preventing violent actions from occurring, as “[b]y inviting readers into the mind of the bully, [the author] allows them to enjoy hockey violence and forces them to recoil from it, and, in doing so, to recoil from themselves” (Buma 197). There is a strict difference between legal, accepted violence and illegal, repudiated violence. On the ice, most seemingly violent actions are perfectly acceptable, while any form of violence off the ice is immediately characterized as dangerous.

3.4.7 Injuries

Often thought to be caused by violence, a major theme within hockey novels is the discussion of injuries and the resulting exclusion from hockey. However, “[a]ccidental injury does not constitute violence” (Blake 126), and thus the majority of injuries in hockey novels for young adults are usually not depicted as such. These injuries lead to exclusion and changes in careers, or they may exhibit characters’ values and their ability to cope with unforeseen obstacles.

One prominent point of discussion seems to be the inability to play and pursue a career in hockey after suffering an injury. While the coach in *Hockey Girl* has stopped playing professional hockey due to a knee injury (Hyde 76), and thus changed her career from playing to coaching, current players face different injuries and suspensions. After player Billy broke his ankle, he is promoted to assistant coach (Vandervelde 67) and also attends practices on the pond to act as a coach (76). Players who understand what the game is about and who do not want to give up their involvement thus have the possibility to pursue a different career path as coaches.

The injuries mentioned in hockey novels are – interestingly enough – very similar to each other, affecting either the head or the legs. One of the most frequently portrayed injuries is a concussion which players suffer after a rough check or a fall. In *Hockey Girl*, male protagonist Kip has already had one concussion before which is the reason that he is not allowed to play hockey on the team when he suffers a second, mild, concussion (Hyde 85). However, Kip still practices as long as he does not feel pain or takes a hit to his head (ibid.). A second type of injury that is portrayed frequently is a broken leg. In Vandervelde's *Ice Attack*, antagonist Bill slips on a patch of ice on the street and breaks his ankle, but still attends practice. The injury prevents him from playing for a few weeks (64). Although for Bill this means having to take a break from playing, it represents an excellent opportunity for protagonist Alex to join the game again as his bully is now sidelined (65). Another player with a broken leg is mentioned in *Rink Rivals*; this player's misfortune opens a spot on the Nighthawks for Evan (Guest 19). Although a small sample of books was selected, it is noteworthy that three of them include serious injuries that prevent players from joining the game.

Attitudes towards injuries seem to be either very cautious or ignorant. Coach Sheffie in *Ice Attack* reminds the players that their "health is more important than winning. *Always!*" (Vandervelde 66), thus promoting a the cautious approach. In contrast, Kip's father in *Hockey Girl* is unwilling to accept his son's injuries (Hyde 85), and Bill continues to play with a broken ankle (Vandervelde 64). At a game, Bryn scores a goal and collides with the other team's goalie, which ends with a sprained wrist on his part, but no exclusion from the game (Guest 70-71). While Bryn's father is very concerned, his coach reassures them and draws on his experience with the numerous injuries he has seen in his life (71). Whichever side the coaches and parents are shown to be on, the books all underline that players should listen to their doctors and not risk permanent damage.

Although it is not considered an injury but a marker of a grown hockey player, it is surprising that even in hockey books for young adults, one boy has already lost one of his teeth (Guest 81). The "hockey smile" is usually only associated with older players who are allowed to play without a face mask, but in a team as violent as the Nighthawks are, it may very well be a sign of frequent fighting.

In general, hockey injuries are portrayed as part of the game and they are usually related to accidents or unlucky falls rather than actual violence, and sometimes they do not even happen on the ice. Injuries could thus be seen as obstacles, as bad luck, or as an innate quality of any sport that can happen to anyone. They usually call for the player to overcome his or her disappointment and grow with the challenge.

3.4.8 That Weird Goalie

In hockey novels, Goalies are often represented as outsiders or players with unusual habits and quirks. As mentioned in the foreword, the position of a goaltender is a very special one. This chapter analyzes how hockey goaltenders are portrayed in hockey novels for young adults, mainly focusing on their habits, their character traits, and their status within the team.

Being superstitious about one's equipment is one trait that is frequently presented as special to goaltenders. In *Hockey Girl*, goalie Sam lays out her gear and puts it on in a specific order. She takes off all the equipment and starts from the beginning if someone touches one piece (Hyde 25). In *Too Many Men*, Sam has similar habits about dressing up: he always puts on the right piece of equipment before the left, except for his skates (Schultz Nicholson 11). When Sam is tired, he forgets about his routine and – of course – the game is a disaster (87). The only goalies seemingly not interested in superstitions are the twins in Danakas' *Brothers on Ice*. However, portraying a goalie as sometimes weird or different is not only limited to superstitions.

Hockey goalies are at times characterized as oddballs or disadvantaged, but they may also be a decisive factor within the game and they most certainly occupy a special position within the game. One disadvantaged goaltender is Jordan Cairn, a young boy in *Rink Rivals*, who plays despite his severe asthma (Guest 76). Although limited in their range and usually not included in descriptions of the game play unless shot at, sometimes a goaltender can make a difference. In Guest's *Rink Rivals*, the goalie manages to score an empty-net goal and secures the team's win (113). However, goalies are usually seen as having a special position within the team. In *Too Many Men*, Sam cheers with the team, but when they lose, he often takes the blame (Schultz Nicholson 25). His brother Brian describes this as "[j]ust because you're a goalie doesn't mean you're the only one on the team" (83). Goalies thus of-

ten over-estimate their importance and blame themselves for a loss. Sam describes the thoughts of goalies about their responsibility. He explains that if he “as the goalie, [makes] a mistake, he [takes] on the responsibility for the score” (17), thereby describing accurately that a goalie’s mistake will most likely result in a goal, while a player’s mistake has a smaller chance of turning into a goal. As Sam puts it,

“The loss is my fault. I should be able to handle this.” [Steven said,] “We’re a team.” “I let the goals in. our loss was my fault.” Steven furrowed his eyebrows. “Why do goalies always take the blame?” “I only take the blame when it’s my fault. This loss was all because of me. If you make a mistake, it’s not the same as when I do. When I make a mistake, the goal goes up on the board.” (98)

It seems that Sam is harder on himself than need be, but ultimately, mistakes made by a goaltender are harder to remedy than mistakes by players. However, a goaltender’s mistakes are punished visibly, both in the goal that is scored and in the ultimate punishment for a goaltender that follows suit within the game when they are pulled from the ice and benched. Being the backup goalie can be seen as a punishment for playing badly. The goal is the only position within the team that is fiercely contested by two players who cannot play in the same game. In the novel, the 67’s goalie, who seems to be one of Sam’s idols, explains how to overcome getting pulled from the game. He assures him that it will certainly not be his last bad game and that it is good to get used to the feeling early on (118). For a goalie, he explains, “[t]he most important thing is how you deal with the crap the next day” (119). Goaltenders thus do not only have to deal with immense pressure, they also have to be mentally stable and very competitive. Due to the special position they play, they often take the blame for a team’s loss.

A final point in reference to goaltenders is related to their gender. The goalie’s uniform is described as bulky and making goalies look bigger than they really are (Guest 76), thereby hiding a player’s body and making it easier for a girl to take a men’s position (Blake 87). According to Blake, goalies are often described as “effeminate characters” and the only position a girl could play on a men’s team is that of a goaltender (60), which is illustrated in Vandervelde’s *Ice Attack*, the only instance where a female player is portrayed on a boys’ team. While goaltenders are certainly a distinct breed of hockey players, girls in boys’ hockey novels are limited to this position.

Young adult hockey novels portray goaltenders as oddballs, as superstitious, and as very important to a game. However, they are also characterized as competitive and mentally strong players who carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Furthermore, the position of a goaltender seems to be an opportunity for girls to enter the male realm of boys' leagues.

4 Shootout: Conclusion in Penalty Shots

The survey of themes in Canadian hockey literature for young adults has revealed a vast array of different themes present. Departing from an analysis of how the sport is presented in novels and the three main themes of identity, family, and gender, a number of additional themes could be identified and discussed. This thesis has revealed valuable findings and was able to both affirm and contradict previous research on hockey literature. The most important results will be tied together in this concluding chapter. In the selected works of literature, a vast array of themes was found, exceeding the amount expected after the analysis of secondary literature.

One of the most prominent themes was that of identity construction and growing up. It was shown that hockey novels discuss these themes, which are expected to be of much interest to the readers, similar to general young adult literature. The intense focus on rules and penalties, both on and off the ice, was equally prominent and underlined the importance of the educational aspect of young adult literature through the discussion of the protagonists' reaction to penalties. In contrast to adult literature, hockey as an escape and a career were only of minor importance in young adult novels. Instead, difficulty in prioritizing various duties such as hockey, school, and friendship could be added to the list of themes not found in secondary literature.

Within the general theme of family, which was only partially discussed in secondary literature and claimed to be a male domain (Blake 170), the relationships between children and parents in particular as well as those between siblings provided numerous interesting insights. In the discussion of parent-child relationships, the novels only rarely showed signs of struggle, while difficulties in relationships among siblings were more frequent. In general, the novels suggest that good relationships make characters happy and successful, while struggle hinders

success. In contrast to Blake's descriptions, young adult literature shows primarily supportive rather than overly ambitious parents. The theme of coaches as fathers or family was added as these characters played a major role in several novels and in one way or another incorporated the role of a parent through advice and education.

The most important theme in the books selected – or the theme with the most points of discussion that were deemed relevant for this survey – is that of girls playing hockey. Although Blake claims that female players are rarely seen in hockey literature, this is certainly not the case in young adult literature (207). However, female hockey players are only very prominent in girls' hockey novels while they receive little attention in boys' hockey novels, with only one mention in four books. Girls' hockey books explicitly discuss the fact that girls are not the usual hockey players. Girls in hockey novels are always very strong characters and encourage the fight for equality. While secondary literature emphasizes masculinity in hockey literature, young adult novels prefer a discussion of general characteristics such as toughness, courage, or size – which are not restricted to male players. In contrast to strong female players, mothers generally play a minor role in hockey novels, at least in contrast to fathers, who tend to be more present.

Although the focus of this thesis is set on the three major themes discussed previously, a number of additional themes have been found in the analysis of the primary literature. Based on secondary literature, themes such as Canadianness or violence have been included. While the national theme was not prioritized in young adult novels, violence was determined as one of the major themes. In terms of violence, the novels do not only refer to accepted or overly aggressive violence on the ice, but also to violence off the ice and non-physical violence such as bullying. A second major theme within hockey novels seems to be community and team play, underlining the importance of cooperation and the power of working together. All novels analyzed present their protagonists at a moment in life when they are undergoing changes – either relocation or transfer to a new team. A further educational theme discussed in all hockey novels for young adults is that of overcoming failures both on and off the ice, often in connection with competition. Although violence and toughness are major themes within hockey novels, injuries more often occur outside of the rink and are usually not caused by violence but rather by accidents. Finally,

goaltenders seem to occupy a special position within the game of hockey, which is also presented as such in young adult novels.

In the survey of hockey novels for young adults, the focus on identity, family, and gender revealed the importance of these three major themes as they offered enough material for extensive discussion even in a very small corpus. However, the novels displayed a large number of additional themes that were not extensively discussed separately in secondary literature. Instead of focussing solely on three major themes, relevant themes that were prominent in the novels were also included in the discussion. The final 19 themes provide an insight into the variety and depth of themes that readers encounter in the selected corpus. It is not possible to determine a ranking of themes according to their importance; what is important is their rich variety and diversity.

5 Post-Game Recap: Concluding Remarks

I think there are so many life skills to be taught, whether it's teamwork or being on time, listening to directions or just getting along. [...] As kids get into junior high ages, that's when time management becomes so important with balancing school, family and hockey. Playing a sport and staying in shape is great, but I think those life skills are the No. 1 aspect and the reason I'll put my daughter in team sports. (Jon Greenwood, director of hockey development at the Maritime Hockey Academy in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; qtd. in Morreale)

Hockey can be the draw that brings kids in, and we can help them with skills, but in reality we are teaching them life skills ... helping create self esteem, teamwork, problem solving and communication skills ... along with a form of exercise to help them live healthier lives. That's what's good about introducing kids to the game. (Former New York Ranger and Stanley Cup Champion Steve Larmer; qtd. in Come Play Youth Hockey)

The life lessons and values hockey can teach children are numerous, as are the themes within Canadian hockey literature for young adults. Both the sport and the novels written about it are very similar: they teach life lessons not only when it is time to play on the ice, but also in times when teenagers are not at the rink. This thesis has offered an overview of the most prominent themes in hockey literature, identity, family, and gender, and has shown the vast and varied pool of further topics present in these novels. Hockey novels for young adults do not only present and rep-

resent a very specific part of (Canadian) sports culture, they also educate the reader on every single page.

This thesis has shown that female athletes are not always marginalized in hockey novels, as their roles are paramount in books for girls. However, female characters are still underrepresented in books with male protagonists. It has been made clear that there are books written for boys, some written for girls, and even a few written for – or about – goalies. Finally, the thesis has laid out the vast array of themes that can be found in hockey literature, although the corpus had to be limited to six novels. As the list of themes and their discussion grew longer and longer throughout the writing of this thesis, the corpus had to be narrowed down in the process, thereby excluding a large number of noteworthy literary works. In light of the fact that only six novels with no more than 151 pages each have provided enough material for a thorough discussion of 19 themes, a more detailed analysis of a larger number of novels could be the subject of a future research project. In the course of the writing of this thesis, it became more and more apparent that the initial number of expected relevant themes had to be raised with every book consulted, highlighting the potential of hockey novels.

For future research, an in-depth analysis of the role of women in hockey literature would be very welcome, as young adult literature seems to diverge from adult literature in this specific subject matter. Other points of interest could be the involvement of female authors, as these seem to be rather numerous; or a closer examination of any of the themes presented in this thesis. Furthermore, a commented bibliography of Canadian hockey novels – both for adults and young adults – could be a valuable addition to the vast realm of research on sports literature.

Hockey literature, especially hockey literature for young adults, is as neglected in research as women apparently are in adult hockey novels or many parts of hockey culture. Although this short survey could only provide a very limited discussion, the genre and the subject matter call for more attention within the realm of literary research.

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List of Primary Literature Considered

The following list includes all Canadian hockey novels for young adults that have been originally considered for this thesis, except for the six books finally chosen. This list contains only Canadian novels, yet before the selection according to date of publication, exclusion of series, exclusion of e-books, and age limitations. E-book editions are marked as such. If no publication information is available on such editions, this is indicated by "npi".

Belisle, Dave. *There's a Shark in My Hockey Pool*. npi. Kindle file.

Brouwer, Sigmund. *Oil King Courage*. Victoria: Orca, 2009. Kindle file.

---. *Chief Honor*. Victoria: Orca, 2008. Kindle file.

Earle, Tom. *Hat Trick*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2010.

Galloway, Steven. *Finnie Walsh*. (revised ed.) Toronto: Vintage, 2010. Kindle file.

Gault, Peter. *Goldenrod*. New York: Permanent Press, 1988. Kindle file.

Johnston, Wayne. *The Divine Ryans*. London: Anchor, 1999. Kindle file.

MacGregor, Roy. *Mystery at Lake Placid*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995.

---. *The Night They Stole the Stanley Cup*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995.

---. *The Screech Owls' Northern Adventure*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996.

---. *Murder at Hockey Camp*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997.

---. *Kidnapped in Sweden*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997.

---. *Terror in Florida*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997.

---. *The Quebec City Crisis*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

---. *The Screech Owls' Home Loss*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

---. *Nightmare in Nagano*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

---. *Danger in Dinosaur Valley*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999.

---. *The Ghost of the Stanley Cup*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999.

---. *The West Coast Murders*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000.

---. *Sudden Death in New York City*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000.

---. *Horror on River Road*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000.

---. *Death Down Under*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001.

---. *Power Play in Washington*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001.

---. *Secret of The Deep Woods*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003.

---. *Murder at the Winter Games*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004.

---. *Attack on the Tower of London*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004.

---. *The Screech Owls' Reunion*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004.

---. *Peril at the World's Biggest Hockey Tournament*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008.

---. *Trouble at the Top of the World*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008.

---. *Face-Off at the Alamo*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2013.

---. *Panic in Pittsburgh*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2013.

---. *The Mystery of the Russian Ransom*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2014.

---. *The Boston Breakout*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2014.

---. *Reality Check in Detroit*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015.

Markus, Michael. *East of Mourning*. Victoria: Trafford, 2001. Kindle file.

Maureen, Ulrich. *Face Off*. Regina: Coteau, 2007. Jessie Mac series. Kindle file.

---. *Power Plays*. Regina: Coteau, 2010. Jessie Mac series. Kindle file.

---. *Breakaway*. Regina: Coteau, 2012. Jessie Mac series. Kindle file.

McCormack, Pete. *Understanding Ken*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1998.

O'Connor, Larry. *Penalty Box*. Toronto: Kellom, 2007.

Russell, Nancy Leigh Mary. *Rink of Dreams*. Toronto: Key Porter, 2005.

Schultz Nicholson, Lorna. *Northern Star*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2006.

---. *Holding*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2008.

---. *Cross-Check!* Toronto: Lorimer, 2010.

---. *Roughing*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2010.

---. *Rookie*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2012.

Skuy, David. *Undergrounders*. Toronto: Scholastic, 2011.

Swan, Bill. *Deflection*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2010.

---. *The Enforcer*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2007.

Young, Scott. *A Boy at the Leafs Camp*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985.

Zweig, Eric. *Fever Season*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2009. Kindle file.

Appendix

Synopses of Primary Literature

The synopses are taken from the back covers of the novels. In cases where crucial information was omitted due to the nature of the teaser, it has been added and marked in italics, so that the overall story can be understood.

Danakas, John. *Brothers On Ice*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2001.

Troy and Trent are brothers who play on the same Winnipeg hockey team, Trent as forward and Troy in goal. When Trent takes a turn in nets he finds out he's a natural – the best goalie on the team. Troy has to fight for ice time, and the brothers' relationship grows colder and colder.

Brothers on Ice is a realistic story of the struggle to learn what brings families together, and what drives them apart.

Guest, Jacqueline. *Rink Rivals*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2001.

When the Selkirk family moves from northern Quebec to Calgary, life turns upside down for twin brothers Evan and Brynley. Evan has always been the family hockey hero, while Bryn prefers the piano to the puck.

In Calgary, Bryn finds himself on the ice, risking his musical future to impress a girl who prefers hockey to classical music. Meanwhile, Evan is making friends with a bad crowd and spinning a web of lies to cover his tracks. Only a twin brother can help him out of this mess.

Hyde, Natalie. *Hockey Girl*. Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2012.

THE DARE: Turn a championship-winning girls' softball team into a contending girls' hockey team.

THE BET: Finish higher in the girls' league standings than the Hornets finish in their AAA boys' league standings.

THE STAKES: The losing team becomes the cheerleading squad for the winning team for the entire next season – complete with spandex and pompoms.

Tara and the Cartwright Roadrunners are up to the challenge. But when their ice time is confiscated to accommodate a boys' hockey tournament, the girls launch a campaign to gain fair and equal access to the rinks. Will the town rally behind a girls' hockey team? And will the Roadrunners pull it together in time to save their season – and save their dignity?

Schultz Nicholson, Lorna. *Delaying the Game*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2005.

For the first time, Kaleigh is playing on an all-girls hockey team. Never a "girly-girl," she misses her former teammates, has trouble following the different rules of girls' hockey, and gets frustrated when her fellow players are distracted from their game. That is, until Shane comes along. Soon the attention of this older boy is taking up too much of her time, and Kaleigh finds herself unsure whether she can balance hockey, her friendships, and dating.

Schultz Nicholson, Lorna. *Too Many Men*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2006.

Sam has moved with his family to Ottawa, leaving his friends and hockey teammates behind in Canada. The talented goalie quickly makes the Kanata Kings Double-A team, but feels insecure about his place on the team and at school. Then his mother breaks her leg, leaving Sam and his older brothers to keep the household running. Without the support of his old friends, Sam finds himself on his own and spread much too thin.

Vandervelde, Beatrice. *Ice Attack*. Toronto: Lorimer, 2002.

Alex and Bill were once an unbeatable combination on the Lakers hockey team. Alex, with his shorter legs and lower centre of gravity, can be “faster than a speeding bullet” on the ice. He hates being short, but uses it to his advantage. When he passes to Bill, the captain of the team and star player, the puck always finds the net.

But Alex and Bill haven’t been hitting it off lately. Bill’s show-off tactics are getting on Alex’s nerves. During one game, Alex refuses to pass the puck to Bill. Suddenly, the two boys seem more like enemies. Bill even gets the team to gang up on Alex. As Alex feels more and more under attack, he considers quitting the game. A freak accident changes everything...

Billy has broken his foot and Alex has to take over his spot on the team, while Billy is named assistant coach. When Alex’ mother invites Billy to stay with them over the holidays, Alex is not happy. However, when he finds out that the reason for Billy’s behaviour is the break-up of his parents, it breaks the ice.

Abstracts

English

Which themes can be found in Canadian hockey literature for young adults? This thesis ventures to answer this question by means of a thorough analysis of six selected novels and focuses primarily on identity, family, and gender. Based on previous research in both literary and sports studies, potentially relevant themes, which served as a point of departure, are described. In reference to leading research on Canadian hockey literature, the most relevant themes are discussed and categorized, resulting in a detailed analysis of 19 themes and numerous points of discussion therein.

Deutsch

Welche Themen sind in kanadischer Eishockeyliteratur für Jugendliche vertreten? Diese Diplomarbeit stellt einen Versuch dar, diese Frage auf Basis einer detaillierten Analyse von sechs ausgewählten Romanen zu beantworten, und konzentriert sich in dieser Vorgehensweise primär auf die Themen Identität, Familie und Gender. Auf Basis bisheriger Forschung im Bereich der Literatur- und Sportwissenschaft werden potenziell relevante Themen beschrieben, welche als Ausgangspunkt dienen. Die bedeutendsten Themen werden in Hinblick auf führende Forschungsarbeiten zur kanadischen Eishockeyliteratur diskutiert und kategorisiert, woraus sich eine detaillierte Analyse von insgesamt 19 Themen mit zahlreichen Diskussionspunkten ergibt.