

‘WHAT ABOUT THE FLOWERS OF SCOTLAND?’ WOMEN AND SPORT IN SCOTTISH SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

In both academic and popular literature about Scottish sport relatively little attention has been paid to women’s experiences of Scotland’s sporting culture. This article offers a preliminary overview of some of the ways in which women participate in and contribute to sport in an attempt to open up the existing discourses about sport in Scotland. The discussion draws on previous historical and sociological analyses of Scottish sport, and also on the wider international feminist scholarship about sport. A third dimension is that the paper connects the study of women’s sport in Scotland with the social and historical scholarship about women in Scotland.

The discussion raises a number of issues and questions that require more thorough investigation in order to develop a gender-sensitive understanding of sport in Scottish society. In probing the question ‘What about the flowers of Scotland?’ it is argued that sport is a sphere of popular culture through which women have contributed to the nation’s identity, and encountered the gender apartheid that is still characteristic of the economic, social and political life of the nation.¹

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¹ *McIvor (1996) used the phrase ‘gender apartheid’ in his analysis of the social, cultural and economic experiences of women in Scotland during the twentieth century. Conceptually the terms refers to the divisions between men and women in*

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Over the last decade a body of literature has emerged from sociologists, historians and political theorists who have undertaken research into certain aspects of Scottish sport. A critical review of these investigations reveals that four themes have tended to dominate: histories of particular sports or organisations; studies which examine the relationships between sport and expressions of different nationalisms; issues surrounding race, ethnicity and religious identities; and sport in Highland communities. This body of research has made a significant contribution to understanding Scottish sport. It has also affirmed the assertion that 'no dialogue on Scotland or Scottish civil society is complete without acknowledging the social space occupied by sport' (Jarvie and Walker 1994, p.8).

Recent work has considered the social and historical significance of a variety of sports including for example shinty, rugby union, motor-sport, athletics and swimming (Jarvie and Burnett 2000) but it is men's football that has dominated the interests of Scotland's scholars. A considerable proportion of the literature about Scottish football has focused upon the ways in which it has been a vehicle for unitary and contested expressions of nationalism. However as Joseph Bradley states,

no matter how important, it would seem strange to most of us if national identity were overtly expressed in our everyday lives. We have other identities that are more frequently expressed; as parents, as children, as workers, as religious-faith adherents, or as male or female.
(**The Herald**, 23 September 2000)

This has some resonance with the assertion that 'there are alternative ways of being Scottish' (McCrone 2001, p144). These 'alternatives' include the differences between Lowland and Highland Scotland, the experience of being Protestant or Catholic, black or white, and of course male or female. As outlined above some of these issues have received attention in sport-society

public, private and social spheres, which reinforced a degree of patriarchy in Scottish society. During the twentieth century these divisions have been eroded, although there is still an equality gap. In this paper it is argued that sport has embodied this gender apartheid. It has reinforced and reproduced gender divisions, and contributed to definitions of masculinity and femininity.

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discourses, reinforcing the point that it is inaccurate to write of a homogeneous or unitary Scotland when in reality there are many Scotlands. This complexity of collective and personal identities reflects the lived reality of people in Scotland, and in other national contexts. Yet one limitation of research about sport in Scotland is that relatively little attention has been paid to gender issues, or to women. This has some parallels with wider sociological research in Scotland, where a major problem has been 'the relative lack of attention which has been given' to gender issues (Brown, Myers and Breitenbach 1994, p.71).

The gendered nature of sport and physical activity has not however gone unnoticed. Reflecting upon the significance of sport in Scotland Christopher Harvie (1998, pp.118-19) noted that 'For most Scotsmen, sport meant football'. Harvie continued 'football was politically important: it defined class, gender, religion, and nationality, and ritualized and contained all of these.' Other scholars have reiterated the significance of football as a male sporting practice, yet a thorough analysis of the ways in which sport contributes to and constructs definitions of masculinity in Scotland and the implications of this for men (and women) is noticeably absent. It is as if the gendered nature of Scottish sport and its representations of hegemonic masculinity are unproblematic for those men who undertake academic critiques. An exploration of the implications of this for those men who do not engage with sport or with particular activities would therefore be a refreshing approach to this field of study.

The largely male authorship of previous historical and sociological analyses of Scottish sport has been almost dismissive of women's interest in sport. For example Bairner (1994, p.21) remarked that women's interest in the football results in Scotland was to gauge the mood of male relatives, adding 'most of these women are happy when the Scottish national team does well.' Yet this comment may disguise the extent of women's participation in football since at least the end of the nineteenth century (Macbeth 2002). Moreover it reinforces the privileged status that male sporting practices in Scotland have enjoyed in academic and popular accounts. Further evidence of the peripheral consideration given to women is found elsewhere. Bradley (2001, p.7) noted that during football's European Championship finals in 1996 'the support was substantially male dominated with only 5% female'. The composition of the Tartan Army is perhaps not surprising; however the inclination of women (and many men) to join this and other football support groups may be

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diminished by the 'macho culture' (Bradley 2001, p.17) that engulfs this environment. This macho culture, which is also evident in much of the media's coverage of football, could be subjected to closer critical inspection that challenges this celebrated symbol of modern twenty-first nationhood.

At this juncture two general points can be made which connect this paper to the wider international female scholarship on women and sport. First, in Scotland, as in other cultures, sport is often depicted in a taken-for-granted way as an essentially male activity (Hargreaves 1994; Talbot 1988). For example common parlance in the Scottish media refers to 'the Scottish international team' (Jim Traynor, Your Call, BBC Radio Scotland 18 April 2002) when referring to the men's national side, while any references to female football is prefaced by 'women'. The same distinction is made in relation to other activities including rugby, bowling, and golf. The administration for each of these sports is the responsibility of separate organisations for men and women. However the inclusion of a prefix in the names of the women's organisation (e.g. Scottish Women's Football, Association; Scottish Women's Rugby Union; Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association; Scottish Women's Bowling Association) appears to reinforce assumptions that sport is male territory. This practice may be rooted in the Victorian ideology that prevailed when many organised sports developed (Hargreaves 1994). Even hockey, an acceptable team game for middle-class women in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, seemed to accept that the male game was the normal form of the sport. In choosing the nomenclature for their national association in 1900 women identified themselves as the Scottish Women's Hockey Association, one year before men established the Scottish Hockey Association (Connolly and Weir 2000).

There is a second point that connects this review with the wider international scholarship about women's sport. That is the paucity of academic or popular commentary that has both a female authorship and attends to women's sport in Scotland. This concurs with the assertion that most histories and sociologies of sport, as well as its popular literature, 'are written by men about male sports' (Hargreaves 2000, p.5). There is a more extensive international body of literature about women and sport, much of it underpinned by feminist theoretical perspectives. In Scotland however the absence of a female authorship about women's sport may be one of a number of ways in which this popular cultural practice continues to be valorised as essentially masculine. One consequence of this is the devaluation and

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negative stereotyping of women's activity although this is not just evident in relation to sport (Breitenbach 1997, p.85).

Over the last decade a number of female scholars have made important contributions to debates about the lives of women in Scotland (Breitenbach 1990, 1997; Brown 1993, 1996, 1997; Sutherland 1995). Unlike some of their male peers however female scholars in the mainstream of sociology and history do not appear to have paid much attention to sport in their work. Nonetheless some of the issues they have raised have informed this preliminary investigation about women and sport. There are three points in particular that can be highlighted here. First this wider scholarship about women in Scotland has offered a female perspective on the broader social and political context in which Scottish sport has been developed. Second it has illuminated some of the issues that are particular to Scotland's women in both historical and contemporary contexts. The third point is that this literature has helped to clarify some of the ways in which Scottish women have been marginalised from academic discourses. In this respect Breitenbach (1997, p.83) has argued that Scottish women have been marginalised from at least three strands of academic discourse: Scotland's history, British feminist history and from debates on nationalism.

Each of these forms of marginalisation has a parallel in previous analyses of the social and historical significance of sport within Scotland, and also in the wider British and international feminist scholarship on sport. It is not possible within the scope of this article to examine this work in detail. It is however important that future research about women and sport in Scotland engages with these, and other, debates. To draw this section of the present discussion to a close one further point is significant. If we are to understand women's sport in Scotland it is incumbent upon women to write their accounts of sport. It is from this perspective that I take up my own challenge to open up this discourse.

WHAT ABOUT THE FLOWERS OF SCOTTISH SPORT?

The argument set out so far is that the many ways in which women participate in, contribute to and experience sport have been peripheral in previous discourses about the significance of sport in Scotland. This marginal attention has disguised the diversity of women's participation and interest in sport, and the contributions they have made (and continue to make) to

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Scotland's sporting culture. It is estimated that women comprise 51.3 per cent of the nation's population of approximately 5.1 million (Scottish Executive 2002, p.2). However we know comparatively little about the ways in which Scotland's women engage with sport, or the meanings, experiences and identities that they construct around and through this aspect of popular culture. This section highlights some of the evidence available about women and sport, and reflects upon how this could be more fully examined.

Since 1987 System Three has collected data about sports participation in the annual Scottish Opinion Survey on behalf of sportScotland (formerly the Scottish Sports Council). The System Three data collected over a twelve year period suggests that women's participation in physical activity has risen from 50% to 60%. The results published in 2001 demonstrate that the most popular activities amongst Scottish women are walking, swimming and keep fit or aerobics (Table 1), activities which are defined by the four Sports Councils in the UK as physical recreations, rather than sport (sportScotland 2001, p.4). The popularity of these activities amongst women may in part be because they are individually based activities that require little formal organisation or commitment. This evidence also appears to reinforce the perception that women are less likely than men to engage in competitive sport, particularly team sport.

Table 1
Most Popular Sports 1998-00: Women

Activity	Participation (% of women)
Walking (2+ miles)	32
Swimming	26
Keep fit/aerobics	13
Dancing	12
Cycling	8
Tenpin bowling	6
Multi-gym/weight training	5
Hill-walking/climbing/mountaineering	4
Running/jogging	4

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Badminton	3
Bowls	3
Snooker/billiards/pool	3
Golf	2
Yoga	2
Ice skating/ ice hockey	2
Horse riding	2
Tennis	2

source: sportScotland 2001, p.13.

The wide scope of the System Three survey restricts the extent to which it can generate detailed information that goes beyond general trends in participation. Specific and more detailed case studies are therefore required that will elucidate the structural and cultural experiences of women's relationship to Scottish sport. There is however the danger that too much emphasis is placed upon the perception of sport as male cultural practice, and therefore a constrained environment for women. As Talbot (1988, p.103) asserted we must examine and portray women's experiences of sport in a positive way. New research about Scottish sport must therefore acknowledge the social and structural framework that both constrains and enables women's involvement. Case studies that investigate the social history and contemporary culture of women's sports organisations at both local and national levels provide one avenue for exploration, as Macbeth's research (2002) into women's football in Scotland demonstrates.

The database of national governing bodies of sport compiled by sportScotland identifies five organisations which are specifically responsible for women's sport in Scotland. These are the Scottish Women's Bowling Association, the Scottish Women's Indoor Bowling Association, the Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association, the Scottish Women's Rugby Union, and the Scottish Women's Football Association² We can add to this group Netball

² Although there is a separate women's football association in Scotland which has its own Executive Administrator, league and committee structure, it is worth noting that over the last decade there has been some streamlining of administration and development work in conjunction with the Scottish Football Association.

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Scotland which administers a sport played mainly by women, although in Australia and New Zealand netball has become popular amongst men. Each of these organisations is a site upon which women have exercised autonomy in a particular sector of Scottish civil society. These organisations are important for understanding the history of women's sport in Scotland, but they are also part of the historical and contemporary social experiences of many Scottish women. Case studies of these organisations might help to understand more fully their significance for women as sites of autonomy and empowerment. Critical research of these organisations, and of integrated associations, might also reveal the ways in which women have challenged dominant gender power relations, or have acquiesced in the ideology that prevails in sport and in wider society.

In the twenty-first century a substantive sports administration and delivery network is acknowledged as an important component for developing sport at all levels, from grass roots through to elite levels. The career opportunities associated with this network (for example in coaching, sports development and management) provide another locus for research about sport and in particular the role of women in this occupational sector. There has been some research conducted within this sector in Scotland (Thomson 1996) but this has not specifically focused on gender issues. At UK level studies have examined such matters in relation to leisure services, historically the broader sphere in which public sector sports development and management has been located. This research has demonstrated that while structural barriers to gender inequity have been diminished through legislation and equal opportunities policies, the culture of organisations continues to reinforce gender-power relations which can reproduce the subordinate status of women (Aitchison 2000; Yule 1997a 1997b). Women working in the sports sector in Scotland may have had experiences that are similar to their colleagues in other parts of the UK, but the Scottish context invites closer inspection. Scotland's local authorities are part of a distinctive civil society that contributes to the autonomy of Scotland (Paterson 1994). This sector may conceal a cultural environment that has reinforced or challenged particular Scottish nuances of gender-power relations.

Despite the expanding profession of sports development and administration, most sport in Scotland is still delivered through voluntary organisations. The voluntary sports sector does provide employment opportunities but in the twenty-first century it is still principally volunteers who coach, organise and

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administer Scottish sport. Although there are five governing bodies which focus on the female dimension of specific activities, most (but not all) other voluntary sector clubs and organisations concerned with sport are responsible for both male and female activities. This integrated structure is no doubt a sensible and manageable practice, but it may not be without problems. Research in the USA and Norway for example has revealed that the power structures and culture of mixed gender environments tends to reproduce gender relations which are more beneficial to men than women (Gogol 2002; Hovden 1999; 2000). For example the Norwegian research has shown that the dominant gender relations that prevailed influenced women's reluctance to get involved in sports organisations, and their decisions to discontinue their involvement. Those women who did work within sports organisations reported that in these essentially male domains they 'were not empowered to raise and articulate interests and needs as women' (Hovden 1999, p.23). To date there has been no critical investigation undertaken into Scottish sports organisations, but the experiences of women and girls in integrated organisations may have some similarities.

It has been claimed that 62% of those who volunteer in society are women, but sport is identified as one of the few community activities in which more men are volunteers (Scottish Executive 2002, pp.88-89). Leaving aside secretarial positions men appear to predominate in posts that equate to managerial roles in business and also in elite coaching and sports development. If this is accurate then the voluntary sector of Scottish sport is an interesting context for investigating women's relationships to, and experiences of, sport. A critical investigation of power, both in and through the institutions of voluntary sport, is absent from previous research about Scottish sport. Research is required that gets beneath the veneer of gender integration (and also ethnic inclusion) within Scotland's sports agencies. In this way we might reveal the extent to which women experience gendered power structures and cultures in Scottish sport, even if in very subtle ways. In short the St Andrews Sporting Club (home of Scottish boxing), the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers (Muirfield Golf Club) may not be the only sporting institutions that sustain discriminatory ideas and practices about women.

Volunteering in sport encompasses a variety of roles including for example administration, strategic planning and coaching. Women's own participation may have been limited to certain sports, but their voluntary activity cuts

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across all sports. In this context it must be acknowledged that women's volunteering often provides a service to and support network for sports culture which goes beyond administrative and coaching functions. Thompson (1999) has illustrated this point in her study of the voluntary contributions that three different groups of women made to tennis in Western Australia. Across the three groups (the mothers of child players, the partners of male players and women who themselves played) tennis placed additional demands on the women's management of their personal lives and their domestic responsibilities. The participation of children or male partners in the sport brought additional domestic and childcare responsibilities, and in many cases women were also expected to take on domestic duties within the sport (e.g. providing hospitality for visiting teams or organising fundraising events). This evidence illuminated the 'immense contribution' that women make to Australian tennis culture, but in ways that constitute 'and [are] constituting of ... hegemonic relations' of gendered institutions in a gendered society (Thompson 1999, pp.228-89).

Thompson (1999) concluded that women's contribution to Australian sport has been ignored, denied and undervalued by national and state agencies because much of it is invisible, absorbed into the domestic and childcare responsibilities of family life. Many women in Scotland service the nation's sport in similar ways; it is perhaps necessary that people continue to do so for the successful organisation of Scottish sport. That does not mean we should not expose the ways in which this can sustain and reproduce the material and cultural relations of gender apartheid in sport, and in society more generally. It is a practice that ought to be more thoughtfully examined by the power brokers that run the nation's sporting institutions.

An important dimension of previous research in Scotland is that it has probed the socio-historical development of sport. This has also been evident in the wider international scholarship about women's sport. Women's sports history in England, for example, has been located within the wider social and political context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Research has therefore highlighted the importance of education, the constraining and enabling ideology about women's bodies, the changing role of women in domestic (private) and public life, and the different opportunities available to middle and working class women (Fletcher 1985; Hargreaves 1994; McCrone 1991; Parratt 1998). There are similarities here with other western cultures where sport has also been perceived as a male cultural activity.

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Nonetheless different national contexts have been shaped by the nuances of particular social, cultural, economic and political histories, a point that is reiterated by Sara Gogol in her study of female college coaches in the USA. Gogol (2002, p.30) revealed that during the 1940s and 1950s girls living in Canada who were interested in sport may have been at 'a distinct advantage' compared to their American contemporaries since Canadian girls seemed to have more opportunities in a range of activities.

The limited research already conducted about women's sport in Scotland has revealed similarities with developments in other western cultures (Tranter 1994; Connolly and Weir 2000). If previous discourses about Scottish sport are accurate, however, women's activity must also have been contoured by the distinctiveness of Scottish society. Evidence suggests that women in Scotland participated in popular recreations like golf and football before the nineteenth-century sporting revolution. Writing about curling in 1890 the Reverend John Kerr claimed that 'Ladies do not curl on the ice' (cited Smith 1981: 158). Nonetheless Kerr acknowledged that:

About fifty years ago a ladies' bonspiel was played on Loch Ged in the parish of Keir, two rinks of maidens of Capenoch against two rinks of the maidens of Waterside, with skips of acknowledged skill presiding over them.

(Kerr 1890, cited by Smith 1981, p.158)

The description of this and other bonspiels involving women is similar to the matches played by men before the game was formally codified and institutionalised. There are also parallels here with other popular recreations of the period such as shinty (Reid 1998). The work of Tranter (1987, 1989, 1994) has shown that detailed analyses of primary sources can yield information about women's participation during the nineteenth century. Nonetheless in order to understand more fully the place of sport in the lives of Scotland's women many more substantive case studies are required, which examine the social history of women's sporting practices.

SCOTLAND'S SPORTING HEROINES

On 30 November 2001 the National Museum of Scotland launched a year-long process to establish a Scottish Sporting Hall of Fame. There were only twelve women listed amongst the first one hundred nominees, and only one

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woman was on the panel that selected the first inductees. When the first fifty inductees were presented to the Scottish public on St Andrew's Day 2002 only five were women – Ellen King (swimming), Nancy Riach (swimming), Belle Robertson (golf), Winnie Shaw (tennis) and Louise Aitken-Walker (motor sport). Based on this evidence it would appear that Scotland has not had many sporting heroines. Furthermore the Sporting Hall of Fame may sustain the representation of Scottish sport as male territory, and its sportsmen as national icons while our sportswomen are given a marginal place. In doing so the initiative has reproduced the practice of other popular accounts of Scottish sport, and in particular its representation in the media which accords the nation's sportswomen secondary status.

In the broader international context a number of studies have examined the ways in which media sport has reproduced the gender ideology that prevails in society. This research has considered, for instance, the under-representation of women's sport in the media and a style of reporting that frames sportswomen in relation to a preferred image of femininity and sexuality (Creedon 1994; Hargreaves 1994; Willis 1982). There has been little research that has rigorously examined Scottish media coverage of female sport or of the ways in which it has represented gender. Bertagna (1991, p.95-6) remarked upon 'the lack of coverage of women's sport [in the Scottish press] in a culture that is so sport-oriented.' Although written more than a decade ago the comment remains valid, and it can also be levelled at the broadcast media. Historically men have dominated media coverage of Scottish sport but over the last decade more women have established a presence in the sports media. This includes for example Natasha Woods, Ali Paton and Elspeth Burnside in the Scottish press, while Hazel Irvine, Rhona MacLeod and Alison Walker have made regular appearances in television sports reporting. Yet this female presence in the mainstream Scottish sports media has not resulted in significantly more attention being paid to women's sport (Boyle and Haynes 2000). The Scottish sports media continues to be dominated by male sporting practices and in most cases these women report on 'male games', with some occasional exceptions in the broadsheets.

Women's sporting practices are generally given a lower billing than men's sport and in some areas media coverage continues to ridicule, stereotype and marginalise women's achievements (Boyle and Haynes 2000; Creedon 1994; Hargreaves 1994; Willis 1982). A casual consideration of the Scottish press and broadcasting output confirms that women's sport receives comparatively

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little attention. It is also important to acknowledge that the greatest proportion of sports coverage in Scotland is devoted to a small range of professional sports (e.g. football, rugby union, racing, boxing) which are traditionally perceived to be men's sports. These activities also depict a preferred image of masculinity that celebrates strength, toughness, aggression and a degree of physical contact (Boyle and Haynes 2000, pp.134-41). These 'masculine' traits contrast sharply with preferred 'feminine' characteristics, but they represent an image of hegemonic masculinity (Messner and Sabo 1990; Messner 1990) that can be problematic for many men, and for sporting women who do not conform to traditional stereotypes.

It is unsurprising that sports traditionally understood as women's activities are given marginal attention in the media, but the same is also true of women's participation in traditional male sports. The achievements of Julie Fleeting, Scotland's top goal-scorer in international soccer, and the growing number of women who play the game are ignored whilst the men's game receives year-round saturation coverage. A similar pattern is evident in golf. Professional golfers like Mhairi MacKay, Catriona Matthew and Janice Moodie are relatively unknown in comparison to the household names of Montgomerie, Torrance and Lawrie. When Scottish women are celebrated attention tends to focus on individuals like athlete Liz McColgan, Yvonne Murray and Lee McConnell, the Olympic sailing gold-medallist Shirley Robertson, or Canadian-based swimmer Alison Sheppard. Coverage of these elite sportswomen is also limited by the seasonal nature of the sports concerned and also by their success in a major event.

The omission is even more acute in team sports as the case of the Scottish women's rugby team illustrates. By the middle of March 2003 the Scottish women had won all three matches played in the women's Five Nations rugby competition yet the media only noted each result. This contrasted with the extensive analysis of the men's team during the same period in the corresponding Six Nations tournament. In 1997 the Scottish women won the Five Nations championship, and yet the press largely ignored this achievement. Unlike the victories of the men's football team at Wembley in 1967, or the men's rugby team at Murrayfield in 1990, Scotland's women footballers and rugby players have not been incorporated into the mythologising that connects sport and nationhood. The question of how the achievements of Scotland's sportswomen have informed the collective

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popular memory of the nation is worthy of more detailed investigation in future research.

Academic analyses of Scottish sportswomen as part of the iconography of nationhood have been limited, but Motherwell swimmer Nancy Riach is one of the few women who has been the subject of this type of analysis (Walker 1994). During the late 1930s and 1940s Riach swam for Scotland and Great Britain and in 1945, at the age of twenty, held twenty-eight different records in her sport. More important however is Riach's significance as a 'national idol' during and shortly after the Second World War (Walker 1994, p.143). This assertion hints at the nexus of social, cultural, political and historical circumstances that have contoured the lives of Scotland's other elite sportswomen. It also indicates a gap in our understanding of how sportswomen have represented ideas about Scottish nationhood and importantly Scottish womanhood.

The limited attention that has been given to sporting heroines in the iconography of nationhood is not peculiar to Scotland, as the plethora of literature on this topic demonstrates. In the Scottish case, however, there are some parallels with the extent to which women generally have featured as symbols of nationhood. The editorial introduction to the first issue of the journal **Scotlands** (1994) noted that women had been excluded from 'the iconography and the power structures' of the nation and its self-projections through culture. Elsewhere Aileen Christianson (1996, p.122) asserted:

If Scotland's sense of nationhood has a civic rather than an ethnic base, with our surviving national institutions such as the law and education and the mixed ethnic origins of Scots, then it is not surprising that women may feel excluded from a full sense of being part of this imagined nation.

Esther Breitenbach (1997) has also contributed to the debate about women in Scotland's national discourse. Breitenbach has argued that women have been made invisible in narratives about Scottish nationhood by either excluding them from accounts, or by incorporating and containing their contributions within certain ideological frameworks of womanhood. She also pointed to the 'the power of Victorian domestic ideology' that has influenced the preferred view of women as 'wife and mother, of the domestic, nurturing, caring role, over one of active participation in public life' (Breitenbach 1997, p.86). It is precisely this ideology that helped to construct and maintain sport as a gendered institution during the nineteenth century and twentieth centuries.

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If women have been excluded or marginalised from the projection of Scotland as a nation then this has had a special resonance in relation to sport, given the pre-eminence that certain sports and events have been accorded as vehicles of nationhood (Reid 1997, p.148). Part of this problem may lie in the peripheral attention that is given to women's sport practices by the media which plays a significant part in the processes by which individuals, teams or events are celebrated as national icons. Media coverage of the women curlers at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games therefore offers a recent case study through which the national symbolism of sportswomen can be examined. It is too soon to assess whether the gold-medal winning performance of the all-Scottish women's 'rink' will become embedded in the mythology of Scottish nationhood. However for the purposes of this paper it helps to illustrate some of the connections between representations of Scottish sportswomen and other Scottish 'women of interest' (Breitenbach 1997).

Like the soccer and rugby teams of 1967 and 1990 the Scottish women curlers were not favoured in advance of the Olympic competition, and disappointing performances in the round-robin stage reinforced the pre-competition assessments. The results of other countries offered the UK's representatives a play-off that they won and therefore secured a semi-final place against the Canadian team. A dramatic win over the competition favourites set up the final against Switzerland the following evening. Following the semi-final victory the BBC revised its programme schedules on both BBC1 and BBC2 television in order to provide live coverage of the final. After three hours of play the colour of the unexpected medal rested on the final stone, delivered by the skip Rhona Martin. As Martin delivered the final stone the BBC's commentator Dougie Donnelly captured its symbolism describing it as 'the stone of destiny'. The analogy was reiterated by the British coach, Scotsman Mike Hay, who referred to Martin as the 'the girl who threw the stone of destiny' (**The Independent**, 23 February 2002) which secured the gold medal. This may be one of the best analogies to a symbol of Scottish nationhood that women's sport has provided, even though it was under the auspices of a British flag.

Over the next week television, radio and newspapers gave headline coverage to the women and in the case of the Scottish press some emphasis was given to their status as representatives of Scotland. But the coverage also demonstrated the ways in which women's sport is contained within an acceptable image of womanhood. For example the reports consistently

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framed the women in relation to their male partners and in the case of Rhona Martin and Debbie Knox to their children. This style of reporting therefore reinforced the message that their sporting success had not been at the expense of normal female roles. The 'responsible family man' is not an image that is often cultivated by the media in its coverage of sportsmen, and yet this practice is common in relation to the nation's sportswomen. In this respect the 'commemoration' of these sportswomen was resonant of the ways in which the contributions of other women to Scottish public life have been contained 'within the notion of nurturing and caring femininity' (Breitenbach 1997, p.86).

Some media reports commented upon the ordinary appearance of the Scottish women compared, in particular, to the more glamorous, image-conscious Canadian curlers. One English male sports writer curiously described the Scottish women as 'looking like the wives of electricians'. In a more humorous vein Ian Hyland wrote:

TYPICAL. The women curling team grabs our only decent medal at the Winter Olympics and the sexist jibes about being good with sweeping brushes begin almost immediately. But not from me. I've nothing but admiration for the way they've managed to fit all that training and preparation into their busy lives. It must have been a nightmare for them – what with all the cooking, washing, picking the kids up from nursery. (**Sunday Mirror**, 24 February 2002)

Such humour may provide entertainment for the readers of the **Sunday Mirror**, and at one level Hyland's comments appeared to be complimentary. However the ideology that underpinned the humour served to trivialise the women's success and the domestic labour that they undertake in addition to their sport. In this way certain branches of the press perpetuate the dominant structural and cultural ideology that maintains the pre-eminent status of men's sporting practice. The women themselves spoke with dignity and pride in what they had achieved, of their skill, and where sport sits in their lives. As Rhona Martin explained:

It was just a routine draw ... It was open, they left me about four feet, they didn't leave any guards and when I played the shot I didn't feel any different. I'm still a mother of two, a housewife in an Ayrshire village,

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and the children are going to be tired for school today.
(**Evening Times**, 22 February 2002)

From a feminist perspective it could be argued that such comments acquiesce in the media agenda that reproduces the image of domesticity and traditional notions of womanhood. However if we are to represent accurately the achievements of women like Rhona Martin, their experiences of sport, the meanings that they associate with it and its place in the wider context of their lives, we must do so without distorting these meanings. Research must probe these experiences whether women are engaged in sport 'in spite of, in defiance of, in ignorance of, or with apologies to social preconceptions of the female role' (Talbot 1988, p.103).

CONCLUDING REMARKS: SOME POLICY-RELATED ISSUES

This paper has suggested some of the issues that future research on women and sport in Scotland might examine. In concluding, attention turns to the potential importance of such work for informing a variety of policy issues. It is not possible to explore in detail the range of issues that need to be examined. The objective is to question in general the extent to which gender issues are properly incorporated in the policy agenda. Questions are raised about whether women have a voice in informing the agenda that is emerging within the context of the governance of Scotland's sport. At this stage these are tentative but nonetheless important considerations.

During the late-1980s and 1990s the debate that surrounded the democratic deficit experienced by Scotland also raised the issue of the nation's gender apartheid in public life. One consequence of this has been that in formal politics thirty-seven per cent of MSPs elected in 1999 were women, and 39.5 percent in 2003 (Mackay 2003). The Labour MSP Wendy Alexander stated that this was 'the beginning of a new phase in women's participation' (Alexander 2001, p.ix). Setting out some of the short and long term challenges for women Alexander identified the need to set up an Equality Unit to ensure such issues would be at the heart of policy-making, budgeting and the public appointment system. As the preceding discussion illustrates these matters have some resonance for the structure and culture of sport. However they are also important for those people who have responsibility for formulating sports-related policy.

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One concern relates to Parliamentary interest in sport in Scotland. The White Paper for devolved government, **Scotland's Parliament** (1997), identified sport as one of the areas over which the Parliament would have power. Since its inception in 1999, however, the Scottish Parliament has maintained the pre-devolution system for the governance of sport at arms-length through sportScotland. It appears that sport 'is just not politically important enough' (Jarvie and Thomson 1999, p.94) to command the attention of the nation's politicians, in spite of the importance the public (and some politicians) appear to place on having successful international representation. This paper has tried to demonstrate that sport is not just about what happens at elite level. Moreover sports-related policy cannot be addressed in a social vacuum since there are wider issues which affect how sport is organised and played. Here consideration has been focused upon the ways in which sport may reinforce the marginal or subordinate status of women in Scottish society but more research on this issue is necessary. Research might also investigate how sport can help promote women's health or address gender and social exclusion issues. Substantive research about women's experience of sport is required if future sports-related policy is to address these issues for all of Scotland's population.

Although sport has not been a priority concern for MSPs since the formal inception of devolution in May 1999 it is interesting to note some of the ways in which sport featured on the political agenda during the Parliament's first four years. One example is the financial and emotional backing that certain MSPs gave to the failed bid to co-host the men's European soccer championships with Ireland in 2008. Certain advantages may accrue from hosting such events, but like the Ryder Cup bid, the hand-wringing over the Hampden Stadium, and the deliberations over the relationship between the Camanachd Association and sportScotland, politicians have focused on male sports practices. Moreover, it appears that men have largely set this dimension of the sports-policy agenda. Our politicians at national and local level must recognise the ways in which investing public resources in this way can perpetuate the privileged position of male sport in our society, but does little to challenge the gender ideology that has ascribed a secondary status to women's sport.

If Scotland's sports-related policy agenda is to be relevant to all of Scotland's people then the debate must not be defined by the interests of particular groups or agencies that tend to be dominated by men. One consequence of

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this may be that the interests of other groups – of women, of other men, and of Scotland's different ethnic and cultural communities – are more equitably represented within the power structures and policy debates about Scottish sport. Jarvie and Thomson (1999, p.94) were correct to question whether or not Scotland's new inclusive-politics should apply to the sporting institutions that are part of civil society. Yet like previous research their analysis failed to address the gender apartheid that is still evident in Scottish sport, and also in the way that the discourses about sport and nationhood, and sport and policy, are conducted.

The emphasis in this paper has pointed to the gendered structure and culture of sport in Scottish society. This may have discouraged or constrained some women from participating in certain sports, but women have been active agents in the development of the nation's sport. Future research must expose this sphere of women's lives and examine the meanings and identities that women construct in relation to sport. Developing informed critical social research about women's experiences of sport is important if current policy-debates are to be relevant to Scotland's women. Research can also reveal the extent to which the sports institutions of Scottish civil society are inclusive. It is however necessary that women become agents in this process. There are many ways in which the 'flowers of Scotland' contribute to sport. We must develop more fully our knowledge and understanding of this if we are to achieve a more balanced perspective of the social space occupied by sport in Scottish society.

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