In fall, 1996, I reviewed Joan Ryan’s book *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes: The Making and Breaking of America’s Elite Gymnasts and Figure Skaters* for the Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal. Ryan’s powerful critique discusses the physical and psychological problems associated with elite level gymnastics and figure skating in the United States. This review comments on Laura Robinson’s (1998) book, *Crossing the Line: Violence and Sexual Assault in Canada’s National Sport*. Robinson’s book details various sexual assault cases that have caused many to question the institutional and sporting practices of the junior hockey system in Canada, the feeder system to the National Hockey League (NHL). Although the sports each author addresses are very different, the books are strikingly similar in intent. Each author takes a disturbing look at what goes on beneath the surface of high level sports performance and asks readers to consider the ways in which sport may promote far more than healthy athleticism for its young participants.

Robinson tackles the paradoxical question of how a game that defines and unifies Canada can also be responsible for the systematic dehumanization of young men and women. To shed light on this question, Robinson draws on case studies, court cases, and existing research to systematically investigate the disturbing trend of sexual abuse that has recently jolted the Canadian junior hockey system. To set the stage for the book, Robinson defines ice hockey from a social-psychological perspective. In the opening chapters of the book a view of hockey as a "total institution" emerges. As a total institution, Robinson claims players are idolized, cut off from society, prized for their athletic prowess, and learn to live in a constant state of flux due to the ever present possibility of being traded or injured. The multi-million dollar world of junior hockey in Canada, Robinson indicates, is a place "where teenage boys learn they are the young gods of a national religion, where their strength, aggression, and physical prowess are coveted skills that older men are willing to buy, sell, and trade" (p.40). The subcul-
ture of hockey with its violence, close adherence to traditional
gender role, and the disruption of attachments (due to frequent
relocation) often assumes the characteristics of a dysfunctional
family. As young players are indoctrinated into a sport where, in
the eyes of the media, victory is synonymous with "virility" and
defeat with "impotency," it is not surprising that self-centered and
aggressive sexual behavior is fostered.

Robinson's writing style is matter-of-fact and her examples
surprisingly graphic as she describes brutal and humiliating hazing
rituals, gang rape of female fans by hockey players, and the sexual
abuse of players by coaches. It is worthwhile to note that this
book was originally given to another individual for review. After
reading three chapters, the book was returned with the prospective
reviewer indicating that it was, "too much." When asked for elaboration,
she appeared convinced that the author could not possibly be giving an honest portrayal and questioned the significance of
Robinson's message. After learning about much of what Robinson
discusses in the news three or four years ago, I decided to go forth
with a review of this book. Readers should be cautioned, however,
that the language is straightforward and often graphic. As I
read this book, I too, was often shocked by the detail the author
uses in describing sexual acts that ranges from anal sex between
men to the tying of a string around the penis of a rookie player in
the name of a hazing ritual. For mature readers who are interested
in the critical analysis of sport and how sporting behavior translates to behavior in the larger society, this book is a valuable
resource.

In a discussion of gang sex (i.e., several players having sexual
intercourse with one female), Robinson tells the story of a sev-
eventeen year old, twelfth grader given the pseudonym of Cindy
Green. Green attended an end of the season party being hosted by
the Guelph Storm junior hockey team. Green went to school with
the players and worked as an usher at the ice arena where the team
played. She considered the players to be her friends. After drink-
ing too much, Green fell asleep on the sofa bed in the basement of
the house where the party was held. There were three players in
the basement with her. Green eventually went to the police where
the following story emerged:

"She woke up with someone undoing her pants, told whoever
it was to stop, and pushed an arm away. . . . As she did up her