

SEX, POWER, STATUS, AND AMERICA'S PASTIME

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ABSTRACT

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Sport groupies figure prominently in popular culture, portrayed primarily as vixens determined to seduce athletes for many reasons including the desire to engage in promiscuous sex, to elevate their social status, or to secure financial stability. Relevant literature, however, in the social sciences is scant at best. Grounded in exchange theory, this qualitative research presents a thorough investigation into groupie motives and behavior, their social exchange interaction with athletes, and how this phenomenon relates to the larger social world. The sample consists of twelve female confirmed sport groupies. Demographic data was collected through a brief survey instrument and narrative data through open-ended interviews. The groupie-athlete relationships are

analyzed conceptually in relation to the marginalization of women through sport; patriarchy as the social structure in which gender relationships are negotiated; sexuality objectification and commodification and its relation to the disempowerment of women; and the sexual deviance of sport groupies. The findings support the belief that as long as the power differential between genders remains imbalanced, women will continue to utilize their physical and emotional resources within cultural norms or as deviants to enter relationships with men to achieve the level and type of power and status they seek.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sport groupies figure prominently in popular culture, portrayed primarily as vixens determined to seduce athletes for any number of reasons including the desire to engage in promiscuous sex, to elevate their social status, or to secure financial stability. In the movie *Bull Durham*, for example, the character of Annie, played by Susan Sarandon, is portrayed as a groupie who alternately nurtures and seduces two team members, played by Kevin Costner and Tim Robbins, for the sheer enjoyment of the sexual and emotional experience. In *The Natural*, Glenn Close's character, Iris, represents the "good" girl left back home on the family farm while Redford follows his professional baseball dreams into the city lights. Harriet Bird, played by Barbara Hershey, a baseball groupie and the antithesis of the virtuous Iris, foils the success of Redford's character by shooting him at the behest of another man who seeks to ruin the baseball star's career. While many similar depictions permeate American popular culture, relevant literature in the social sciences is scant at best. According to anthropologist George Gmelch (2001:163), "Groupies hustled players, and players bedded them, but little was said or written about it." For at least thirty years, sport groupies have existed as a social phenomenon, which clearly warrants systematic investigation, description, and analysis of their motives and behavior and its relation to the larger society.

Popular media documentation of the groupie phenomenon began in the 1960s, associating rock and roll musicians with the girls/women who lusted after them. These frenzied fans followed the group on tour, displaying outlandish and sometimes illegal behavior to get the celebrity's attention and, ultimately, get him involved in a sexual relationship. Connie Hamzy ("Sweet Connie"), Pamela Des Barres, and the Plastercasters are only a few of the most notorious original rock and roll groupies, and numerous rock groupie biographies ultimately emerged in the 1980s (Balfour 1986; DeBarres 1987).

Groupies are not exclusive to the music scene. An awareness of sport groupies emerged from the 1970 release of *Ball Four* by a former New York Yankee who describes the womanizing behavior of a teammate and the groupies who made themselves available to him. In baseball, groupies are called "Annies," in hockey they are "puck bunnies," and in the sport of rodeo, groupies are dubbed "buckle bunnies" (Gauthier and Forsyth 2000). Such literature offers an extremely shallow and gendered representation of the sport groupie. The present research provides a thorough investigation into groupie motives and behavior, their social exchange interaction with athletes, and how this phenomenon, overall, relates to the larger social world.

This thesis examines these issues by focusing on the sport groupie-athlete relationship as a microcosm of American society which: (1) marginalizes women by excluding them from the masculine realm of sport; (2) reinforces an inequitable, patriarchal social structure in which women attempt to obtain status via a male benefactor; (3) disempowers women through sexual objectification and commodification; and (4) represents a display of the groupie's sexual deviance. The social science literature deserves the inclusion of women who exist on the periphery of professional sports in America and

conversely, this marginalized group must be included in future discussions of sex identities, sport, and social structure. This inclusion will stimulate awareness and promote understanding of the undeniably active, varied, and significant roles that women play in the institutions that are sublimely integrated into American popular culture. Data collection and analysis will also provide insight into gender and social issues as yet uninvestigated within the sociology of sport.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Peter Blau (1964) asserts that social attraction is the force that induces all human beings to establish social associations on their own initiative and to expand the scope of their associations once they have been formed. On the most basic social level, one individual may possess and/or command a commodity or service desired by another individual. Anyone who commands the sought-after commodity or service attains power over any other who desires it by withholding the desired item contingent upon satisfaction of their need. Sharing or relinquishing the desired item remains with the possessor. Operating at every level of social interaction, these principles form the foundation for social exchange theory and the power differential that results from social exchange. This literature review summarizes relevant theoretical and empirical writings for the purpose of framing the issues and formulating research questions.

Exchange Theory

Exchange theory, prominent in social psychology and most appropriate to this research, focuses upon creation of social hierarchies based upon maximizing benefits of direct and perceived values while focusing on groups and networks. Networks are the exchange interactions that occur between individuals, such as the relationship between groupie and

athlete, and exchange theory represents a social extension of economic exchange concepts as the actors in the relationship negotiate terms and content of exchange.

Homans (1961) defined social exchange as a cost-benefit relationship among individuals in which human behavior is reinforced by positive results or redirected by negative results. Outcomes of social exchange relationships are evaluated by the individual actors (or group of actors), each acknowledging the exchange of benefits with one another and the subjective values each attaches to the exchange. Emerson (1976) asserts that this concept has been employed extensively by economists who use the concept of utility as the subjective psychological value (i.e., amount of reinforcement) an individual derives from a good or service. Similarly, in social exchanges, one individual may feel “slighted” by the outcome of a social exchange and, therefore, refuse additional exchanges with that individual. Conversely, exchanges perceived as “successful” tend to reproduce the social exchange and continue a social relationship between individual, forming expectations for future exchanges.

In this context, groupie-athlete social interaction may represent indirect exchange: the groupie may engage in certain behaviors in an attempt to stimulate a desired, reciprocal behavior by the athlete. Each participant in the exchange holds expectations of benefit; however, the difficulty in this form of exchange can be the miscommunication between appropriate “giving” and “taking” between the individuals. This creates inequality within the social relationship and an imbalance in power distribution.

In describing this kind of relationship, Blau distinguishes between celebrity and fan, stating, "The rewards expected from associating with an impressive person that makes him attractive also would make us dependent on him and subject to his control"

(1964:43). Rather than an exchange of tangible commodities, the sport groupie provides, for example, sexual favors and expects from the athlete the opportunity to accompany him to prominent social events or to be recognized as his lover or girlfriend. Even more precarious is the situation when the groupie offers genuine affection and/or love to the athlete and expects to receive reciprocal emotional attachment in return. The relationship between groupie and athlete thus represents an imbalance in indirect exchange based upon the athlete's elevated position in society and the groupie's attempt to obtain anticipated benefits by her association with him.

America's Leisure Class and the Prominence of Sport

Thorsten Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) anticipates many of exchange theory's arguments in the sense that it describes the nature of social exchange networks and their impact on society. Although describing the leisured classes of *fin de siècle* America in 1899, the relevance of his theory remains evident today. This theory aligns itself well with contemporary America as it describes the predatory nature of society where characteristics such as prowess and exploit are highly valued. A "leisure class" clearly exists in the United States, comprised of individuals in occupational positions defined by Veblen as those related to government, warfare, religious observances, and sports. All represent occupations that require displays of exploit and prowess rather than the drudgery of daily production of goods and services. For example, clergy's demonstration of exploit and prowess can be associated with the combat of good vs. evil, which is clearly separate from mundane life.

Sport is the aspect of Veblen's leisure class that will be examined here because it is the realm of groupie existence, and because "it does not afford any appreciable pecuniary incentive, but it contains a more or less obvious element of exploit" (1899:41). In the absence of war, there is perhaps no better display of prowess and exploit than that displayed in the arena of sport where superior talent, physicality, and strategy reign for the benefit of the players, as producers, and spectators, as consumers.

Carroll (2000) describes the Hero Myth as emerging from the prehistoric era:

In Symbolic Hunt Theory, the "sports hero" is based on the dominant Paleolithic hunter who accomplishes hunting feats...and the consequential giving of life and sustenance to the community, and in short, postpones death. (P. 86)

The athlete thus represents American ideals as a champion, possessing courage, strength, skill; he is an allegory of the alpha male in the wild (Carroll 2000:97). He represents a combatant perfectly conditioned physically and prepared for battle against a clearly defined and equally prepared enemy. Since his actions are regulated by rules of fairness and sportsmanship to protect the weak, the athlete personifies the belief that the superior warrior will dominate the inferior warrior (Carroll 2000:77).

Athletes, therefore, comprise a significant aspect of Veblen's superior class, while also providing entertainment for the masses that comprise the larger society. Although they do not always live up to the ideals society expects of them, nonetheless, athletes represent social and financial success. These factors, coupled with their near deification in contemporary American society, makes athletes very sought-after by groupies.

Sport and the Marginalization of Women

The distinction between Veblen's "leisure class" and the "others" represents a difference not measured merely in economic terms, but in the classification of "superior" and "inferior" classes. "Manual labor, industry, whatever has to do directly with the everyday work of getting a livelihood, is the exclusive occupation of the inferior class. This inferior class includes slaves and other dependents, and ordinarily also all the women" (Veblen 1899:2). From these distinctions, Veblen asserts that social hierarchy begins with members of the superior class creating a model for the fame (or notoriety) associated with being a member of that esteemed class.

For this study, the ramifications of this theoretical foundation emerge from Veblen's assertion that this structure creates a *de facto* inequality and discrimination between superior and inferior as well as a differentiation between men's work and women's work and the value assigned to each. In addition, the men in the superior social positions, who are athletes in this study, are valued members of society. Consequently, they can structure the expectations, values, and ensuing habits of society (Fasteau 1974; Theberge 1981).

When men possess greater opportunity to achieve superior status via leisure class occupational positions, such as in sports, women are fundamentally excluded. Women, conversely, must develop a method for achieving superior status through their own devices (demonstration of prowess and exploit), or achieve the status they seek through liaison, in terms of social exchange, with a man of the superior class (borrowed status). Groupies are perhaps "...seeking money, attention, and status from being associated with high-profile athletes" (Gauthier & Forsyth 2000:351). The motives and behavior of the

sport groupie characterize one aspect of the social relation of women to the men of the leisure class in America today.

In sum, women are excluded from the masculine arena of sport and the ensuing opportunity to obtain superior status through athletic accomplishment. This represents their marginalization in American society more than in other areas such as education. For example, since the implementation of Title IX, women received 38% of medical degrees in 1994 compared to 9% in 1972; 43% of law degrees in 1994 compared to 7% in 1972; and 44% of all doctoral degrees in 1994 compared with 25% in 1972 (U.S. Department of Education 1997). In athletics, however, which is also an integral aspect of the legislation, Title IX has not succeeded in advancing women's status in sports to the level of men's. Many individual success stories exist of female athletes who benefited greatly from Title IX such as Dr. Dot Richardson, captain of the 1996 gold-medal Olympic Softball team. Frey and Eitzen, however, assert that the Title IX legislation has not affected the structural changes necessary to place women in positions of status and power within the organization of sports:

Since Title IX, schools are now offering more sports for women, and participation by women as athletes has shown a dramatic increase. However, the proportion of women who are coaches or administrators has declined significantly. In 1972, 90% of women's teams were coached by women; in 1989, 47% were coached by women. Similarly, the non-coach administrators of women's sports programs tend to be men, and the few women administrators in place are supervised by men. (P. 517)

While the Title IX successes in education and the increased participation of women in sports activities are laudable and are certainly making a difference in the lives of women who choose to participate in athletics, the lack of significant increases of women

in positions of status and power in athletics, overall, reflects the continued marginalization of women (Messner 2002).

Sport and Patriarchy

Groupies, rather than create equitable relationships with athletes, perpetuate a patriarchal social structure. Their motives and behavior focus on attainment of status, wealth, and prestige through associations with a socially superior man or benefactor, men who are often perceived to occupy higher or more valued social positions. According to Allen Johnson (1997), groupies may perpetuate these structures by forming less than equitable relationships with athletes, especially if their motives and behaviors further entrench the prominence of men. Johnson states, “A society is patriarchal to the degree that it is male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered. It also involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women. Patriarchy is male-dominated in that positions of authority...are generally reserved for men” (1997:5).

While men have traditionally occupied the roles associated with Veblen's leisure class, women have entered the national and global arenas of politics, warfare, theology, and athletics. However, many differences in status, power, and distribution of wealth between men and women remain. Johnson (1997) states:

Male dominance also promotes the idea that men are superior to women. In part this occurs because we don't distinguish between the superiority of *positions* in a hierarchy and the kinds of people who occupy them. This means that if superior positions are occupied by men, it's a short leap to the idea that *men* must be superior...In this sense, *every* man's standing in relation to women is enhanced by the male monopoly over authority in patriarchal societies” (P. 5).

In athletics, it is still the *male* athlete's prowess and exploit that are lauded while female athletes, like women in general, are expected to remain "feminine" and unsuited to the rigors of "serious," meaning masculine, athletic performance. This reflects social structures in America that celebrate the values traditionally expressed by men such as daring, prowess, aggression as masculine while minimizing those traditionally expressed by women such as nurturing, compassion, resignation as feminine (Betcher 1993; Fasteau 1975; Messner 1989). Each extreme of this dichotomous construction of gender is socially valued accordingly, with the masculine identity expected to maintain social prominence. "Patriarchy is, however, a reality in our world, so much so that many people cannot imagine any other way of organizing human life" (French 1985:57). Although changes in social structure certainly can and do occur over time, patriarchy continues as the established social order in the United States and is personified by the groupie-athlete relationship in terms of perpetuating a structure of inequitable status and power.

Disempowerment of Women through Sexual Objectification and Commodification

Although their behavior may be viewed as socially and sexually liberating, groupies actually represent social inequity and the disempowerment of women through sexual objectification and commodification. The inequitable nature of such relationships promotes the continued social control over the behavior and status of women as commodities or trophies to be controlled and/or owned, and disposed of at will in favor of a better offer. Veblen (1899) states:

...the institution of ownership has begun with the ownership of persons, primarily women. The incentives to acquiring such property have apparently been: (1) a propensity for dominance and coercion; (2) the

utility of these persons as evidence of the prowess of their owner; (3) the utility of their services. (P. 53)

The publicized sexual exploits of athletes such as “Magic” Johnson, Wade Boggs, Mike Tyson, and many others demonstrate the propensity of women offer to athletes for a variety of reasons. With abundant female pursuers, the man retains almost total power in the relationship as he may retain or discard women at his whim.

Groupies must also adopt behaviors such as seductive dress and flirting skills that will make them more attractive "commodities" to enhance their chances of being chosen by an athlete to engage in sex or a romantic relationship. Women further lose significance as an equally valued partner in a relationship as they assume the submissive status and role of “toy,” “mother,” or “caretaker” to the athlete (Blau 1964, Goldberg 1973). By strictly acknowledging such extreme tenets of patriarchy, groupies must use their status as a commodity rather than as an equal partner to establish relationships with athletes, adopting the extremes of traditional female gender roles that society expects them to assume. Since the social structure promotes an imbalance in the social exchange between men and women, male athletes maintain many levels of power in their relationships with groupies who willingly forfeit their power for the right to associate with the athlete.

Sport Groupies as Sexual Deviants

While the seduction of high prestige males provides an opportunity to obtain power or prestige on their own terms, the social price to pay is very high, especially if groupies are labeled as deviants. Many segments of society may consider groupies to be deviant because they act too aggressively as sexual pursuer and behave promiscuously, which are

masculine behaviors, or they use sex to obtain status, privileges, or tangible commodities, which borders on prostitution. It is the superior class, the very class of men that the woman pursues, that determines what is acceptable or unacceptable social behavior, which further compounds the issue. Clear distinctions are made between “respectable” women who make acceptable marriage partners, and groupies who are “toys” for the enjoyment of the players, “trophies” to be collected, or “gold diggers” seeking their wealth or prestige.

In the case of sport groupies, however, it seems that the trophy concept may be reciprocal in nature. Within the groupie subculture, the seduction of a prominent athlete may provide a certain element of pride and accomplishment for the seductress as well. In their study of rodeo “buckle bunnies,” Gauthier and Forsyth state: “Women are seeking to acquire the ‘best’ cowboy, whose sexual ‘conquest’ will be viewed as a form of status attainment” (2000:357). Based upon the assumption that a groupie may enhance or diminish her own status among her peers, status within the groupie subculture will also be investigated. The deviant status of groupies can therefore be analyzed on two levels: conformity to the norms of the larger social world and their status within the sport subculture in relation to one another.

Overall, the groupie-athlete relationship demonstrates social exchange between women and members of the social elite, athletes. The inherent power imbalance in these relationships results from the historical marginalization of women through sport and the elevated status of athlete as celebrity. As marginalized members of the sport culture, women’s sexuality is objectified and commodified, representing men’s expected utility and value of women and the resulting disempowerment of women. Social structures such

as patriarchy further promote and perpetuate these areas of social inequality between men and women. As a microcosm of American society, the sport groupie phenomenon reflects elements of social exchange, power, and status and the means by which individuals obtain these within existing social structures.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Because so little literature exists regarding groupie motivation and behavior, many questions immediately presented themselves for investigation. The first question posed is simply, "Why?" The fundamental question to be answered by this qualitative study, therefore, is why sport groupies seek relationships specifically with athletes. Whether groupies are motivated to pursue sport figures (1) to satisfy personal sexually promiscuous drives, or (2) to obtain status, fame, or wealth vicariously through the athlete is of primary interest. The answer to this question establishes the foundation for the study. The underlying premise is that social exchange theory explains the groupie-athlete relationships, which represent larger issues within the social structure such as marginalization, patriarchy, commodification, and deviance. The findings therefore should support, refute, or redirect this research.

Because the groupie-athlete relationships represent many levels of marginalization, I examine levels of inclusion in the masculine realm of sport. Groupies enter the realm of sport on the fringe, seeking some benefit from their social exchange with athletes. I seek to understand the extent to which they are actually involved in the sport itself since they are not athletes in the sport around which they congregate, nor are they affiliated with the sport program in any official capacity. Questions such as "How

involved in sports were you growing up?" seek to understand how groupies seem themselves in terms of athleticism and the world of athletics. Numerous probes follow to further understand their perceived level of involvement and inclusion or exclusion from the masculine arena of sport and with the athletes themselves. (See Appendix B for Interview Protocol.)

On a larger scale, this research investigates the degree to which groupie-athlete relationships are couched in a patriarchal social structure. I investigate this phenomenon primarily via exchange theory, but I am also guided by theories associated with Veblen's leisure class that explain the origin and perpetuation of patriarchy. With American society structured to value the accomplishments of men more than those of women, and with the establishment of the "hero myth" (Boorstin 1961), patriarchy continues to shape the dominant social structure and suggests why groupies are interested in aligning themselves with athletes even though the relationships must be inequitable with the athlete maintaining a superior social status with the groupie acquiescing to his wishes to obtain the benefits she expects to receive from the association. Open-ended interview questions such as those inviting groupies' self-assessments of submission or power in relationships with athletes will offer insight into the actual existence of patriarchy as a social structure in which these women exist.

The question of disempowerment through sexual objectification and commodification will be analyzed in terms of 1) the behaviors groupies display as they attempt to associate themselves with athletes, and 2) the roles assumed by the groupie in relation to the athlete. As groupies "package" themselves in order to seduce athletes, they commodify their sexuality to present the most attractive option available to the athlete,

which may be what she offers in exchange for the benefits. Blau states, "How valuable a woman is as a love object to a man depends to a considerable extent on her apparent popularity with other men" (Blau 1964:79). Veblen's trophy concept suggests that, as a commodity the groupie must present herself as vastly appealing and allowing the athlete to "win" her over the similar attempts by other male athletes. It may be that the groupie revels in her position as the most prized commodity to be obtained. As a commodity, however, an individual is subject to the receptiveness of others to herself and the value placed upon her by individuals external to herself. This, then, leads to disempowerment of women since she is viewed as a commodity to be possessed, rather than a sentient actor obtaining status and power through her own abilities and accomplishments.

The deviant status of groupies emerges from several factors: pursuing sex with married men, having sex in public places, women initiating the sexual encounters, and promiscuity. According to many American social norms, a woman's sexuality should be controlled and is a commodity to be guarded and granted in socially ordained circumstances like marriage. Blau describes the loss of value of a commodity through its ease of attainment, and since the sexuality of women in a patriarchal social structure is perceived as "owned" by the male who "owns" the woman, her sexual value declines as she dispenses her sexual favors indiscriminately. "The interest of girls in protecting the value of sexual favors against depreciation gives rise to the social pressure among girls not to grant the favors readily" (Blau 1964:80), and promiscuous behavior is viewed by both men *and* women as deviant. To many men, such behavior is deviant if he is not the one receiving the favors, or if he perceives the woman's sexuality as "his" and not to be shared with other men. For women, the behavior is labeled deviant because it devalues female

sexuality in general and, perhaps, because easy access to such a desired commodity (bad girls' sexuality) undermines the more guarded commodity of others (good girls' sexuality).

The extent to which groupies are "deviant" will be investigated in relation to existing literature about socially accepted standards of sexual behavior.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This research project is explanatory in nature, focusing on “how” interaction occurs in a specific sport environment, in this case baseball, and “what” comprises meaning and value to the individuals involved in that environment. It can also be construed as exploratory because of the scant amount of academic research specifically focused on sport groupies. The research goal was to provide as complete and accurate description of the subjects and their behaviors as possible. As a qualitative researcher, I attempt here to tell the “story” of my subjects and to relate their stories to specific aspects of sociological theory. For these reasons, I adopted a qualitative methodological framework, believing that an ethnographic model best suits this detailed subculture-focused research. This model utilizes a high level of description and detail as I attempt to glean information from respondents through observation and interviews, then explore and describe motivational and behavioral themes. “Long interviews” provide ethnographic detail that months or years of fieldwork usually provide (McCracken 1988). Thus, this ethnographic model was used to describe, analyze, and interpret in narrative terms the beliefs, behaviors, and motives of groupies and athletes and how they relate to sociological theory.

The research took place in the southwestern United States and focuses on groupies of the minor league (Double A) baseball team, the Cheyenne Coyotes [a

pseudonym]. A female sports fan is defined by the following definition: “1. a fan...who usually follows the group around.... 2. an admirer of a celebrity who attends as many of his or her public appearances as possible.” To be a “*groupie*,” the female fan must also claim to be pursuing sexual activity with a professional athlete or athletes. Only females over the age of 18 were interviewed. The sample consists of twelve female sports fans who acknowledge that they are sport groupies. Because of the sensitive nature of this research, the utmost care was taken to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. All proper names used throughout are pseudonyms.

I attended 16 out of 70 (23 percent) regularly scheduled home baseball games between May 1, 2002, and September 1, 2002. I accompanied an admitted baseball groupie, a gatekeeper, to the first two games and was admitted into her circle of friends. Through her introductions, I initiated discussion with other groupies. My initial data, gathered during April, were obtained strictly through observation and casual conversation and then documented as field notes. In these, I identify and describe typical groupie characteristics and behavior, both at the ballpark and at pre- and post-game social events. Specifically, observational data were gathered in terms of dress, location, behavior, and the people with whom the groupie chooses to initiate contact. By adopting similar dress, mannerisms, and a flirtatious demeanor, I easily entered the stadium environment and initiated conversation with many female fans and potential groupies. After at least one casual social conversation, I offered potential research subjects the opportunity to be included in the study only if she defined herself as a baseball groupie or if someone else identified her as a groupie and she did not reject that label. The transition from

ethnographic observation thus emerged from a growing rapport with the groupies with whom I had made contact through the gatekeeper.

Immediately prior to the interview, the respondent received a Letter of Explanation. (See Appendix A for a copy of the form.) I then obtained basic demographic data, such as age, ethnicity, occupation, and educational attainment through a brief survey instrument. (See Appendix B for the instrument.) The remaining textual data emerged from open-ended, in-depth interviews conducted in a location that the respondent chose. Locations included restaurants, bars, and the stadium. On average, the interviews lasted approximately one hour. The shortest completed interview being approximately 15 minutes with the longest lasting over 2 hours. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. Only one groupie prematurely ended the interview after the first question.

In order to follow stream of consciousness in which the respondent tells of her experience in as much detail as she chooses, linking one memory or belief to another, I utilized circular questioning whereby one response to a fundamental question on the protocol elicited several more questions following a similar train of thought. This method allowed the respondent to follow the course of her emotions, beliefs, and memories while still maintaining the structure of a guided interview. When the responses and questions veered radically from the protocol and its purposes, I gently guided the respondent back to the original protocol questions, thus gleaning fundamental responses while still obtaining a wealth of additional emotional thoughts and recollections.

I believe that my gender aided this research because, as a female, achieving access to this group was easier than I would have imagined. Additionally, my gender and age created a

conversational and interviewing environment much more comfortable for the respondents than would have been possible for a male researcher. I easily developed rapport because these women viewed me as a peer, more similar to themselves than different.

Consequently, the groupies honestly to enjoy discussing their experiences with me which made recruitment easier, and I was actually approached by two young women who asked me if I would interview them, rather than vice versa. Their willingness to share their experiences with me indicates their gratitude toward my academic interest in them and their experiences as subjects worthy of study.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

I analyzed the collected textual data, which consisted primarily of imagery, perception, and similar ephemeral variables transcribed from extensive interviews, interpreting and assimilating themes and contextual highlights that connected, as a common thread, the beliefs and experiences of the subjects. Like other qualitative methodological studies, I understand that the voices that speak here can be interpreted in many ways. I offer one of many possible interpretations of this phenomenon although it is grounded firmly in both theory and other empirical studies.

Coding the Data

The collected data contained numerous categories and subcategories of textual information. Based upon the major themes introduced in the literature review, the typed transcripts were analyzed and groupie responses sorted into the larger themes such as responses regarding perceptions of marginalization and objectification. From these larger themes, unexpected and more nuanced categories emerged. Within these subcategories, additional themes such as nostalgic reminiscences among good girls surfaced, providing other categories of data for contextual analysis. As each new theme emerged, all transcripts were reviewed for supporting or refuting remarks. Because some overlap in concepts

exists, such as commodification being one aspect of patriarchy, I maintained coded themes within the structure of the interview protocol. For example, it was presumed that attire reflects some aspect of commodification. Therefore, attire and similar, emergent packaging themes remain an integral part of commodification although they are also reflective of the tenets of patriarchy on a more macro level.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and the presentation of “truth” in the findings, meaning that the presentation captures the actual truth that exists in the subject and the subject’s environment, was a primary goal of this researcher. Additionally, the issue of reliability was also of primary concern. Although reliability may be compromised when a researcher condenses long, complex narratives into brief snapshots of information, I exercised extreme caution in interviewing and in presentation, exercising an awareness of possible bias in the selection of questions and presentation of the findings. Interpretation of transcription and the subjects’ meaning were also viewed as possible areas that could jeopardize reliability of the research.

I attempted to reduce the opportunity for bias foremost by entering the field environment with minimal knowledge of the team, the stadium, the fans, and every other aspect of the phenomenon I sought to study. Other than an anecdotal awareness of sport groupies obtained through the media and my literature review, I tried to keep an open mind and investigate why and how groupies pursued baseball players. My purpose was to match existing phenomenon to the scant literature that specifically addressed the sport groupie, and I attempted to maintain an interview and analysis framework to address

specific issues while allowing respondents to express the depth of their experiences.

Every attempt was therefore made to eliminate bias in the collection and presentation of data from this research, and findings will be presented and interpreted in the valid and reliable manner possible.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

Anthropologist George Gmelch's (2001:165) assertion that local women pursuing baseball players because the players are not local, making them "more 'exotic' and more interesting than local men whose backgrounds they know all too well" in no way represents the groupies encountered during this research. The locale of this project, situated in a triangular area formed by three major cities in the South Central United States separated by approximately 50 miles, created great differences among socioeconomic statuses and lifestyles of the groupie participants. The extremely and, perhaps understandably, gendered *Inside Pitch* also implies that baseball groupies seek some form of nostalgic liberation from the confines of small-town America, alluding that the women likely perceive their association with a baseball players as the high point in her life. All groupies included here experience exchange relationships with baseball players and nostalgia does seem to be a part of that experience. These findings, however, assert that groupies either seek total inclusion into the baseball lifestyle, an assumption that Gmelch refutes, or completely reject what baseball players represent in American culture.

From this investigation, a "good girl"- "bad girl" groupie dichotomy emerged, each with its own motives, behaviors, expectations, and outcomes. (Appendix C contains respondent profiles.) The categories of "good girl" or a "bad girl" materialized as the

respondent categorized herself as one or the other, not necessarily in those words exactly, but by defining herself in terms of the other. For example, the fundamental label of “good girl” applies to those groupies who have distinguished themselves from the “sluts” or “bad girls.” The “bad girls” interviewed often identified themselves as such, “bad” in terms of their decision to rebel against the existing system that expects women to behave like “good girls.” Regardless of the label applied, these findings represent the personal experiences of 12 women seeking sex, power, and status through America’s pastime and the men who live it.

Observations from the Field

I began attending Cheyenne Coyotes games during the month of April, 2002, initially attending about one game a week. Over the course of the research, I attempted to stagger my attendance to a variety of weekdays and weekend games. I did not buy a “package” of tickets because I did not want to restrict my seating to one particular area. Rather, I sought to obtain initial observations from and initiate conversations in a variety of vantage points. Assuming that the purpose of the groupies’ presence at the ballpark was to be seen by and to meet the players, I arrived at least one hour before the game was scheduled to begin when crowds of fans would be at a minimum.

At first, I spoke to no one, simply sitting and watching the activity as it played out around me. To remain discreet, I carried no tape recorder and no notebook, attempting to commit all that I saw or, at least, all seemingly relevant details, to memory. Patterns began to emerge and it became easier to discern who was who and what his or her goals were. Because my goal was to obtain data through in-depth interviews with groupies, I

took minimal notes, except when it correlated with specific events a groupie described to me. It became apparent, though, within those first few weeks that people other than the groupies I had met through my gatekeeper were aware of my reason for attending baseball games and my presence at the ballpark sparked an interest in players on the field, wives, management, as well as the groupies in the stands. As I observed them, they too observed me.

Upon arrival, I would sit above the infield in various locations and watch the interactions taking place between players and fans. This was a casual time in the ballpark when players would be stretching, messing around, and signing autographs for children and adults who presented them with items and a pen. It is interesting to note that, during all the games I attended, I never witnessed a woman with a child approach a player asking for an autograph; a man always accompanied a child and he always conversed with the player during the interaction. I believe this behavior reflects the traditional social norm that restricts a married or otherwise sexually committed woman from approaching a man who is a stranger to her. It also became immediately clear that some of the young women in attendance were after more than players' autographs.

It became more apparent over time that some of the same women would appear around the same time and adopt a posture of casual availability or actually initiate contact with players upon arrival. Women would arrive in pairs or alone, dressed in attractive summer attire, but almost always with a shorter shorts cuff or a more revealing shirt than one might label "conservative." They tended to sit in the first few rows of seats near the dugouts and bullpen areas or stood watchfully in various locations.

Different days of the week offer a variety of special and promotions. Weekend day games were clearly more family-oriented than others, including more children in the stands. Thursday nights were “Beer Nights” and offered more of the expected party atmosphere with larger groups of young adults such as the college crowd. Groupie activity seemed more subdued during day games on weekends, perhaps due to the different size and composition of the crowd itself. Thursday night games were very festive events and some groupies drink beer even though they profess not to drink when they attend games. In general, the day of the week and the time of the day appeared to affect groupie behavior.

Casual conversations with numerous female Coyotes fans established professional contacts and rapport with many of the ballpark regulars. With the gatekeeper’s assistance, I approached known groupies and began to schedule interviews. Once the interview process began, establishing additional contacts was not difficult and many groupies willingly shared their experiences with me.

Exchange between Groupies and Athletes

All of the women interviewed acknowledged awareness of a socially mandated system of exchange between men and women. They view marriage as a system of exchange based upon traditional gender roles of man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker and mother. Audrey states, “I’ll be happy as [an athlete’s] a wife, supporting him and raising children. The security will be nice and the travel will be fun.” In opposition to this expectation, Becky insists, “Marriage is a trap. Women get stuck with the shitty jobs and the guys can do whatever they want.”

All groupies interviewed recognize that baseball players do have something they want. Baseball players possess status and power, and groupies seek to embrace or disrupt those qualities for a variety of reasons. Hoch states that organized sports mirror dominant cultural mores and provide a link between sexist institutions, thus the propensity of women to seduce athletes is inherent in the socialization of American men and women. “The boys gather contacts that will enable them to dominate society, while the girls slowly acquire the habit of living through their menfolk” (1980:11). In order to accomplish this, women adopt certain behaviors to secure social status through men. Naison (1980:34) states, “...every woman should now provide what men once sought in prostitutes – a seductive, but fundamentally passive sexuality that would affirm men’s feelings of competence.” Thus, sexuality becomes a medium of exchange between men and women.

Marilyn Frye discusses philosopher Robert Ehman’s assertion that “sex itself” is value neutral, but insists that sexual intercourse does not occur in a social or psychological vacuum. She states, “Whatever acts people engage in as ‘sex,’ the parties to them are invariably moving and feeling within a distinctive, complex medium of power, myth, value, and the deliberate manipulation of desire for commercial purposes” (Frye 1992:41). All the respondents in this study recognize their conscious decision to utilize their biological sexuality and socially constructed femininity to pursue relationships with baseball players. The use of female sexuality and the value-charged act of coitus therefore come to dominate the exchange relationships of groupies and athletes.

For Lisa, pursuing sex with athletes is a game she enjoys playing:

Believe me, there’s always a guy watching to see if he can get some pussy from you. Sometimes, I’ll let him, or, uh, sometimes not..It’s just about

getting laid. That's it. They just move from one woman to the next and I, uh, make my place in the rotation or, uh, when I don't want to do this anymore, I'll move on to something else.

Roxanne, however, explains that her use of sexuality to pursue players has another purpose:

I try to be provocative, but not look like a slut. You can tell the girls out here who just want to get laid. I really have to make it a point to stay away from that "look" and to steer clear of those girls, too. Being considered a slut, you know like they are, could really ruin my chances...for a date. I don't want the guys to think I'm easy because that's not the kind of girl they want to really be with.

Connie: What kind of girl do you think they want?

Roxanne: A nice girl. You know, a girl, a woman really, that is pretty and smart and who knows how to act. I mean, these guys get a lot of attention, you know, like from TV and newspaper people...and, uh, they don't want some nasty girl making a mess of their life.

These two comments describe distinctly different ways that groupies perceive their experiences with athletes and establish the dichotomy of groupies into categories of "good girls" and "bad girls." Lisa's decision to provide sex to athletes varies greatly from Roxanne's perception of what the athlete wants from a woman. Both represent exchange relationships experienced by the groupies in this study.

The groupie dichotomy. Although Gmelch (2001) proposes simply that all groupies share similar characteristics, pursuing baseball players because they are "out for fun" and "looking for memorable sexual experiences," and not because they anticipate long-term relationships. These findings dispute Gmelch's declaration of a singular groupie motivation as an overly simplistic description of an extremely complex phenomenon.

Ortiz (2001) comes closer to presenting an understanding of the social dynamics at work in these relationships, describing the social distinction between “good” and “bad” girls and asserting that this dichotomy permeates athletes’ social expectations and sexual relationships. His writings, however, insinuate that all groupies are “bad” girls. From this data, however, two very distinct types of groupie emerged among the Cheyenne Coyotes groupies.

The first group is comprised of “good girls” who exhibited and discussed their enthusiasm for the game of baseball and for the team. They love the game itself, the men who play it, and consider themselves supporters of the team and its efforts, win or lose. The “bad girls,” however, exercise their sexual agency in a manner that sex radical feminists would laud, empowering them in sexual situations where they exchange sex freely as a physical act without experiencing physical or emotional exploitation by their male lovers. Such women, actively choosing to be “loose women” or “whores” enacting behaviors considered deviant challenge patriarchy defy the labels and expectations of subordination that society places upon them (Chapkis 1997; LeMoncheck 1997; Califia 1994). Both groups of women recognize the existence of a patriarchal social structure, one embracing it and the other rebelling against it.

For the “good girls,” the athletes represent a stable and prominent social position and a middle-class or higher lifestyle. For the “bad girls,” athletes represent a skewed social structure, sexual oppression of women by men, the challenge of seduction, and a competition between themselves and other female pursuers. It is important to note that the groupies recognize the dichotomy and distinguish themselves from each other. Similar

to Roxanne's earlier comment about not wanting to be presumed to be a "slut," good girl

Katie remarks:

I came out here to meet a nice guy, a player, to date. I don't want anybody to think I'm a tramp or anything cause there's plenty of them out there....They're not nice girls who want to go out and have a relationship...no, they just try to get the guys in bed. They don't care if he's even married...all they want to do is score with a player. It's pretty sick, I think.

Bad girl groupies often express disdain for the good girl groupies, wives, and girlfriends of baseball players. Lisa says:

I don't expect nothing from these guys than sex. I have to be realistic and I think hanging out with them and fucking is great, but I, uh, really think that any girl who thinks these guys can be faithful are just fooling themselves. Some are nice guys and all, but they all just take whatever they can get and I, uh, I really don't think loyalty to any one woman is possible for them.

Good girl groupies seek to liaison themselves with a baseball player through socially accepted practices to soak up his elevated status vicariously, hoping to enter his exclusive lifestyle. Bad girls, however, adopt socially deviant means to exploit him sexually for her own personal gratification, often for the feeling of power that seducing the socially powerful provides. The motives, behaviors, and expectations are very different for each group. Consequently, the issues of marginalization, patriarchy, objectification, and deviance will be discussed relative to each type of groupie and the different athlete-groupie exchange relationships that exist, separately.

Baseball's "good girls." "Good girl" groupies are typically home team supporters; the players are "their" guys and they form a strong association to one particular team that plays at this level and perhaps the professional team with which it is affiliated. This is not surprising because if a player is "called up," the groupie already set a ready

understanding of what's happening in the organization her potential lover/husband would be joining. For example, Audrey always wears one of her Coyotes shirts to games, but says that she would never consider wearing a shirt with the Coyotes' major league's team name on it to a game at the Cheyenne Coyotes' stadium.

That would be way too presumptuous. I think that would send a message to the guys that you're anticipating a move to the majors. That's *not* a good way to get close to these guys... You have to support them and the team right here and right now. [Emphasis in the original]

This quality, loyalty, expressed by all good girl groupies remains a focus in their responses. Roxanne states:

I was raised to be loyal to a cause or to people that you care about. My dad always taught us to see things through 'til the end. If your team's losing, you don't give up... you stand by them regardless of what happens. I guess I expect other people to be that way too and, in this case, especially, where it really and truly is a win or lose situation, you have to stand by the people you, you know, care about. And, I really care about these guys.

Also aware of the "hometown" atmosphere of the ballpark, good girl groupies seek to develop and enhance their place within it such as being accepted by the wives as "non-threatening" to them, accepting and reinforcing the social hierarchy of the environment. Ortiz (1998) states, "female groupies play a part in their own subordination, because they are female inhabitants in the hypermasculine world of professional sport." For example, Katie describes the scrutiny of players, management, and wives as a positive aspect of social life at the ballpark:

It's kinda like a Neighborhood Watch program, but the neighborhood's a baseball team! There's a lot at stake here. The guys, well some of them, have great futures ahead of them, and the wrong type of girl can really screw that up, I think. You know, if she only wants to exploit him.

When asked how she responds to that scrutiny, she replied:

I guess you'd say it's an exclusive organization and the people in it...you know, players, wives, and all are concerned with who's around and what's going on. If you want to be part of the group, you have to play by their rules. I have no problem with that.

Through these behaviors and understandings, good girls attempt to maintain "appropriate" social standards, respecting marriages and adopting appropriate behavior for "good" girls who want to be players' wives, which include expressing unconditional loyalty and embracing traditional gender roles.

Aware of the importance of their sexuality to their exchange relationships with athletes but conscious of their social reputation, good girls do not want to be viewed as "gold diggers" or "sluts." Rather, they view themselves as intelligent individuals in pursuit of romantic and sexual relationships through social exchange with baseball players, using their feminine wiles to achieve their goals. They possess a desire to liaison themselves with players, viewing themselves as potential mates who display qualities that athletes seek in wives. Roxanne believes that she, as a potential mate, exhibits certain qualities that a baseball player finds attractive, offering a baseball player: "Loyalty. Friendship. Love. I'd be the best girlfriend or wife a ball player could imagine. I guess I would just offer him my entire self."

Although good girl groupies all state that they expect what they perceive as an egalitarian relationship of reciprocal love, they also tend to expect to give more to the relationship than they receive from the liaison in what can be described as a traditional, gendered way. Roxanne states:

I will always work if I need to. You know, I don't expect a man to take care of me financially. I'm an awesome cook. I keep a smart apartment. I am not socially retarded...I mean, a man would be able to take me anywhere. I think I'm pretty and have a great body, too, so he should appreciate that. [Pause] I think I have a lot to offer.

When asked what she would expect in return, she states, “His lifestyle. His world. To be a part of him. Life under the stadium lights. I’d love that.”

Good girl groupies enter exchange relationships with athletes understanding that their aspirations of love and marriage may not be achieved. Even with such this awareness, good girls express disappointment at failed relationships with baseball players. For example, Maria relates her experience with a baseball player:

Just another failed relationship, you know. He just made me feel so bad about it, though. You know, when he was getting what he wanted everything was, like, cool and we’d go out sometimes and have fun. But, then, after awhile, he’d call me real late at night, like after I was in bed already, and he’d want to come over and sleep with me. Well, not to sleep. He came over for sex...He was great in bed and I liked the company, but then he’d start to come over drunk and after a couple of times like that, you know, that’s when I decided that I was just being used and told him “no more” then he started calling me a slut and a whore...He liked what he was getting, but when he wasn’t getting it anymore, it was, like, all my fault and I was, like, this bad person all along... I guess I should have known better than to get involved that time of the year... Some of the girls say that’s when the guys want a “winter wife” if he’s not married, of course. You know, someone to be with when the pressure’s low and there’s not a whole lot going on. [Laughs] They say a “winter wife” can be just about anybody with a pussy because she’s not real visible. They don’t need a trophy in the off-season. I guess I should have known better than to hook up with him that late in the year, but I really thought he was sincere. Man, was I stupid!

Similar in some ways to prostitution, this type of exchange relationship is enacted by many good girl groupies. It involves the exchange of female sexuality and, some believe, a woman’s “self” for the tangible, financial security, and intangible, status, commodities offered by a baseball player’s profession and lifestyle. Feminists such as Carole Pateman who describes the “male sex-right” would assert that female sexuality is being purchase by the male in all of these exchanges. Similarly, Wendy Chapkis (1997:14)

addresses the exchange of female sexuality for commodity, summarizing pro-“positive” sex feminist views, stating, “When love, relationship, and mutual pleasure are the only appropriate context for sex, cash and contract cannot substitutes as evidence of reciprocity.” Although good girl groupies do not view their actions as selling themselves, the issue remains that they exchange their sexuality and their services for benefits they receive or expect to receive from baseball players.

The player, on the other hand, may be completely unaware of his “sexual contract” with the groupie. Her intentions, however, remain clearly based in the exchange of her sexuality for his willingness to share his social status with her. Roxanne reinforces this exchange of self for status:

They’re a small, special group [baseball players] and being part of that group, it makes me feel special too. You know, like if I marry one and have kids, I won’t be just another soccer mom.

Baseball’s “bad girls.” Unlike the good girl groupies, the “bad girls” perceive men as selfish and abusive of their social status and power. Many perceive baseball players as self-aware exploiters of their desirability, which is rooted in their physicality, their social status and their potential as mates, as well as the seduction challenge they represent.

Becky, for example, concisely describes her opinion of sports and athletes in general:

These guys think God put women on this earth to fuck them and wipe their kids’ snotty noses. It’s pathetic.

Similarly, Lisa discusses her pursuit of ball players as a sexual power-related challenge while also recognizing that she is but one of many potential seductresses:

Men are all the same and baseball players are the worst I've ever seen. If he's got a dick he might be attractive, but you gotta get to that point to check out the dick and then see if he can use it...Baseball players are like, I dunno, like, just hot. There are only a little group around here and they're so damn cocky I guess catching one's a big challenge for me. I like playing with them...getting them to want me, being able to get him up and hard and wanting me, and then shut him down cause I know he's just gonna fuck some other girl tomorrow night. That's just the way it goes... I really don't care what they do except when they're with me...I, um, I think mostly it just makes me know that I have to be the one that needs to decide if we fuck or not. I have to be the one to decide if I give myself to him and, uh, decide if I am getting what I want from him.

All bad girls acknowledge the inherent inequality in their exchange relationships with athletes. Many of these women recognize that men maintain the relationship's power and they must acquiesce to his expectations or move on to another player. As Lisa previously revealed, even if a groupie seduces a player for an evening, she knows that she has affected no real control over him.

Contrary to good girls' perceptions, bad girls view the ballpark atmosphere as a location where the game of baseball as well as social "games" take place. They view the hypermasculine environment, the hierarchy of team positions, the consumerism, and the wives' hostility as silly constructions of people jockeying for power and/or wealth and they soundly reject what they see. Particularly of note is the hostility of bad girl groupies toward baseball wives. Although Ortiz (1997) believes that baseball wives' perception of groupie motivation stems from "her need to improve her low self-esteem, and her need for upward economic mobility," the groupie respondents in this study proclaim to be fully self-sufficient. They reiterate that their attitude is one of rebellion against what they perceive as repressive and "bogus" institutions such as consumerism and marriage. In their experience and outlook, marriage simply means that some woman such as his wife or

girlfriend is repressed while the groupies benefit from the sexual adventures their husbands want from them.

Becky, an accomplished car salesperson and aspiring singer, distinguishes herself from the good girls who willingly engage in sex in exchange for romantic gestures.

Illustrating her point that the marriage institution is a facade, she states:

We all got the same thing between our legs, but they [baseball players] feel like they have to work for it to make it worth getting. It never fails to amaze me how stupid men are. They all want the forbidden fruit.

Further, what she perceives as the hypocrisy of baseball players' marital relationships disgusts her. "The little wifey lives her little happy life in the limelight as a ballplayer's wife. If she doesn't know he fucks around on the road, though, she's an idiot."

Many groupies, good girls and bad, acknowledge what Ortiz (1997) has labeled "institutionalized adultery." Regarding marriage, Lisa indicates that players do not value their marriage vows:

If they don't want to be with me, they can always say 'no.' I have had a couple, maybe two, married guys tell me that before, but usually not. If they think they can get in my pants, they usually try to.

Specifically regarding players' wives, she continues:

I think that they're pretty damn stupid! [Laughs] These guys get away with so much and the stupid women just let them do it, or pretend they don't know, or whatever. I swear I don't know how they can't tell that these guys are cheating on them. It's so damn obvious.

Although they respect neither the institution nor those involved in it, bad girls typically shy away from involvement with local players who are married primarily because it is easier and perhaps more prudent to maintain some semblance of anonymity

and not directly face the hostility of the local wives. When asked why she only dates away team players, Lisa says that dating a local player who's married would be:

...way, way, way, way too close to home. I want to be with the guys from the traveling team cause I don't even have to worry about wives or girlfriends seeing me and getting all pissed off. It's easier to be selective, too. They only come around so often instead of being around, underfoot every damn day.

Becky concurs, stating, "The local wives are way, way too bitchy to deal with, so I choose the less-traveled road. Less bullshit that way."

Similar to perceiving marriage as a façade, Becky believes sport promotes the power imbalance between men and women. Like many bad girl groupies, she attempts to seduce players as a form of power play and to seek sexual gratification through a sense of conquest. When asked why she pursues baseball players, she indicates that teasing and having sex with ball players proves that she is their equal.

Personally, I'm out here to have a little fun and fuck with whoever I can. It's not much, I guess, but I enjoy it. When they come to me, they treat me as an equal or we don't play.

Becky's ideas resonate with Waller (1937:728) who stated, "As long as an association is founded on a frank and admitted barter in thrills, nothing that can be called exploitative arises." Sex radical feminists argue along similar lines. A woman exercising her sexuality on her own terms thereby *owns* her sexuality which then cannot be owned by anyone else (Chapkis 1997). Because groupie bad girls engage in exchange relationships with an inherently unequal power differential, however, radical feminists would argue that the bad girls are immersed in false consciousness, ignoring the reality that their sexual exchange with baseball players perpetuates the historical oppression of women (Chapkis 1997;

LeMoncheck 1997). Because both of these feminist perspectives exist on a continuum of sexuality utilization on one end and sexuality exploitation on the other end, both may be relevant to describe the exchange relationships of bad girl groupies and baseball players.

Regardless of the justification for their actions, bad girls recognize the sexually restrictive and imbalanced social structure and they seek sexual and social gratification in the ways they choose. Although this frustrates for many bad girls, they continue to participate in these relationships, most often citing the thrills of rebellion against social norms and seduction as the primary reason for continuing to pursue baseball players.

Marginalization of Women

Historically, sports are equated with masculinity. When women entered the realm of sports, it was of a feminine nature by design. Women are relegated to the status of cheerleader, strictly a support role requiring skimping, sexually revealing attire and the performance of dance and gymnastic routines. "In professional and collegiate sports, physiological differences are invoked to justify women's secondary status..." (Lorber 1993:571). Lorber further asserts that Western sports are designed for men's bodies and their status is thus constructed as socially heroic when they participate in and achieve victory in recognized sport. Betcher (1993:171) also supports this argument, stating that, "Sports emphatically differentiates a man from the world of women. He reaffirms his manhood through rituals that he shares exclusively with men." When women demonstrate sport skill, however, they are labeled as "unfeminine" and therefore unworthy of a "real" man's attention. In the traditional realm of sport, women are expected to know their place, which is on the sidelines.

At least one historical aberration exists. In the sport of rodeo, prior to the death of bronc rider Bonnie McCarroll at the Pendleton Roundup in 1929, women actively participated in every event in which men competed, often receiving acclaim from the American public and media (LeCompte, 1993:25-27; Wooden and Ehringer, 1996:187-188). During that period in American history, frontier women participated actively in daily ranching chores that included the activities that rodeo events simulate. Although injury and death were not uncommon among rodeo cowboys, it seems that McCarroll's death proved woman's frailty and the ensuing reluctance for rodeo producers to allow women to compete pushed women to the fringe of that sport. Since that tragedy, women have been expected to assume a more "ladylike" presence in the world of rodeo such as participation in queen contests and "safer" events such as barrel racing, breakaway calf roping, and goat tying.

Between these two dichotomous roles of male athlete and female athlete, resides the groupie. For example, although Vanessa played softball, memories of her brother's and his teammate's baseball accomplishments inspire more pleasant memories for her than her own athletic accomplishments. Joann's baseball star brother Brian inspired a sense of celebrity for her in their rural hometown, and Patty's brother Bob received all of her father's attention and accolades while she dutifully performed her role as cheerleader for his football team. The experiences of these women as they matured significantly impacted the beliefs and opinions they hold about sports as adults in positive and negative ways.

Other groupies were not allowed as children and young women to participate in sports at all. Although most grew up in the 1980s, the women interviewed were expected

to tap and ballet dance, sell Girl Scouts cookies, or be cheerleaders, like Patty, instead of playing sports as athletic equals with their brothers and male friends. These experiences reflect both the perseverance of traditional gender expectations in contemporary and the relegation of women to the periphery of sports. Competition between the sexes can only be promoted as a novelty.

Maria's experience illustrates the separation of men and women in sports. For her, baseball was an integral part of life growing up with brothers. She states:

All of my brothers played baseball. I spent a whole lot of time at the baseball field watching them play when I was growing up and in school and all. And, as I was growing up, I dated their friends who also played baseball. Baseball has been a pretty big part of my life, I guess. Maybe that's why I love it so much...I could never get into the girly stuff like cheerleading. I think I didn't have the hair for it. But, that just wasn't a time for girls to be athletic. Soccer was just starting to catch on around here, but there were no options for girls my age.

Christy relates a similar experience, competing in a sport dominated by females at the youth level. She says:

My daddy taught me how to ride before I could walk, I think. It drove my mother crazy because she said it wasn't ladylike for girls to ride around like wild Indians. I guess Dad got tired of listening to her bitch about it so he got me into English riding. That seemed okay to Mom, too. You know, more like how a lady should look with the sexy stretch jodhpurs and tall boots. The funny thing I realized though as a teenager was there were no guys involved in the events me and the other girls at the stable rode in. I guess they thought they'd be gay if they dressed like we did and rode elegant horses. They didn't want their friends on the football team to laugh at them.

These two examples speak to the separation of the masculine and feminine sport experience. Maria clearly describes the marginalization of young women from masculine sports where she could only be a spectator while her brothers competed. Christy,

however, provides insight into a different aspect of marginalization. Even though Christy describes a sport that is clearly gender neutral, the boys would not be considered masculine if they competed in equestrian events with the girls. Similar to doing “women’s work” the equestrian show circuit among youths is dominated by young women. Consequently, young men who enter that realm must not be “real men.”

This separation of masculine and feminine spheres of activity was articulated by the Cult of True Womanhood (Sklar 1973), a code of ethics by which nineteenth century women lived and by which their behavior was judged, which assigned appropriate behaviors for each gender. In the 1800s, the American woman was socially determined by nature to be a delicate, fragile creature who could not make decisions and who was dependent upon man for her care. Although applied to white, middle- and upper-class women but not women of color, immigrant women, or women of lower social classes, this concept of femininity existed as the model to be achieved and maintained. This ethic has persisted since, adopting various forms that further oppress women, assuming that they continue to “buy into” the concept. According to Kathryn Sklar (1973:158), the Cult of True Womanhood and the separation of male and female spheres remained because:

The position of women in American culture was therefore an example of how ‘superior and subordinate relations’ contribute to the ‘general good of all.’ Women ‘take a subordinate station’ not because they are naturally subordinate, or even because subordination suits them, but because it promotes the general good of the society.

Maria describes her belief that separation of masculine and feminine spheres is necessary and appropriate, stating:

God created us male and female for a reason. Personally, I like it that way...If we were the same, think how boring life would be. And no sex. Who could live like that?

Although largely antiquated, this code remains a prominent aspect of groupie-athlete relationships, albeit in a diluted form. Good girl groupies believe it is acceptable for men to have sports as exclusively their domain and should be respected as such. In order to participate on the fringe of that domain, good girls groupies adopt appropriate Cult habits and expectations. Bad girl groupies express awareness of these Cult tenets and the resulting separation of spheres. Their response, however, is insurgence.

Patriarchy and the Athlete-Groupie Exchange Relationship

Many groupies connect their infatuation with baseball players with both family experiences and past events. Whether a good girl or bad girl, they overwhelmingly recognize the importance of maleness, its association to sport, and its superiority in the social world. This *de facto* recognition supports Pyke's (1996) assertion that an "essential" gender order constitutes the master ideology in our society, thus assuring the superiority of men over women through unconscious acceptance. Also aligned to traditional American values, groupies view men as successful when they are "winners" or are able to overcome conflict. They acknowledge baseball as an ideal environment to witness and evaluate masculine "fitness," both physically and socially. These are traits and expectations the groupies learned as children whether in positive form or negative form. Through positive associations with sports and baseball, good girls learned that their role in sports was ancillary and that loyalty to the team and the male players was paramount. In their responses, good girls overwhelmingly recognize positive male characteristics and seek to liaison themselves to men who display these characteristics.

Positive associations with patriarchal tradition. Joann provides an example of how her experiences as a young woman promoted her love of baseball and molded her role expectations as an adult. She reminisces about watching her older brother play high school baseball, enjoying her status as kid sister of the star pitcher:

It was such an incredible time for me...I'd love to live that year the rest of my life. I had just turned 14 and was in the eighth grade. Brian was a sophomore that year and led his team all the way to State. They didn't win the championship, but we lived in a small town and he was a complete celebrity for a long time afterwards. Everywhere we went, people would stop us and talk about baseball and stuff. The girls all swooned for him and all the guys wanted to be him. He and I'd always been pals growing up and he usually would let me hang out with him unless he and his buddies were drinking or doing other stuff he didn't want me to see him doing. It was just so cool to be with my brother, the star of our little town. All the cool boys suddenly wanted to date me even the ones in high school. I knew it was because of Brian, but I didn't care. I was just happy that I could be a part of his success. Because he was so special, I was too now. That was a time I'll never, ever forget and always want to live again.

Similarly, Vanessa also speaks nostalgically of her twin brother's athletic associations and friendship making a significant impact on her life.

We were always kind of a novelty because we were boy-girl twins, but one summer Jack played T&C baseball and I played softball like we always did. We were 17 and about to start out senior year that Fall. Jack was selected for a different team that year and had only one of his friends on the same team, the first baseman, who I'd known all my life, but now I had the biggest crush on him. His name was Lloyd. I had always thought that was about the stupidest name a guy could have, but he was totally hot, so no one, especially not me, a girl, would ever say anything bad about him. He was an awesome ball player too. I loved to watch him play and so did a lot of other people. That summer, I'd always hear girls in the stands talking about him and what they'd like to do to him sexually, but I didn't...I just couldn't, see him that way. To me he was really hot, yeah, but he was just my brother's friend and a really nice guy. As far as I knew, Lloyd hadn't dated any girls over the summer, so toward the end of the season, I finally asked Jack if he'd see if Lloyd was even remotely interested in me and he said he would. [Laughs] Come to find out, Lloyd

was very much interested in me, but was afraid to ask me out because I was Jack's sister! About two weeks before school started again, after dating about a month, I lost my virginity to Lloyd. It was okay, I guess, nothing like I'd expected though. That was the first and only time we ever had sex and we dated for a bit after school started, but then broke up. We didn't love each other and we both knew it. It just seemed like the thing to do, so we did. Throughout our senior year though, Jack, Lloyd, and me were friends like we'd always been. When spring training rolled around again, I was always there, cold or hot, rain or shine, cheering for my two favorite guys.

Such experiences with males formed and solidified the emotions and expectations that some groupies have for athletes. To Joann and Vanessa, baseball players represent many things, prominently celebrity, friendship, and sexuality. Many good girl groupies grew up with their male relatives - fathers and grandfathers excluded - as equals, yet also learned that greater social value was placed upon the achievements of males rather than on their own as females. Patty states:

I was always in dance or cheerleading, but it was my brother Bob who got all the attention and glory. My dad never once came to a single dance recital I had, but Mom was there every time. Dad only came to football games because Bob played. During the games he probably didn't even realize that I was there, cheering. The only important thing going on was that Bob was a football player.

Although Patty's statement is bittersweet it supports the assertion that nostalgia clearly plays a part in the lives of groupies. Many reported male role models' adoration of sports, in general, and often baseball specifically. Moreover, these groupies adopted their male role models' values, incorporating them into their own lifestyles. Roxanne's father instilled a love of baseball in her and throughout her life she continues to associate baseball with a sweet, innocent time in her life when anything was possible.

When I was little, I remember Dad just living for baseball. He'd talk about it all the time. Year round, he'd talk about the previous season and

speculate about the next one. Mom never really acknowledged it or talked about it, but I guess she respected his obsession. The stats and names I didn't know, but it didn't matter. It was like a bond we, he and I, shared. He'd sit outside in a lawn chair on our deck and he'd drink beer and listen to baseball games while we kids played in the yard. Sometimes he'd let me sip his beer when he knew Mom wasn't watching. I loved those times. It just seemed like, right, you know, to support the team, whatever team it was. He'd cuss a little, not too loud that Mom could hear, though, if his team lost or screwed up...I don't even know who he rooted for back then...but it just seemed so *normal* to be so attracted by and attached to baseball. I mean, every spring, my brothers and their friends would get out the balls and bats, and gloves, and the leather-softener-stuff. The leather would smell so good, especially if someone got a new glove and, of course, someone always did. They'd talk about who should win the pennant and all, but I really didn't care about that. It just...I dunno...It just *was*, I guess so very normal, like baseball marked the changing seasons not the calendar. It still makes me feel good, though, to smell leather in the spring like the freshly-cut grass, like something could happen, anything maybe...something really cool. I dunno, maybe that's just too out there and dumb to be real, but it seems real to me. No matter how old I get, baseball still is an important part of my life. [Emphasis in the original.]

Other “good girl” groupies related similar experiences of associating baseball with positive male interaction.

Bad girls, however, mostly reject traditional gender role expectations and often speak of being “sold out” or ignored by the men in their lives. Some bad girls consequently developed negative attitudes towards men and the concept of gender “fair play” in general, especially sexual exchange relationships. Regardless of whether their experience was positive or negative, it is apparent that these young women learned that social exchanges between men and women are inherently unequal. Consequently, both good girl groupies and bad girl groupies developed methods of exchange with athletes that reflect the values toward sports and athletes that they learned as children.

Negative associations with patriarchal tradition. Lisa, a self-proclaimed bad girl, describes her half-brother as a:

...pussy who doesn't even play sports. He always got what he wanted and was just pretty much a whining little jerk. I think, um, he was their real 'baby' so got his way all the time. And, he's a boy, so that automatically makes him superior to me.

Heather projects similar contempt towards all men and especially baseball players, stating:

I don't know where the arrogance comes from. I think maybe ball players enjoy the fact that they can get any woman they want. Or, at least, it seems that way. Remember Sam Malone on "Cheers"? These guys are more like that than you might think. Strutting around like the cock of the walk. But most guys are like that, too, I think. These just happen to be worse because they're celebrities and can get away with it more. A penis and a bat automatically places them at the top of the food chain.

Becky grew up without a father while her mother worked outside their home. She was raped on the way home from school by a local football star when she was 14. Her views resonate with Lisa's, especially the contention that "men are all the same." She says:

They all want pussy and they want momma to take care of them. They especially like it if they can get all of that in one package. It's that Madonna-whore thing, I think. These guys [baseball players] got it especially bad, though.

Although she vehemently states that she is over the trauma of her rape, she also admits harboring negative feelings for athletes because of the prestige given them regardless of their true personalities.

All the stories you hear about the players and all and what model citizens they are. It's bullshit and really hilarious. They're a bunch of assholes who take advantage of their position as 'stars' to do whatever the hell they want.

Becky believes that athletes are conditioned to believe that they are above social and legal laws, a situation that continues to contribute to their exploitation of women.

Perpetuating patriarchy. Although bad girls view their own actions as vindictive and they profess to engage in predatory sexual behavior in rejection of traditional gender roles, Pyke (1996:531) states that consistently "...women behave in ways that bolster men's power, at the expense of their own, as a means of celebrating essential differences and asserting their identity as women." If so, the underlying master ideology of patriarchy remains dominant. This certainly explains the good girl groupies who adhere to the tenets of patriarchy as "the way things should be" and, upon more stringent investigation of the motives and behaviors of bad girl groupies, may also explain their actions.

Bad girls' attempts to use their sexuality as a means to refute male dominance does not necessarily accomplish their goal, but instead fosters a false sense of power. The bad girl chooses to align herself with an athlete because it is his status that distinguishes him from other men. Seduction of "lesser" men would not constitute a challenge, which would render the conquest insignificant. If all an athlete wants from a groupie is her sex and she gives it to him, she has maintained the patriarchal gender and power status quo. If she refuses to relinquish her sex to him, he will get it from another woman. In both scenarios, the structure of patriarchy is supported with men retaining power and status over women.

Although they seek sexual liaisons with baseball players for different goals, the good girl and bad girl groupies both contribute to a patriarchal social structure by seeking relationships with athletes because of their social status as men of significance and

celebrity which easily equates to status and power. Maria articulates this more clearly than any other respondent. When asked why she pursues athletes, she responded:

His status. His status as a man who is significant to the community and who knows what else might come from that. I just know that when you're associated with one of these guys that your life is different. You have different advantages and opportunities. Like, if I was married to a player, people would give me more respect.

At best, a woman retains power over her personal sexuality at the most micro level only, that of the dyad, choosing to engage or not engage in sexual exchange with a specific athlete.

Receiving his status by association in exchange for her sexuality is not guaranteed, however. The groupie wields no power beyond the act of coitus unless the athlete chooses to give her more. These findings indicate that negotiating individual acts of sexual exchange between groupie and athlete typically affirms patriarchy. Good girls willingly adopt a posture of subservience and emphasized femininity (Connell 1987:187) in deference to the athlete's superior status, hoping to be chosen as his wife based upon what she perceives to be the desired feminine characteristics she displays. Although not seeking marriage to an athlete, even the bad girls acknowledge that they intend to marry and have families, thus "buying into" the American Dream of the nuclear family, and anticipating the continued reality of male-dominance throughout their lives as wives and mothers. In Becky's words, "Maybe I'll meet some guy tomorrow and sell out lock, stock, and barrel and be a good little girl driving kids to daycare and soccer. I guess stranger things have happened."

The findings of this research support both feminist viewpoints: women as oppressed, albeit willingly, or women's empowerment through utilization of her

sexuality. Awareness, empowerment and agency, however, do not automatically ensure a groupie's personal satisfaction nor her contentment with the status quo, especially if the existing structure ensures a woman's subordination to men and her resigned acceptance that subjugation to men will be her ultimate destiny. Patriarchy it seems is alive and flourishing in the 21st Century American ballpark.

Sexual Objectification, Commodification, and Empowerment

Historically, women have been sexualized and objectified based upon their biological sex. Aristotle, Hesiod, and Plato all allege that males are the foundation of creation and woman emerged into society as a secondary creature, a gift or a punishment for men, and thus subject to his control (Tuana 1993). Linke (1992:579) further clarifies this construction of women as a mere vessel, unrestrained in physical and emotional persona and requiring external and rational control, stating that "the conception of female sexuality and procreation as natural (that is wild, untamed, raw, dangerous) seems at times to justify existing orders of power and domination." These ideas have established the dichotomy of men as rational and pure in spirit, and women as sexual and therefore less pure and sinful.

Kingsley Davis's (1937:746) discussion of the sociology of prostitution recognizes female sexuality as a commodity and sexual intercourse as existing within a system of social exchange, asserting that "women trade their sexual favors for an economic and social status supplied by men." As previously mentioned, Willard Waller (1937:728) asserted:

The emergence of thrill-seeking furthers the development of exploitative relationships. As long as the association is founded on a frank and admitted barter in thrills, nothing can be called exploitative.

Recognizing the agency of both the man and the woman in a sexual relationship, Waller asserts that the woman may exercise “gold-digging” while the man may seek thrills from the body of the woman. One can clearly assess from these statements that the woman seeks socially relevant *commodities* in the form of gifts or status from men while the man seeks to utilize the woman’s *physical body* for his sexual pleasure.

These ideas reflect early twentieth century views that women as well as men utilize sexuality for a variety of purposes. In particular, these views suggest that women often maintain the option of providing sex or choosing not to provide sex, depending upon the man’s ability or willingness to provide what she wants. Howard (1988:105) asserts, “...both initiating and refusing sex reflect directly the degree of power or dependency of each partner...the more powerful partner...was found to be more likely to engage in sex outside of the relationship.”

Although such recognition of female sexuality addresses the process of exchange and the concept of power and both its importance to the social order, contemporary feminist perspectives now address more than these issues. What feminists do not agree upon, however, is the exact nature and appropriate usage of this commodity, believing that men have historically proven incapable of determining the true nature of female sexuality and its relevance to society (Chapkis 1997). Chapkis (1997:5) states that not even one feminist voice has a monopoly on Truth, describing one of the two primary feminist camps as those who see sexuality as inherently exploitative and the source of women’s oppression.

The other, however, recognizes sexuality as a source of pleasure and empowerment for women (Chapis 1997:12). For example, good girl Maria, likes the idea

of being associated with an athlete as his significant other. She acknowledges that she will use her sex to win a baseball player husband. She says, "Sex is really all a woman has that men want." She believes the benefits of an exchange of her sex would justify the exchange, stating:

Well, it's not like actors and singers and stuff. These guys are, like, here in the neighborhood. They're just like me and you except that they're star athletes. It makes them more special and I find that attractive and want to be a part of it. I want a man who's somebody special. If we go somewhere, we'll be recognized and that would be cool.

When asked what she would really gain by the relationship, she replies:

I just know that when you're associated with one of these guys that your life is different. You have different advantages and opportunities. Like, if I was married to a player, people would give me more respect. I, uh, I guess it's because they'd want to make him happy and make him see them in a positive light. You know, like if I do something nice for him, he might do something nice for me. That might come in handy, I think.

Roxanne also expresses that she likes the idea of being part of the elite, closed society that is baseball. She says:

It's different with players. You, um, get to be part of a world where they're like really important. You know? There are only a few of them and to be part of their world is special in itself. I, uh, like the fact that it's kind of a closed group, you know? If you get to be a part of a player's life, it's kind of a unique experience...they're in the news and stuff. If I date an accountant or a bartender or something like that, I'm just like everybody else, you know, like just taking life as it comes. [Long pause] I, uh, want a life that's not just typical, I guess. These guys are, uh, special because they're different than everybody else. I like that and I, uh, want to be a part of that.

Katie recently entered a romantic relationship with a Coyotes player. In her mind, the exchange of her sex for his status seems complete. She describes how the association to her lover makes her feel:

They're [baseball players] sexy and talented. They make good money and more if they go pro. I love the game and I love to be a part of it...now that I am with Player, when he's on the field and everybody's watching him, I just am so proud that he's my guy. When the announcer calls his name to bat or making a play, it is the biggest thrill I have ever experienced. I just can't describe how it feels, but I do know that I am addicted to it.

These narratives describe good girl groupies' expectations of receiving social benefits in the form of prestige and power in exchange for their sex. Bad girls, however, utilize their sexuality as a means to seduce and control, even if briefly, men they view as exploitative. Becky, for example, describes her experiences as controlling and manipulative:

Sometimes, I play momma for them too, but only if it's what I want to do. Most of the shits just take the pussy then take off. It doesn't surprise me when they do and that's cool. I don't want them hanging around anyway....For the most part, I just like the thrill of fucking these guys who think they're so good, you know, God's gift to the world. Sometimes, when they're working at it real hard and they're just small and not good and they're getting close to coming, I yawn and tell them to get lost. [Laughs] I act real bored, like I need to wash my hair or something. Sometimes I do. I get up and wash my hair.

When asked if she ever feels used by the players, she replies: "Hell, no. I can take it when I want or walk away. No man's just gonna use me like a toy."

As these narratives indicate, groupies knowingly enter exchange relationships with athletes, utilizing sexuality as their primary bargaining chip. Compromises must be made, sometimes to the woman's advantage and sometimes to her dismay. A groupie may relinquish sex and merely be exploited, obtaining no benefit for her contribution to the exchange. One groupie, Katie, believe she has achieved her goal. Becky does not set a goal of ownership over players, but achieves a feeling of empowerment from her exchanges with athletes. Regardless of the outcome of individual sexual encounters,

however, the respondents in this research continue to willingly engage in the exchange of sex in attempt to obtain perceived benefits.

Sexual Objectification. All groupies interviewed stated that men, in general, and baseball players, in particular, view them as sexual objects before viewing them as people. French asserts that males' need to control demands that they cast everyone else as "other" (French 1985:262). The name "groupie" itself implies an object possessed in unison by the group, in this case the team. Vanessa states:

The first thing they [players] check out is your boobs. They do that first before they'll even meet your eyes. I've watched them with other girls and if a girl doesn't have a chest that they find enticing, they just turn away without giving her another thought, looking around for the next set that's big enough to catch their eye.

Other women share similar viewpoints. Audrey, for example, says that once a woman has the label "groupie" she is viewed as prey by all the men who know of her groupie title.

One guy asked me out early in the season and we went out to a nice dinner. After that, he came back to my apartment for a drink and to talk, I thought. While I was making margaritas in the kitchen he said that he was going out to his truck for something. I didn't think anything of it cause he seemed like a pretty nice guy. Well, when I came back into the living room, he had a baseball bat in his hand. I thought it was kinda odd and asked him what that was for. He replied that he wanted me to masturbate with it, saying that that always turned him on. I told him to get the hell out of my home and he acted all hurt and offended. You know what he said to me? He said, "Well, you're a groupie. Isn't that the kind of shit that y'all do?"

Audrey's story and others like it imply that baseball players view women, specifically groupies, as sexual objects before they consider the women as people, deserving of the respect they would give to any other person. It reinforces Frye's (1992) statement:

...most females will have most of their sexual experience in relationships in which, on balance, they have considerably less social, economic, and physical power than their partners and in a context of myth and dogma that impose male-affirming and female-degrading meanings upon their sexual acts and contacts. (P. 45)

In sum, when a woman is considered to be an object, she relies on others to construct and validate her self. These objectifications are often very unflattering. For example, groupies carry many labels such as “slut,” “winter wife” and “slump busters” (Ortiz 2001). All of these and the many other labels confirm that the groupie-athlete social and sexual exchanges reify the concept of groupie as object to be used for the athlete’s pleasure or to meet other instrumental needs.

Sexual Commodities. From the establishment of women as objects rather than sentient individuals who are equals to men, it then follows that women can be utilized as commodities by men. Maria discusses her failed relationship with a baseball player not on the local team, but that of a nearby town. Although she is a season ticket holder, she now refuses to attend a game when his team is in town. Since her negative experience, while accepting responsibility for her sexual exchange with that team’s center fielder, she admonishes herself for it. She believes in retrospect that she should have known better.

I never want to see him again or his team. I love the game, but I just hate the way he made me feel and he probably told every guy on his team about me, that I’m just a no-good slut. That’s so unfair, but I bet that’s what he did...Some of them have families and seem to be truly happy. You can tell the wives that think their husbands cheat. They watch all the time and never enjoy the game. If he ever gets married, his wife will sit with that frown on her face, knowing he’s after some other pussy. Yeah, [player] was a total prick, but I know I’ll find a nice guy to fall in love with.

For a brief time, Maria happily met his sexual needs, believing that she was in a romantic relationship with the player. The romantic dinners and other dates, however, became fewer and farther between and during this time, he began showing up at her house very late at night and occasionally drunk and expecting sex. Maria realized then that she was just being used. When she refused to feed his selfish sexual appetite, he broke all ties with her, calling her a “whore.”

Maria’s case exemplifies the commodification and use of groupies’ sexuality. She further states:

About a week after he quit calling, I heard that he had moved in with another groupie who owns a ranch. [Laughs] I guess he wants to be a cowboy now.

Similar to Maria’s experience, Roxanne also expresses the negative feelings associated with being sexually used by an athlete. Although Roxanne is currently in a relationship with a local baseball player, she recalls a bad experience from late last season:

There was one player last year. Late in the season we started to date a little. He acted like a nice guy and acted like he wanted to date and be friends...you know, maybe get to know each other during the off season, which was totally great for me. I didn’t want to be a “winter wife,” but I thought maybe I could make something of it that would last. But he ended up just wanting sex only and not ever calling me or taking me out. He was getting what he wanted and I was, you know, just waiting for his dumb ass to call. It became like high school, you know, where a guy says, “Yeah, you’re my girlfriend,” but then he finds every excuse not to, you know, be a couple with you while he goes out and does his own thing. To hell with that!

When asked if she had been nervous to arrive at the ballpark this Spring because she might encounter him, Roxanne replied:

Thank God, no. The jerk ended up going to Spring Training with a professional team and I haven’t seen him since. [Laughs] If the news talks about that team at all, I change the channel. I just don’t really want to

know what [Laughs] or *who* he's doing these days. [Emphasis in the original.]

Although both of these narratives share the “winter wife” concept, other good girl groupies similarly express the belief that the athletes treat them as commodities. For example, Melissa, stated that a local baseball player approached her after a game, asking if she'd come to an away team's room and have sex with him and another local teammate. She knew they were both young and new to the organization and to the player she expressed horror at the notion, flatly refusing. She confided, though, that it really didn't surprise her at all and that it was not the first kinky sexual request that had been offered to her. She was also not surprised that, when she said, “No” to his request, the player shrugged it off, as if he could easily find a willing participant elsewhere.

They admit to engaging in such kinky sex and other "deviant" behaviors, but the bad girls reject this concept of exploitation, believing that the control they exercise in the sexual encounters prevents them from being sexually used by players. Heather, 17 years old at the time, relates an experience from two seasons ago:

I had just started to come out to the games and it was the last week of the regular season. I started talking to a guy from the away team and he asked if I'd show him and his friend around town after the game. I agreed and we went out and got totally shitfaced drunk...The three of us finally made it back to their hotel room and we commenced to doing whatever we wanted, sexually, you know. It was like some totally cool porn movie and I was the star. They each took a turn fucking me while I sucked the other one off...But, when Bill wanted to tie me to the bed, though, I said "no way" and we all settled down a little bit. We still had fun and all, but I had enough sense, thank God, to keep things under control. That was a great night.

Becky describes her perception of the sexual situation between groupies and players, asserting that baseball players are so arrogant that they assume God created women

strictly for a player's sexual pleasure and to care for his children. When asked if she is successful in her goal to bed baseball players for recreation, she responds:

Yeah. I am. It's almost become boring it's so easy to get these guys in bed. That's all they want, so it's not much of a challenge, really. Most of them suck in bed, anyway. They think they're God's gift to women, and they just suck. They strut around like they've got big dicks and all kinda skill in the sack, but it's all bullshit. They don't know a clitoris from a cough drop. It's all about them getting off. Wham, bam, thank you, ma'am. They have no clue how to please a woman because they have no need to. [Laughs] They have every dumb assed woman around wanting to fuck them. When you got that amount of pussy lined up around you, you don't have to work at it at all.

Similarly, Lisa frames her sexual experiences with players in terms of personal empowerment:

I decide to play or not. You know, um, I think it's easier at the beginning of the season when no one really knows who you are but, ya know, later on you get a reputation as being easy or kinky and the guys try to come on to you and that's bullshit. I hate that shit. If they act like they want me just to like control my body, they can hang it up. Nah. I don't play that. I choose who gets me...It's not the other way around. These guys think they can get everything or everybody they want and that pisses me off. [Emphasis in the original.]

I then said to her, "Hmmm...it sounds like what they want and what you want aren't the same thing then?" Lisa laughed and replied:

Oh, no. Don't get me wrong....it's the exact same thing. It's sex. I just decide whose getting mine instead of the other way around. These guys expect every woman to roll over for them and they get pretty cocky. If they try that with me, I shut 'em down. The one I want...he's gonna have to work to get my sex.

On the surface, these narratives seem to support Frye's concept of the "willful virgin" who enjoy engaging in sex with men of their choosing on their own terms. She indicates that the word "virgin" did not originally mean a woman whose vagina was

untouched by a penis, but “a free woman, one not betrothed, not married, not bound to, not possessed by any man. It meant a female who is sexually and hence socially her own person” (Frye 1992:133). Bad girl groupies do maintain aspects of the “willful virgin.” However, upon further investigation into the groupie narratives, the bad girls are not “willful virgins” at all as they adopt heteropatriarchal conduct to achieve their seduction goals. These groupies knowingly use their sexuality as a commodity to seduce baseball players, adopting tactics recognized by society as gendered, such as the use of piercing, clothing, and make-up.

In contrast, Frye (1992:134) states that Virgins “do not attire and decorate themselves in the gear which in their cultures signal female compliance with male-defined femininity and which would not form their bodies to such compliance.” Even to the most ardently rebellious bad girl, packaging her sexuality for success remains a priority which, in turn, that further supports the patriarchal objectification and commodification of women.

Sexual Packaging. Good girls and bad girls acknowledge and accept negotiation of sexuality as an aspect of the relationships they form with baseball players. They understand that to get what they want, they must “package” themselves accordingly; good girls, to woo and bad girls, to seduce. When asked about how they present themselves physically to the player, the major concerns for good girl groupies are appropriate self-presentation and propriety. Melissa, a good girl and a junior at a local major university, is only one of many groupies who describe a “fine line” in terms of dress and behavior to woo a baseball player at the ballpark.

I always wear something casual and relaxed, but also sexy. Usually I wear a university sweatshirt or t-shirt that's just a little too tight. I need to make the impression that I'm not just after these guys for their money or whatever. I am in college working on a degree that will land me a good job. I want them to know that...to see that I'm bettering myself and that I'd be a good wife because I'd be economically sound. That may sound stupid, but some of these guys think groupies are just looking for a meal ticket. Not me, though, my clothes and the way I act lets them know that I would be a good wife, not just a gold digger. I also don't want them to think I'm a slut.

Similarly, Katie states:

If I am in a relationship with a player, like I am now, I have to dress that part. I don't go all trashed out. You know, I go for kind of a "pretty" look for him. You know, for him to enjoy me instead of trying to turn heads. I don't want anybody to think I'm a tramp or anything cause there's plenty of them out there.

Clearly, Katie and Melissa suggest that one of the most important aspects of dress and behavior for good girls is attempting to distinguish themselves from the bad girls whose dress suggests a different kind of availability.

In sharp contrast to the good girls, the bad girls dress to impress and they don't shun the negative attention they often receive from wives and other "prudes." Bad girl

Lisa says:

I, uh, like to wear tight and short shorts and tight t-shirts. They catch the players' eyes and everyone else's, too. I always wear heels, too. And a big bow in my hair. They've commented on that a few times. It's sweet and seductive at the same time. They like that combination.

Although she physically packages herself to attract attention to her physical sexuality,

Becky also speaks of the intellectual aspect of seduction:

When I'm on a mission here, I get the guy I want. It's not that difficult. You just have to know all the stats and be able to talk the talk. These assholes are really impressed when you can spout statistics like a

commentator. You know all theirs and they just melt, especially if you can compare them to some schmuck who's worse than they are. If a woman's gonna talk with men in their environment, she better be prepared to talk like they wanna hear her talk. If not, she's just window dressing and he won't see her unless she's the only pussy around at the end of the evening. That's usually not the case, though, so a woman better have her shit together if she wants to be with one of these guys... Sometimes it takes a couple of games, but once you've got their attention, it's usually easy to keep it up. I talk to the other guys on his team and flirt with them a little, letting them know that I'm interested in their buddy or maybe them. You can't just close the door entirely. They usually don't give a shit if they get seconds anyway. I've built up the reputation here as a "pleaser" so it's not uncommon that the guys want to talk to me, but I also have the reputation of being extremely selective. By the end of the second game, the guy I want wants to talk to me and go home with me. I have nice place at the lake and they all find out about that. If you're gonna play, you gotta have the right toys, too.

Such behaviors support Kitzinger and Wilkinson's (1994) condemnation of Frye's

"willful virgin" concept. They assert that regardless of the woman's intentions:

...heterosexual sexual activity repeatedly reinscribes biological and social maleness and femaleness, continually constructing women as women and men as men in order to ensure male dominance and female subordination. In this way, nothing changes: heterosexuality continues to mean what it has always meant under heteropatriarchy, and to serve the same sociopolitical function. (P. 460)

Similar to the 1800s prostitutes who chose to reject the tenets of the Cult of True Womanhood of purity, self-sacrifice, and second-class status behind men and adhering somewhat to the tenets of sexual libertarianism, the bad girl groupie resoundingly rejects modern social dictates, adopting a "me-first" mentality when addressing sexual relationships. Rather than accept a lifestyle based upon patriarchal social norms, the bad girl chooses to live her life at the ballpark as a stigmatized "fallen," yet independent, woman. She knows her actions are condemned by those she encounters, yet she openly flaunts her embraced sexuality and pursues her goals of sexual conquest.

Bad girls do not regret their decisions, yet recognize that their actions are perceived as socially deviant which they believe is unfortunate. They assert that their actions eliminate the sexual double-standard, allowing women the freedoms of sexual conquest and pleasure that men have historically enjoyed and hoarded. They revel in their label of “bad girl,” engaging in promiscuity, feigning or actual seduction of married men, promoting and willfully engaging in deviant sexual acts, and enjoying their sexuality in the manner and with the men they choose.

Sport Groupies as Sexual Deviants

I originally proposed to investigate the topic of social and sexual deviance. As the research progressed, however, I became aware of the incorporation of aspects of groupie “deviance” into other areas of the findings, such as affairs with married players and engaging in sexual acts with two men simultaneously. After completing the interviews however, I believe that the traditional label of “deviant” does not speak adequately to the groupie experiences and would confuse rather than explain their motives and behaviors. Upon conclusion of transcription and coding, I further decided that a discussion of their “deviance” would be unfair to the respondents and would bias studious evaluation of the exchange transactions in which they engage. The focus here is primarily on the imbalance of power in exchange relationships between male athletes and female groupies and the resulting power and status of each party involved in the transaction. A focus on deviance would only minimize and confuse the discussion of exchange and inequity.

Although Gaithier and Forsyth (2000) found that rodeo groupies earn status among their groupie peers by establishing a rating system for their sexual conquests, no

such system or status structure was found among the baseball groupies. The good girl groupies seeking a long-term commitment with a player carefully selected the athlete(s) she chose to pursue based upon personal interests not his position on the team. Bad girls also do not seem to have a rating system; their seduction appears more categorical in nature. While baseball players are elite in the community, the players on the team at this level of play do not seem differentiated from each other in terms of status and power. For bad girls, all sexual conquests equate to a sense of power, however brief. These two situations, however, may emerge from the Round Coyotes Double A level of play. Perhaps where the status of baseball players is even greater, the groupies may respond differently.

Regardless of the reasons, a hierarchy certainly exists among the women within the groupie-athlete subculture. Wives and girlfriends display territorial behaviors toward groupies as the “insider” crowd. Good girl groupies attempt to gain entry into their circle by adopting non-threatening behaviors. Bad girl groupies, however, express contempt for both categories of women, occasionally to the point of seducing another woman’s lover just for spite. The results of these interactions further complicate any potential analysis of deviance. For example, all women interviewed expressed making conscious choices about their social and sexual behavior and the narratives provided reflect their experiences, both normative and deviant. For example, the distinction between deviant and normative blurs when one asserts that the good girls are in fact “good” because they pursue relationships in a normative manner while the bad girls are “bad” because they are sexually promiscuous. However, are the “good” girls guilty of prostituting their sexuality for commodities the man provides while the “bad” girls are simply engaging in sexual

relationships for the pleasure it provides the participants? Because the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior remains ambiguous, I believe that any attempt to evaluate these groupies with a yardstick labeled “deviance” would severely hinder the more appropriate academic evaluation of these exchanges based upon other concepts such as power.

CHAPTER 7

LIMITATIONS

One problem with this research is that the in-depth interview aspect of the project was begun after the season was underway. Many liaisons had already formed or even formed and changed by the time I began talking formally to groupies. Consequently, some habits had become so ingrained in their lifestyles that groupies did not even recognize what they did or did not do before or during games or even why they had made the decisions they made. After many conversations to elicit self-reflection, the groupies exhibited an ability to evaluate their purposes and feelings. If discussions were initiated prior to the start of the baseball season, however, a greater depth of understanding may have been achieved.

Every game must be attended to fully assess the situation numerically in terms of how many times a groupie did or did not attend and the exchange transactions she attempted to make. Although this is by no means a quantitative project, the regularity of observed behaviors would further support or refute the self-reflections offered by the respondents. It is acknowledged that this research is based upon respondent self-evaluation, which was unidimensional, but the added observation would perhaps add more consistency to this report.

More researchers could follow more details of what actually transpired. Although, this project is based upon in-depth interviews, more observations made by a variety of

researchers would add depth and breadth to the study of behaviors observed and evaluated. For example, one player motioned “jacking off” at one groupie who had turned her back on him after a lengthy conversation. From her pleased smile and sexy swagger, one can guess that she assumed her exchange was productive, but the player’s response, an action comically displayed to his buddy, may indicate quite otherwise. An immediate interview of her perceptions of the encounter would provide valuable insight into the social transaction that transpired rather than assumptions made based upon mere observation.

Many conversations with groupies took place outside the structured interviews, but were not recorded. A holistic study of the team’s social environment, including interviews with wives, would enhance the overall understanding of the presence of groupies in relation to the Cheyenne Coyotes as a team. One compounding problem with this concept, though, is the loyalties each group maintains, therefore, a lack of candor is obviously a problem as each group knows that the other is evaluating their social situation and may not speak freely in order to maintain the individual groups’ solidarity. In addition, similar studies of the athlete-groupie relationship such as those presented by Gmelch must be evaluated with the awareness of his obvious bias. Ortiz’s research involving the perceptions of athlete’s wives adds an additional dimension that perhaps fills some of the gaps in this research.

Although some critics may argue that the sample of twelve is too small, one must understand that the pool of potential small groupies itself is small. The respondents in this study *identify* themselves as baseball groupies. The sensitive nature of the subject may have restricted the sample size as well, which can be true when researching any

marginalized group. Increasing the sample size for the purpose of increasing the size numerically would therefore likely dilute the data to include women who may not fit the definition of sport groupie as strictly as those interviewed. Given the complexity of the phenomenon, I believe this would be an unwise compromise.

Another concern may be the racial homogeneity of the sample. Ten of the twelve women interviewed identified as being “white” with one Hispanic and one African American. Although skewed, the racial makeup of the sport groupies interviewed is indicative of the area in which the research took place and is not surprising when viewed in the context of that environment.

As with any research, regardless of intensive preparation and planning compromises and mistakes are made. Based upon the findings, the topic presents an opportunity for additional investigation, for example in other sports, other levels of play, and other geographic locales. These stated limitations serve to acknowledge opportunities for future expansion and improvement for similar research.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to investigate and explain the exchange relationships between sport groupies and players of the Cheyenne Coyotes Double A baseball team. The literature discusses the inequitable exchange relationships that exist between men and women and these findings concur. In American society, men possess greater power and occupy positions of higher status over women. These findings assert that patriarchy continues as the dominant social reality and groupies adopt behaviors and expectations to carve their niche within our male-dominated society.

Although Gmelch asserted that a single type of groupie exists, this research found that two distinct types of groupies exist. Although the groupie's sexuality is the commodity of exchange for both types, the motives and expectations differ widely. Good girl groupies conform to traditional gender roles and codes of sexual conduct. They enter exchange relationships with athletes aspiring to achieve a long-term relationship, ultimately marriage, and the benefits they perceive to be gained from that relationship. Bad girls, on the other hand, rebel against traditional gender expectations. Their decision to enter exchange relationships with athletes reinforces a sense of personal empowerment as they seduce men of high social status. Often critical of the social order, bad girl

groupies acknowledge that their empowerment may be fleeting and they, too, will someday marry and lead more traditionally gender-ordered lives as wives and mothers.

Groupies, good girl and bad girl, express a sense of marginalization from the world of men, typified in this study as the hypermasculine world of sport. External to this world, groupies are therefore viewed by athletes as sexual objects and their sexuality is commodified, an item of exchange. Good girl groupies utilize their sexuality to achieve a social position they believe can only be gained through male athletes, thus perpetuating the patriarchal tradition. Although bad girl groupies rebel against the tenets of patriarchy and express a sense of empowerment as they utilize their sexuality to seduce prestigious men, I assert that they experience false consciousness and by their very actions continue the patriarchal tradition of male dominance.

These findings offer insight into the world of baseball groupies, presenting their relationships with athletes in their own words and offering a sociological analysis of their experiences in relation to larger social structures. Although not generalizable to the larger population, these narratives offer many insights into the exchange relationships between men and women in contemporary American society. In conclusion, as long as the power differential between genders remains imbalanced, women will continue to utilize their physical and emotional resources within cultural norms or as deviants to enter relationships with men to achieve the level and type of power and status they seek.

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APPENDIX A. LETTER OF EXPLANATION

Letter of Explanation

A Study of Motives and Behaviors of Female Baseball Fans considered “Groupies”

I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at Southwest Texas State University at San Marcos. This study is undertaken in partial completion of the course requirements of Sociology 5399A & 5399B, Thesis.

You are invited to participate in a study of female fans considered “groupies” by the definitions below (in a sports context rather than rock and roll). 1. a fan of a rock group who usually follows the group around on concert tours. 2. an admirer of a celebrity who attends as many of his or her public appearances as possible.

I believe some female fans attempt to associate themselves socially with athletes to gain tangible and intangible benefits from the social exchange relationship. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because it is your motivation and behavior that I seek to understand.

You will be one of approximately 15 subjects who will participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take approximately one (1) hour to complete a brief questionnaire that collects demographic data and an interview that asks questions regarding your attitudes about sports and athletes and your behavior in this context.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

You are under no obligation to participate in the study. Your completing and returning the questionnaire and being interviewed will be taken as evidence of your willingness to participate and your consent to have the information used for the purposes of the study. You may end participation at any time. You may retain the cover letter and this explanation about the nature of your participation and the handling of the information you supply.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have any additional questions later, we will be happy to answer them. Thank you for your participation.

Department of Sociology
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666
(512) 245-2113

Connie Brownson, Principal Investigator

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Harold Dorton, Ph.D., Project Supervisor

Signature of Project Supervisor

Date

APPENDIX B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Questionnaire

This information will remain confidential! Please do not write your name on this form. If you are not comfortable with a question, don't answer it.

- 1 Age _____
- 2 Marital Status
 - _____ Never married
 - _____ Married (# of times _____)
 - _____ Separated, not divorced
 - _____ Divorced (# of times _____)
 - _____ Widowed
- 3 # of children _____
- 4 With which ethnic group do you identify
 - _____ African American
 - _____ Anglo American
 - _____ Asian American
 - _____ Hispanic American
 - _____ Native American
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____
- 5 Your highest level of education
 - _____ Have not completed high school
 - _____ High school diploma/GED
 - _____ Some college
 - _____ Graduated from a 2-year college
 - _____ Graduated from a 4-year college
 - _____ Graduated with a Masters degree
 - _____ Graduated with a Ph D , M D , J D etc
- 6 Religious preference
 - _____ No preference
 - _____ Catholic
 - _____ Jewish
 - _____ Protestant
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____
- 7 Political preference
 - _____ No preference
 - _____ Democrat
 - _____ Republican
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____
- 8 Occupation _____
- 9 Approximate yearly income
 - _____ Less than \$10,000
 - _____ \$10,001 - \$15,000
 - _____ \$15,001 - \$20,000
 - _____ \$20,001 - \$35,000
 - _____ \$35,001 - \$50,000
 - _____ \$50,001 - \$75,000
 - _____ \$75,001 - \$90,000
 - _____ \$90,001 or more
- 10 Mother's occupation _____
- 11 Father's occupation _____
- 12 Mother's highest level of education
 - _____ Have not completed high school
 - _____ High school diploma/GED
 - _____ Some college
 - _____ Graduated from a 2-year college
 - _____ Graduated from a 4-year college
 - _____ Graduated with a Masters degree
 - _____ Graduated with a Ph D , M D , J D etc
- 13 Father's highest level of education
 - _____ Have not completed high school
 - _____ High school diploma/GED
 - _____ Some college
 - _____ Graduated from a 2-year college
 - _____ Graduated from a 4-year college
 - _____ Graduated with a Masters degree
 - _____ Graduated with a Ph D , M D , J D etc
- 14 # of siblings _____ brothers _____ sisters
- 15 City & state of birth _____
- 16 City & state of current residence _____

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

What is it about baseball players that you find attractive?

How are athletes different from anyone else?

How do you prepare for games?

How do you act at games?

Tell me about the environment at the ballpark.

What kinds of social interactions do you have with these baseball players?

What rewards do you feel you receive (or perceive you will receive) from these
relationships?

What rewards do you feel the athletes receive (or perceive they will receive) from these
relationships?

Tell me about your family background.

How involved in sports were you growing up?

How does your family background influence your relationships with these athletes?

APPENDIX D. RESPONDENT PROFILES

Respondent Profiles

Audrey, 26, African American, “Good Girl”
Divorced with 1 child
Elementary teacher, B.A. is highest education
Baptist and Democrat

Becky, 29, White, “Bad Girl”
Divorced with no children
Occupation is Car sales; Some college is highest education
Catholic and Libertarian

Christy, 27, White, “Good Girl”
Divorced with 2 children
Riding Instructor, B.S.
Protestant and Democrat

Heather, 19, White, “Bad Girl”
Never married with no children
Currently a college freshman
No stated religious or political preference

Joann, 27, White, “Good Girl”
Divorced with 1 child
Computer sales with H.S. as highest level of education
No stated religious or political preference

Katie, 23, White, “Good Girl”
Never married with no children
Admin Assistant with some college
Baptist and no stated political preference

Lisa, 25, White, “Bad Girl”
Never married with no children
Occupation is waitress; high school is highest education achieved
No stated religious or political preference

Maria, 24, Hispanic American, "Good Girl"
Never married with no children
Graduate student (social work), B.A.
Catholic and no political preference

Melissa, 20, White, "Good Girl"
Never married with no children
College junior, Some college
No stated religious or political preference

Patty, 25, White, "Good Girl"
Never married with no children
Travel Agent, H.S.
Protestant and Democrat

Roxanne, 25, White, "Good Girl"
Never married with no children
Aerobics Instructor/personal trainer, Some college
Lutheran and Republican

Vanessa, 24, White, "Good Girl"
Never married with no children
Web designer, B.A.
Church of Christ and Democrat

VITA

Ms. Connie Ann Pecha Brownson was born in Houston, Texas, on September 29, 1964, to Jack and Kathleen Pecha. She attended Mount Carmel High School in Houston, graduating in 1983. After three semesters at Texas A&M University in College Station, Ms. Brownson enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, completing Boot Camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, in March 1985. After completing training for MOS 1345, Engineer Equipment Operator, at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Ms. Brownson began an 18-month tour of duty on Camp Foster in Okinawa, Japan, in September 1985. Ms. Brownson completed her active duty career stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, and then New River Air Station in Jacksonville, North Carolina, completing her contract in January 1989 as a Sergeant.

Returning to Texas as a Marine Reservist after activation at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, during Desert Storm/Desert Shield, Ms. Brownson graduated from Texas A&M in 1994 with a B.S. in Sociology and was inducted into Alpha Kappa Delta, International Sociological Honor Society. She attended Officer Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia, in 1995, and she returned to Texas permanently as a civilian in March 1997 and entered the Master's program in Sociology at Southwest Texas State University.

Ms. Brownson and her husband, Jim "Stormy" Brownson raise Boer goats and American Quarter Horses on their ranch southwest of Austin. She is employed by the Department of Special Education at The University of Texas at Austin as Graduate Coordinator. They have one daughter, Alexandra.

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This thesis was typed by Connie Ann Pecha Brownson.

