Intramural Ice Hockey Officiating: A Case Study

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The purpose of this study was to develop a portrait of university intramural ice hockey officiating during competition. Over a two year period, various sources of evidence were used, including semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall interviews, non-participant observation, systematic observation, document analysis and validation interviews. The depth of the results is attributable to the multi-faceted methodology. Previous findings relating to the official's role were supported, such as invoking the spirit of the rules and using discretionary decision-making. The most notable discrepancy was related to the stress attributed to sport officiating, which was not found in this intramural setting. Issues related to fair play, decision-making processes and officiating systems were all explored, allowing administrators to postulate similar questions with other programs and officials.

Le but de cette étude était de développer un portrait de l'arbitrage pendant les compétitions de hockey sur glace de calibre intramural universitaire. Pendant deux ans, diverses sources furent utilisées, incluant les entrevues semi-structurées, les entrevues de rappel stimulé, l'observation non-participante, l'observation systématique, l'analyse de documents et les entrevues de validation. La richesse des résultats peut être attribuée à la méthodologie variée. Les résultats précédents portant sur le rôle des officiels furent vérifiés, par exemple pour ce qui est d'évoquer l'esprit des règles et d'utiliser un pouvoir discrétionnaire lors des décisions. Le plus grand écart avec les résultats précédents concernait le stress attribué à l'arbitrage, qui n'était pas présent en milieu intramural. Les questions reliées au fairplay, au processus de prise de décision et au système d'arbitrage furent explorées, ce qui pourrait permettre au personnel administratif de postuler des questions similaires en ce qui concerne d'autres programmes et officiels.

Intramural athletic leagues play a significant role in the university and college life of current students, staff and alumni, providing them with the opportunity to participate in a wide array of supervised athletic events. Graham (1978) foresaw the significance that intramurals would assume, and proclaimed that the changing demographics of the college student population would "result in intramural-recr-
ational programs playing a greater and more important role in the collegiate society” (pp. 17-18). A recent survey revealed the significance of intramural ice hockey in the Canadian university system, within which approximately 19,400 male and female participants were registered during the 1994-95 season (Gilbert, Trudel, & Gingras, in press). The important role these programs now play in the university environment has increased the need for qualified officials (Quick, 1982).

Research has not been done on the behaviours or characteristics of intramural ice hockey officials in particular. However, studies are available on sport officiating in general. For instance, a database on various dimensions of officiating has emerged in recent years. This compilation has relied mostly on questionnaires and surveys. Characteristics of sport officials have been documented, such as their roles (Rains, 1984; Smith, 1982) and requisites for successful officiating (Alker, Straub, & Leary, 1973; Weinberg & Richardson, 1990). Information also exists on the relationship between authoritarian behaviour in the personality of sport officials and the amount of power inherent in their role (Koslowsky & Maoz, 1988; Purdy & Snyder, 1985). One area which has received much attention has been the high levels of stress associated with sport officiating. Various studies revealed factors which impaired the officiating process such as a fear of failure, anxiety due to large and emotionally charged crowds, the constant review process, burnout and stress related to controlling the contest (Goldsmith & Williams, 1992; Phillips, 1985; Taylor, Daniel, Leith, & Burke, 1990).

Although the roles and characteristics of sport officials have been examined, “there appears to be no research that examines the behaviour of officials during competition” (Quain & Purdy, 1988, p. 64). The only related literature are books designed to serve as guidelines for officiating (Clegg & Thompson, 1989; Weinberg & Richardson, 1990). It has been suggested that a more inductive approach is needed to provide greater insight into the phenomenon of sport officiating (Mitchell, Leonard, & Schmitt, 1982).

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to provide a better understanding of intramural officiating by examining officials in their environment. Several questions were formulated prior to commencing the study: (a) What did these officials consider to be the role of the referee? (b) What rationale was provided to explain on-ice behaviors? (c) What factors affected the decision-making processes of officials in action? (d) How did their environment affect their task?

Methods

The Case

A case study design (Yin, 1994) was used as it enabled the examination of the
phenomenon in its real-life context while using various sources of evidence. The Wednesday night intramural body-contact league was selected. This 12-team league was part of one of the largest university intramural ice hockey programs in Canada, with 82 teams and over 1100 men and women participants (Gilbert et al., in press). The university offered both body-contact and non-contact leagues. A body-contact league was selected because research has found a higher incidence of aggressive penalties in this type of league (Boileau, Desharnais, & Larouche, 1986), thereby requiring the officials to make more decisions in the games. The Wednesday night league had four male students as its referees. They usually officiated two or three 50-minute games consecutively. A convenor was also present at all games to operate the scoreboard and to conduct administrative duties with both the teams and the officials. A referee-in-chief and an intramural coordinator were responsible for scheduling games and assigning referees.

The league used the two-person system of ice hockey officiating, whereby two officials equally shared the responsibilities. The officials indicated that their role was multi-dimensional and involved ensuring the safety of participants, maintaining a flow to the game and keeping control of the contest. All four officials were certified by the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA). Three of them had previous experience as referees in the intramural league, while the fourth official had participated as a player. They had a combined total of 34 years of officiating experience (R=7-11). Background interviews revealed that the primary reason for officiating in this league was the remuneration. Secondary reasons for officiating were also cited, including exercise and the love of hockey.

Although physical contact between the players was permitted, specific rules pertaining to fair play and safety were implemented. For instance, a team could receive points based on the outcome, as well as on their behaviour. Each team started every game with six behaviour points, and each minor or major penalty resulted in the loss of one point until the team exceeded the limit set by the league administration. The limit for minor penalties in a game was five and the limit for major penalties was two. This type of point system has been successfully used in other ice hockey leagues as well (Marcotte & Simard, 1993).

**Sources of Evidence**

Intramural ice hockey officials were assessed throughout the 1993-94 hockey season and the first half of the 1994-1995 hockey season with selected sources of evidence: interviews, stimulated recall sessions, systematic observation, archival reports, documents and non-participant observation. The intra-university coordinator, referee-in-chief and the league convenor were also subject to analysis. Table 1 indicates how the various data collection techniques were employed.
Table 1
Data Collection Procedures Used with Different Subjects

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<th>Sources of evidence</th>
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Note. 1 = Referees (n=4) in first year of study
2 = Intra-University Coordinator
3 = Wednesday night Convenor 1993-94 (referee-in-chief, 1994-95)
4 = Referee-in-chief 1993-94
5 = New referees (n=5) in second year of study

The background interview primarily consisted of demographic questions and general officiating philosophies. The general interview was prepared with questions specific to the Wednesday night intramural ice hockey league. In the first part of the interview, the referees discussed their experiences and expectations of this league. In the second part, the officials viewed a videotape from a similar league and commented on the referees’ behaviours. This process allowed both the interviewer and the subject to prepare for the stimulated recall interviews. In terms of qualitative observation, one researcher videotaped the games so that the main researcher could monitor the action and take notes. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria were followed to conduct this form of non-participant observation. The interview protocol was developed based on the main characteristics of stimulated recall interviews (Yinger, 1986). Each official was interviewed between two and four times by the main researcher. The game was replayed in its entirety and the referees were able to stop the tape and discuss an event at any time. In preliminary interviews, the researcher periodically interjected to stimulate discussion. In subsequent interviews, questions were formulated based on an initial analysis of previous stimulated recall sessions. This preliminary analysis was discussed with two associates in weekly meetings in an effort to increase credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These interviews were analyzed through an inductive analysis process whereby categories were continually formed until saturation was attained (Tesch, 1990). This process began after the completion of the first interview and ended after the fifth draft of the category list. The tagging of meaning units from the transcripts of the
stimulated recall interviews and the subsequent sorting process, was facilitated through the use of the HyperQual software application. This software decreased the time needed to complete this part of the data analysis and provided a computer printout of the categories with their related meaning units.

In terms of systematic observation, the instrument used to code the referees' behaviours during the games was a modified version of the Systematic Observation of Refugees' Behaviours coding form (SORB). This interval recording system developed by Trudel, Côté, and Sylvestre (in press) for use with referees in a three-person system allowed researchers to obtain a portrait of ice hockey referees' behaviours in game situations. SORB provided information on the behaviours (e.g., intervene verbally, inform with gestures), together with their objectives (e.g., encourage/advise, signal a penalty) and directions (e.g., players). After several trials with the original version of SORB, four additional categories were needed for use in a two-person system. These new categories were (a) behaviours - retrieve / position, (b) objectives - signal a technical call, (c) objectives - socialize, and (d) direction - partner. The officials were videotaped in 12 games in which a wireless microphone was attached to their uniform in an unobtrusive manner. Coding of the 12 videotaped games was completed by two of the researchers. After a period of training with the observation instrument, two inter-observer reliability tests were done and a third one was completed after half of the tapes were coded. The test used for reliability was the Scored-Interval Method (van der Mars, 1989) and the level of inter-observer agreement for all three of the reliability tests was 94.8% (961/1014).

The four officials and the referee-in-chief were interviewed after the 1993-94 season. They were presented with the results from the modified version of SORB and were asked to comment on the findings. The purpose of these summary interviews was to determine if the results from the 12 games were representative of the other 54 games played in this league. In an attempt to test for factual and interpretative accuracy, and to provide evidence of credibility, a member checking procedure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was conducted after the first year of the study. A portrait of the league and its officials was prepared and submitted to the subjects for a review of its accuracy. Their comments were subsequently discussed in a validation interview session with each individual. The last source of evidence was the archival reports used by the intramural league. They contained information such as number and type of penalties, number of players, goals and assists, and production and behaviour points. Official game reports from all 66 regular season games were analyzed using an established coding system (Audette, Trudel, & Bernard, 1994).

Prior to beginning the data collection, the methods and the instruments were tested with an official from a similar league. The protocol was also discussed with two associates familiar with the project in an attempt to improve the quality of the interview process.
Results

The two year study yielded over 200 pages of interview transcripts, producing a large database of referee knowledge and experiences. The results from each of the sources of evidence were complementary. A constant review and comparison of the data allowed a number of characteristics to emerge which portrayed the context of this intramural ice hockey league. These themes are supported by direct quotations from the interviews and from other sources of evidence.

Characteristics of the Intramural League

The largest amount of information that emerged dealt with characteristics of this intramural hockey league. The extensive data related to this category allowed the researcher to discover the particular nature of the league, as well as the officials' views. Due to the large amount of information collected on the characteristics of the intramural league itself, several sub-categories resulted: two-person system of officiating, specific rules, relaxed atmosphere and communication with players.

The Wednesday night league used a two-person system of officiating whereby both officials shared the responsibilities. The referees and the intramural coordinator stated that a third official was not required in this league due to the low calibre of hockey and the incurred expenses. Although the use of a two-person system was less expensive, the officials and the intramural coordinator noted the increased importance of teamwork with this system.

CAHA rules were used in this league, as well as regulations designed by the intramural league administration. One of these rules was the predetermination of major penalties (7 minutes). This differed from most organized hockey leagues where the referee's discretion determined if a penalty was a major or a minor infraction. The following penalties were considered automatic major penalties: boarding, charging, cross-checking, elbowing, kneeling and checking from behind. The 7-min. penalty rule was implemented to prevent serious injuries and to promote fair play among the participants. It quickly became apparent, however, that the referees were more concerned with the length of the punishment than with the title of the infraction. In fact, they altered their calls accordingly.

The team already had a seven minute major, I never felt this penalty was worth another seven minutes. In the intramural league they have made rules where there are more major penalties than in normal minor hockey and that has taken the decisions away from us which myself as a referee don't like, because to make them short-handed for seven minutes twice and on any goal scored they don't come out of the box, it is very difficult. So instead of calling it checking from behind, I called it roughing, just to make it a minor penalty.
The league convenor supported this procedure, and indicated that many of the major penalties were often changed to minors for roughing.

Sometimes they [referees] would come to me and say “Three minutes for cross-checking,” but they know that is an automatic major penalty. So I have to change that on the score sheet, because I know what he really wants to give him, so that is why you got a lot of those roughing penalties. The call might be elbowing, instead I would put roughing.

Over the course of the season, the archival reports supported the convenor’s statements and indicated that of the 297 minor penalties assessed, roughing penalties were the most common (34%). Major penalties were assessed at a lower frequency with 40 occurrences in 66 games (0.61 penalties/game).

A major theme to emerge was the relaxed atmosphere in which the officials performed their task. The referees didn’t think the players took the league too seriously, and consequently, they felt the same way. An example was the recording of goals and assists. The officials stated that they often did not notice who assisted or even who scored a goal. Despite this, nobody seemed to mind if this information was received incorrectly, as scoring statistics were not kept in this league. The referees also commented on their positioning and physical appearance, always contrasting this league with other minor hockey leagues. In the intramural league there was no pressure to be in the right position as no one came to monitor their performance. The relaxed atmosphere was also revealed in comments made by the intramural coordinator, who stressed that fun and personal satisfaction were more important than individual awards and honours. The officials also claimed that many of the games were boring as many teams were unevenly matched, resulting in one-sided games. This disparity in calibre was confirmed by data from the archival reports. Among the 12 teams in the league, the range in goals scored per game varied from a high of 7.8 to a low of 2.6. One additional characteristic of this league was the occasional absenteeism of the referees. All referees reported that at some time throughout the course of the regular season, they had to referee one or more games by themselves. This occurrence was not considered serious by the officials in question. The relaxed climate of the intramural league was also evident by the ongoing conversations of the officials with spectators and friends during the games. This may have been encouraged by the structure of the arena, which did not have protective glass all the way around the ice surface. However, the officials also spent the majority of their time skating slowly along the boards, thereby allowing them to speak with individuals. Results from the modified version of SORB supported this finding, where monitoring was the most prominent behaviour (55.6%). Monitoring is defined by SORB as: the referee moves slightly or stays at the same place while observing the game action.

Being over by the side of the boards, I’d keep my eye generally on the play.
There isn’t much action going on at that point and I’m easily able to relax and talk to one of the guys over the boards. It helps to break the monotony of the games sometimes.

Results from SORB revealed that the majority of verbal behaviours (76.6%) were directed towards the players. The most common verbal behaviour was to inform the players that the referees were observing the action. Instead of always calling penalties for minor infractions, they preferred to let the players spend more time playing the game. This was also a way for the officials to communicate what was acceptable behaviour on the ice.

I just do it [yell at the players] to make them aware that I’m watching them, just to get them to calm down without blowing the whistle every two seconds. That would just slow the game down.

One interesting finding was the issue of establishing friendly relationships with the players, which facilitated interactions later in the game. This finding was revealed by two of the referees, and has provided outsiders a unique inside perspective of a yet to be discussed officiating strategy.

If you’ve been talking friendly to a guy for two periods, and in the third period he thinks you should have called something and you don’t or vice versa, he’d be less likely to get really angry and take a fit if he knew you as a person, not just a referee.

Perhaps the most intriguing revelation was the presence of a very strong language barrier. This complication could be considered unique to this particular case study, as this intramural league was located in a bilingual (French/English) university. All four of the subjects were anglophones, while both the convenor and the head referee were bilingual. The head referee estimated that 70% of the players in the league were French speaking. At times this limited the officials’ capabilities to fulfill their roles.

Factors Affecting Decision-Making Processes

Numerous factors arose which affected the decision-making processes of the referees. The five factors that emerged were schoolwork, a previous call, the previous game, the score and the location of the infraction in relation to their partner’s position. All of the referees were students with heavy workloads. Sometimes they were more focused on an imminent examination or an assignment, than the present game. The concentration of the referees could also be jeopardized by a previous play or missed call.

If you do that [miss a call] at the beginning of the game, the whole game you are
thinking “Oh, man that should have been a penalty,” and it’s on you for the rest of the game.

Not only do previously missed calls appear to have a lasting effect on the referees, but also events that occurred during the previous game may have played a factor. Many of the officials indicated that they were often tired and lethargic by the third game of the night. However, fatigue was not the only factor, as arguments from previous games also affected some officials in the next contest. Each of the referees noted how the score of the game influenced their decision-making processes. The consensus was that fewer penalties would be called in the last several minutes of a close game as opposed to a one-sided victory.

I admit I don’t always know the score, but I always know if the score is close, especially near the end of the game because you don’t want to be calling a questionable penalty on a team that is down by a goal with a couple of minutes left.

The issue of supporting each other was raised by all the officials. This was most pronounced when they discussed the location of their partner. Although both officials were responsible for all the on-ice activities in the two-person system, ultimately they each assumed control of one zone. They were very careful not to infringe on their partner’s territory, especially when a possible infraction arose. The issue of support and respect was often cited as the reason for not overruling their partner. As one of the referees stated, it would make an official look bad if his partner called the play in their zone. This apparent lack of teamwork was addressed by one official in the validation interview. This official revealed that there were limits to the aforementioned support and respect. The severity of the infraction was a factor when deciding to call a penalty in the other official’s zone.

I think it also depends on the kind of penalty, like tripping right in front of the guy, I wouldn’t call that from way back because maybe he stepped on his stick, but if the guy hauled off and punched him in the head, I would just have to think that the other referee was looking somewhere else or didn’t see it, or both, because how can you miss that? That can’t be mistaken for something else.

**Validation Process**

After the first year of the study, the four officials, the convenor and the referee-in-chief were presented with a preliminary report portraying the league and its officials. This was subsequently discussed with each of these individuals in validation interviews. All six participants believed that the results accurately depicted the Wednesday night intramural hockey league. In fact, one official claimed that the portrayal of the league and the referees was painfully accurate:
As a referee in that league, I am supposed to support the league and do my job so therefore it may be a little bit embarrassing to admit to the observations as it doesn't really make us or the organization look too good on the whole, but I would say that it is really right on in terms of accuracy.

The validation interviews with the referee-in-chief and the league convenor indicated the need for further observations in the field. They claimed that the referees had improved during the 1994-95 season, and a return to the site would demonstrate this. The change in attitude had supposedly resulted in fewer complaints, games starting on time and perfect attendance by the officials. Both the referee-in-chief and the convenor were dissatisfied with the conduct of the officials in the first year of the study. This report only reinforced their suspicions. They also indicated that only one of the original referees was still officiating in the league. The question to answer then became: had the attitudes and characteristics of the officials in the Wednesday night hockey league changed from the previous year? If so, what were the reasons for these changes?

In the second year of the study, the site was revisited and 12 games were observed over a period of three weeks. Information from the validation interviews was specifically examined, including starting times of games, attendance by officials and behaviours of the officials. The examination of the officials’ behaviours and attitudes appeared to agree with the views of the convenor and the referee-in-chief. For example, all the officials’ were on-time and they all had perfect attendance. There was very little discussion with spectators or friends and the officials appeared more focused and in control of the games. This was supported by the low occurrence of arguments or discussions between the players and the officials. Referees followed official protocol, retrieving pucks for their partners and concentrating more on the proper positioning.

Perhaps the most notable aspect that did not change in the second year was the preference by the officials to assess minor penalties as opposed to major ones, even when the infraction specified a major penalty. In fact, major penalties were assessed at an average of 0.17 per game, down from 0.61 per game for the 1993-94 season. It was easy to observe when a penalty was changed, as the official would skate to the penalty box and signal the infraction to the timekeeper. The researcher, being familiar with the signals, quickly discerned whether the penalty was a major or a minor infraction. This was checked by the amount of time the timekeeper placed on the scoreboard. At least four cases were noted where the officials signaled automatic majors and the player subsequently was assessed a minor. At times, conflict between the timekeeper and the officials resulted. The issue of assessing major penalties in this league has remained a controversial topic for the officials.
Discussion

Both similarities and contrasts were evident in the statements made by these officials and those found in other studies. Congruencies with the literature were present in terms of the perception of the role of the official as multi-dimensional. Despite this multi-dimensionality, similarities have occurred with officials across various sports. In the present study of ice hockey referees, similar factors such as maintaining the flow of the game (Rains, 1984), ensuring the safety of the participants (Smith, 1982; Weinberg & Richardson, 1990) and keeping control of the game (Askins, Carter, & Wood, 1981) have emerged. Researchers have noted the importance of judgment for all officials. In Askins, Carter and Wood’s (1981) study of basketball referees, differentiating between formal rules and actual operating procedures represented the type of judgment used by sport officials. They referred to this concept as “invoking the spirit of the rules.” A similar philosophy has been expressed by officials in various sports (Smith, 1982), including ice hockey (Rains, 1984). In the present study, the officials often referred to instances where they had to decide if a penalty was warranted. These situations were similar to those revealed in other studies. It is interesting to note the reasons cited by officials for not calling penalties in their partner’s end of the ice. They mentioned how there were degrees of infractions, and that minor penalties did not warrant overriding their partner. Askins and colleagues referred to this facet of officiating as disattenders. They described spatial disattending as representing “a claim to ignorance about the event in question” (1981, p. 95). This also appeared to take place with the officials in the present study.

Contrasts to earlier research findings are also apparent, such as the officials’ reasons for officiating. Studies from Koslowsky and Maoz (1988) and Purdy and Snyder (1985) revealed authoritarian tendencies in officials. None of the officials in the current study alluded to this. Past research has also revealed that a special attraction to and enthusiasm for the sport were important reasons for officiating (Mitchell, Leonard, & Schmitt, 1982; Purdy & Snyder, 1985). In the present study, the officials were primarily motivated by money. Perhaps this was due to their occupation as full-time students where this income provided them with extra money. The findings from the present study revealed differences regarding stress and officiating. Goldsmith and Williams (1992) listed several stress factors in their research on intramural football and volleyball officials. These included fear of physical harm, time pressures and fear of failure. Football officials perceived more stress from the fear of physical harm than volleyball officials. Officiating in this intramural league was not considered stressful by the officials, and often the task was considered uninteresting due to a lack of action. Goldsmith and Williams also suggested that intramural officials would experience stress from officiating their peers. In the present case, in which the referees also officiated
their friends and classmates, this was not the case. In fact, these officials enjoyed officiating their peers. Several elements previously cited as major contributors to the stress of officials' were absent in this case study. For example, Weinberg and Richardson (1990) found that the presence of a supervisor was intimidating for referees. In the present study, there was no supervision of officials. However, the league convenor is now the referee-in-chief and is scheduled to attend all the games. The presence of large noisy crowds and boisterous coaches were other stressors for officials (Taylor et al., 1990). Again these factors were not present in this league, as there were no coaches and spectators were rarely present.

The results of this case study also exposed aspects of officiating yet to be discussed in the literature. One example, was the factors affecting a referee’s decision-making process. This included previous calls and the score of the game. These have been openly discussed in the media, but not in academic research. Furthermore, other important issues were also raised, including the effects of school demands, officiating multiple games and a strong language barrier between the officials and many of the players.

Conclusions

A case study method was used in an attempt to explore and describe intramural ice hockey officiating. To obtain a valid portrait, many precautions were taken before and during the study. For example, numerous sources of evidence were used to collect the data, pilot studies were done to complete the question guides and improve interviewing skills, and weekly meetings with peers were held to review and improve the data collection process. Finally, the subjects were asked to validate the report. Based on the comments made during the validation interviews, the results presented after the first year were accurate. However, comments from the referee-in-chief and the convenor indicated that the 1993-94 season was atypical, and the attitudes of the officials were a direct reflection on themselves and not the intramural program.

The league administration was cognizant of the conduct of their officials in the 1993-94 season prior to the presentation of this case study. The league attempted to improve its level of officiating and several changes were made for the 1994-95 season. The league made one significant rule change as a result of this study. This concerned the assessment of automatic major penalties. The rule was originally designed to promote fair play and deter players from committing serious infractions; the context of the game, however, altered the apparent benefits of this rule. Seven minutes for a major penalty had a negative effect on the officials who were often reluctant to enforce this rule. Thus, the administration decided to change the length of a major penalty to five minutes.

In the present research, the intramural referees were students officiating to
make money. Their student status jeopardized their work at times because they
were thinking about schoolwork while officiating, or they didn’t show up because
they were completing a school assignment. The officials perceived a relaxed
atmosphere in the league that sometimes affected their officiating. Examples
included resting on the boards or talking to spectators.

The central roles of ensuring the safety of the participants, controlling the
game and maintaining a flow to the contest appeared to be in conflict. Specific
rules were designed to promote fair play, such as automatic major penalties for
certain infractions. In theory, the officials had to call these penalties as majors to
ensure the safety of the participants, but in reality, this did not always occur as too
many penalties - especially majors - would disrupt the flow of the game and could
result in a loss of control.

Other variables affected the officials’ decision-making processes. Whenever a
possible infraction occurred, the official in a two-person system addressed such
questions as: How severe was the infraction? Did it affect the developing play?
How much time was remaining in the game? What was the score of the game?
Was my partner closer to the infraction? Did the team already have one or more
penalties? The processing of this information required an immediate decision;
there was no time for reflection. Even in the relaxed atmosphere of intramural ice
hockey - where there were no coaches and few spectators - the officiating phe-
nomenon was found to be much more complex than it outwardly appeared.

The world of the sport official is a relatively undeveloped area of research.
Descriptive studies, such as this one, must be conducted to further elaborate on the
officiating phenomenon. The methodology employed in this study may be used by
other researchers and the data used for comparison. Interested parties must first
judge for themselves the transferability of these findings to their own context. The
results have practical implications for individuals responsible for implementing
similar intramural ice hockey programs. Issues related to fair play, factors affect-
ing decision-making processes, and officiating systems have been explored here,
allowing administrators to postulate similar questions with their programs.

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