



TITLE: ‘The mummy hat is off!’: playing hockey, being a mum and emotional wellbeing

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Women have been reported to suffer higher rates of depression and anxiety than men. The continued inequality of gendered roles, especially within the family, may provide some social explanation of these mental health differences. As women move through the life course perceptions of self are inevitably conflicted as new roles, such as wife and mother, are undertaken together with their perceived associated expectations. These expectations, such as an ethic of care in motherhood, have been considered as barriers to women’s leisure participation. However, sport may also be a means of resistance to these expectations and enable re-engagement with a pre-motherhood self, enhancing women’s emotional wellbeing. In early findings of an ethnographic study of fifteen women’s experiences playing hockey in a metropolitan hockey club, themes of escape from motherhood, balance and active negotiation, social support and being motherly emerged from participants who were also mothers. These themes are explored in the context of a club based team sport to highlight the conflicts women experience being a mother and playing sport, how they negotiate these conflicts, their understandings of ‘self’ and their emotional wellbeing.