WHY SPORT? AN EXAMINATION OF YOUTH SPORT PROGRAM CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOURS IN CANADIAN ICE HOCKEY PARENTS

by

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Abstract

Participation in youth sport programming has been shown to influence many outcomes associated with positive development in children and young adult populations. Despite this, the waning accessibility of youth sport programs through more expensive and time-intensive activities has made participation increasingly difficult for many children and their families. While many young athletes undoubtedly make important choices when it comes to facilitating their involvement within youth sport, parents could be seen as ultimately responsible for the final selection of youth sport program type and intensity due to their role as primary caregivers and financiers. Although previous work has explored the ways in which the parents of young athletes behave within the youth sport context as well as how these behaviours may influence their children’s sport participation in various ways, little research appears to examine how sport parents make decisions about the types of sport activities in which their children participate. As such, the present study sought to conduct 15 semi-structured interviews with the parents of children participating in recreational, competitive, as well as a high-performance minor ice hockey programs in Canada with the intention of examining what factors might influence their youth sport program choices and what the decision-making processes behind these choices might look like.

It was found that parents encouraged their children to participate in ice hockey programs as they saw the activity as a positive means to foster athletic as well as non-athletic development, to make friends, and because it was something that their children enjoyed. Parents also recognized that, within the Canadian context, ice hockey held specific benefits for their young athletes due to the sport’s popularity when compared to other extra-curricular activities. Despite these benefits however, parents also discussed barriers to participation highlighting the social climate within organizations, excessive travel, and high cost as factors in their unwillingness to remain involved in particular sport organizations. This thesis discusses the practical and theoretical implications of these findings within the context of the extant sport parent and sport psychology literature, potential study limitations, and future directions in the continued exploration of this area.
Co-Authorship

This thesis presents the original work of Alex Murata in collaboration with his supervisor, Dr. Jean Côté. Alex Murata was responsible for the study design, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and drafting of the written thesis document. Dr. Côté provided crucial guidance throughout each stage of the project and oversaw the direction of the final manuscript in preparation for submission and publication.
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AAA: Triple ‘A’ ice hockey, the highest level of play for children under 16.

IPA: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

OMHA: The Ontario Minor Hockey Association

PAF: Personal Assets Framework

  4Cs: The Four Cs (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character)

  3Ps: The Three Ps (Performance, Participation, Personal Development)

PYD: Positive Youth Development
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Context

Researchers interested in exploring the outcomes associated with participation in youth sport programming have identified a variety of benefits available to young athletes across a range of sport activities (Côté, Turnnidge, & Evans, 2014; Larson, 2000; Oja et al., 2015). To this point, several studies comparing young athletes and young non-athletes have suggested that participation in organized sport may act as a vehicle to increase overall physical fitness, enhance social competencies, strengthen work ethic, and support academic achievement in young athletes across a variety of contexts (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010; Jones & Lavallee, 2013; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003).

Despite the potential benefits available to young people through continued engagement in sport, it appears as though participation in youth sport programming has been on a decline in recent years (Gallant, O’Loughlin, Brunet, Sabiston, & Bélanger, 2017; Scheerder, Vandermeerschen, & Breedveld, 2018). A growing body of research attributes this decline to the proliferation of adult-led, professionalized models of youth sport programming and the increasing acceptance of these models as the norm for the contemporary youth athlete (Armentrout & Kamphoff, 2011; Erdal, 2018; Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996). A professionalized sport program or professionalized athletic training trajectory is often characterized by single sport specialization, year-round training, and an emphasis on extrinsic rewards (e.g., winning and performance) over fun, learning, and enjoyment (Gould, 2009).

Researchers have theorized that the volume and intensity of the activities demanded by professionalized sport programs could play a role in threatening athlete health and safety. As
discussed by Merkel (2013), the risk of suffering a sport-related injury might be greater for physically immature individuals due to underdeveloped skeletal structures as well as varied levels of flexibility and coordination—especially during periods of growth. Additionally, as discussed in a position paper put forth by a team of both youth sport researchers and healthcare professionals, it was recommended that year-round sport participation, early return to sport after injury, and early specialization in a single sport should be discouraged to better prevent instances of injury and burnout in young athletes (DiFiori et al., 2014).

Coupled with a heightened threat of injury, Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2009) have suggested that additional factors, such as the pressure of constant competition inherent to professionalized youth sport environments, might have the effect of creating unnecessarily stressful states in young athletes who may not be ready to cope with such extreme emotional challenges. Indeed, in order to cope with their intense and stressful lifestyles as a result of participation in sport, especially at an elite level, many young athletes have been shown to adopt negative health behaviours such as alcohol consumption, increased aggression, overtraining (in the form of vigorous physical activity), and unhealthy weight loss behaviours (Taliaferro, Rienzo, & Donovan, 2010).

In line with this, the potential for negative spillover resulting from youth sport participation has also been shown to have adverse effects on those within close proximity to developing athletes. More than 20 years ago, Côté (1999) suggested that, in order for most young athletes to achieve elite performance or professional status in sport, siblings and parents were required to make significant sacrifices and offer unwavering support to facilitate an athlete’s pursuit of excellence. Today, representative, travel, and school sport programs often encourage young athletes to train and live in ways comparable to that of elite or professional athletes
despite these individuals participating several levels below national, professional, or semi-professional athletic programs (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008).

Further, studies looking deeper into the social lives of many young athletes have described a slow erosion of once positive relationships with the adults around them. Researchers examining how young athletes feel about their parental relationships reported that, in their sample, 15% of young athletes regularly faced angry criticism from their parents related to sport and that 21% of these athletes would prefer their parents to stay home and not watch them play sports (Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, & Power, 2005). In line with these findings, it has been suggested that young athletes may develop strained relationships with both parents and coaches who primarily focus on successes and failures over other metrics such as enjoyment and improvement which, in turn, can often result in premature sport attrition despite an athlete’s ability to still physically play and perform (Brenner, 2016; Cumming & Ewing, 2002).

Although the behaviours displayed by some parents may contribute in creating negative sport experiences for their children, the impact that youth sport professionalization can have on parents themselves is also worth taking seriously. As sport organizations continue to normalize programming that necessitates more practices, more games, more travel, and subsequently higher enrollment fees, parents may struggle to afford (either in terms of money, time, or both) to register their children in sport programs leading young would-be athletes to lose-out on the subsequent developmental benefits that sport previously afforded them (Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011).

When considering all of the issues and barriers to sport discussed above, it is not difficult to understand why enrollment in most sport programs has been on a decline (Priest, Armstrong, Doyle, & Waters, 2008). In Canada, the decline in enrollment is especially visible within the
county’s national pastime and traditionally most popular sport of ice hockey. Enrollment numbers provided by the International Ice Hockey Federation (2019) show a decline in Canadian youth ice hockey enrolment starting from around 721,000 players enrolled in 2014 to 620,000 players enrolled at the end of the 2019 season. While this decline could be attributable to the risk of injury posed to youth through their participation in ice hockey (e.g., Black, Hagel, Palacios-Derflingher, Schneider, & Emery, 2017; Leiter, Cordingley, Zeglen, Carnegie, & MacDonald, 2016; Richmond, McKay, & Emery, 2012) or, perhaps, to a shift in societal norms away from traditional notions of strength and gender (MacDonald, 2014; Watson, Weir, & Friend, 2005), a key piece of the puzzle could be the highly professionalized environment that young ice hockey players are subjected to as mediated by adults within the sport.

1.2 The Present Study

As discussed previously, researchers believe that many young athletes and their families may elect to enter professionalized youth sport programs and pathways due to assumptions that these environments and conditions might be most beneficial in cultivating elite sport performance in adulthood despite their demonstrated drawbacks (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). Following this assertion, Erdal (2018) hypothesized that these beliefs arose primarily as a result of the ways in which youth sport program offerings are marketed to potential participants. When considering the current state of youth sport and, specifically, the state of youth ice hockey in Canada, I am interested in further unpacking some of these messages to see what communications youth ice hockey families, and youth ice hockey parents specifically, are subject to and how these messages might be affecting their behaviour. To engage further with these questions, I borrowed frameworks and literature from the consumer science literature to act as a roadmap in guiding the underlying direction of this project.
According to this literature, the study of consumer behaviour can be understood as the study of activities and processes involved in the purchase of products and services based on an individual’s previous experiences and ideas (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998; Oke, Kamolshotiros, Popoola, Ajagbe, & Olujobi, 2016). As a framework for this project, then, I have conceived of youth ice hockey programming as a *product* available for purchase by parents to be consumed by a family (parents and children). It might be important to note that the purpose of applying this lens to the youth sport context is not meant to reduce organized sport to a simple business enterprise or transaction between merchant and consumer. Instead, if taken as a novel way of examining the youth sport setting, it is hoped that this lens might shed new light on underlying features underpinning parental decisions regarding their children’s organized sport enrollment and, therein, provide new insights related to sport parent behaviour. Thus, this study will investigate sport parents’ sociocultural environments (e.g., family, reference groups, environment), psychological conditions (e.g., motivations, personality, attitudes), and previous purchase satisfaction (e.g., previous sport program products) in an attempt to analyze the factors influencing their youth sport program selection behaviours (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009).

1.3 Purpose

Past research centered on sport parents has revealed that parent behaviours can be analyzed in a variety of interesting and meaningful ways. Besides the few studies discussed previously, however, it is evident that the majority of research on sport parents has been primarily interested in *what* parental behaviour looks like in sport without necessarily engaging in many meaningful discussions examining *why* these behaviours might occur. Perhaps researchers have not sought to explore “the why” of sport parents’ behaviours due to their causes seeming so immediately logical and obvious (e.g., health, competitiveness, scholarships). Yet,
given the sacrifices that many parents make in order to sustain their children’s participation in youth sport as well as the complex socio-cultural climate in which they make these decisions, I believe that there is much more to be learned about the sport parent experience. Learning more about the sport parent experience may, in turn, deepen our understanding of why parents behave in the ways that they do, enhance our ability to develop appropriate youth sport programs, and contribute overall to the betterment of the youth sport context.

1.4 Research Questions

The study of consumer behaviour has been described as the examination of factors that shape and influence an individual’s consumption behaviour in different environments (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018). Upon considering this definition, I wondered whether it could be interesting to investigate the environments and conditions of youth sport to see how factors present in those contexts might influence parents’ consumption behaviours—in this case, their choice of sport program for their child. As such, the development of my Master’s thesis topic was guided by the following research questions: (a) “Why do parents choose ice hockey as an extra-curricular activity for their children?” and (b) “How do parents make decisions about enrolling their children in specific ice hockey programs?”

In the sections that follow, I will review relevant academic materials related to youth sport parents and investigate the limited literature discussing consumer behaviour within the area of youth sport. Next, I will detail this project’s methodology and procedure, and, finally, present all research findings in full.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

When delving into the literature looking at sport parents, it appears as though the majority of research could be grouped into three broad categories: (a) the role(s) that parents play in youth sport participation, (b) the behaviours exhibited by sport parents, and (c) the ways in which parents’ negative behaviours can be addressed and adjusted. In this section, I use these three broad categories to provide a brief overview of what is currently known about sport parents and about sport program selection before delving into the consumer behaviour literature as it applies to this project.

2.1 The Role of the Sport Parent

2.1.1 Parents as investors. For parents who decide to enroll their children in sport, often, this decision requires a certain level of financial investment. In Hartman’s (2018) examination of sport pay-to-play models, the author suggests that, for a middle-class family making $50,000 to $70,000 dollars per year, upwards of 10% or more of that annual income is frequently invested in a single child’s sport participation (i.e. fees) for a single season. Although some parents perceive sport as a means to promote positive health behaviours in their children, other parents have expressed concern that the high registration fees (in addition to tournament, equipment, and travel costs) associated with youth sport programs represent poor value for the outcomes that their child could potentially achieve (Hardy, Kelly, Chapman, King, & Farrell, 2010).

However, for many sport parents, the notion and practice of investing in their children’s sport participation is normal. Given this normalization, Dunn, Dorsch, King, and Rothlisberger (2016) attempted to gain a better understanding of parents’ ‘investing’ habits and the ways in which this practice of ‘investing’ might impact the familial unit as a whole. Specifically, these
researchers examined the outright financial impact sport participation could have on families, the degree of pressure that young athletes might feel as a result of this large investment, and the levels of enjoyment and commitment that young athletes exhibited at certain levels of investment. The researchers found that the higher the percentage of familial income going towards sport participation, the higher the athletes in this study rated their feelings of negative pressure and the lower they rated their levels enjoyment. Despite these findings, levels of athlete commitment were not affected by annual familial sport spending, which indicates that, although the sporting experience may have been less enjoyable, these athletes still maintained a steady level of dedication.

2.1.2 Parents as opinion leaders. In addition to investing in their children as young athletes, sport parents—whether intentionally or otherwise—may contribute to their children’s perception of their own abilities and/or belonging as young athletes. In some cases, because young athletes do not always know what they require from their parents in terms of emotional or personal support, conversations between athlete and parent might be rare or ambiguous, which can reinforce incongruent beliefs and goals between parent and child (Kanters, Bocarro, & Casper, 2008). Further, researchers found that parents were not necessarily experts in reading or understanding their child’s subjective experiences. In these cases, what parents may view (and intend) as supportive behaviours may actually be interpreted or experienced as pressure or disappointment by the child (Kanters et al., 2008).

In a similar study, Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Oliva, Amado, and Garcia-Calvo (2013) examined the impact of a parent’s evaluation of their child’s sport performance, paying attention to the ways in which this evaluation shaped the child’s motivation for continued participation in sport. These researchers found that a parent’s assessment of task motivation with
regard to sport was positively correlated with their child’s assessments. This is a significant finding as it suggests that children may form self-assessments based not necessarily on objective measures, but rather on the opinions and feedback that they receive from their parents. Consequently, if not managed carefully, sport parents may communicate or behave in ways that inadvertently damage their child’s relationship to and experience of sport. Given the inverse relationship between what parents believe they offer their children versus what their children actually experience, more research could be done to better manage parental attitudes, improve parental communication, and strengthen supportive parental behaviours.

2.2 Sport Parent Behaviour

When considering the results of the studies reviewed above, it seems evident that sport parents can significantly influence how their children will perceive their sporting experience. As a result, ensuring that parents are behaving in supportive, non-harmful ways could be a means to improving the overall experience of sport for young athletes. Currently, when describing the behaviours of sport parents, at least within the North American sporting context, it could be argued that two distinct (and contrasting) behavioural archetypes stand out.

2.2.1 Healthy support. The first archetype describes parents as unwavering pillars of support who often overextend themselves and their families in the pursuit of their children’s achievement of elite sporting success (Côté, 1999). Here, Côté found that during what were deemed as the investment years (a stage in adolescence when young athletes tend to specialize and train seriously in a single sport), often the sport activities of the developing athlete become central to all family activities. Parents also tend to adopt more supportive roles (e.g., trainer, advisor) and take on more emotional labour and stress as a result of their relationship with their child athlete. Gould and colleagues (2008) found similar patterns of behaviour through their
examination of the perceptions that tennis coaches had of their athletes’ parents. The coaches felt that the parents of their club-level athletes were extremely committed to their children’s sporting careers and demonstrated this through their willingness to sacrifice their own personal time, contribute financially to their child’s tennis programs, and advocate for their children’s development both on and off of the court.

Even in more recreational sporting environments outside of the tennis club and national developmental streams, healthy support behaviours can still be observed. In Holt et al.’s (2011) examination of the specific barriers to sport faced by families of lower socio-economic status, the primary issue encountered was time commitment—not necessarily financial cost. For these families, who frequently used public transit or other alternative means of transportation rather than a family-owned vehicle, travelling to sport sessions was difficult, and sometimes impossible. In terms of financial cost, however, parents in these families still reported making sacrifices in order to pay registration fees for their child’s sport. What is more, these parents often took responsibility for their family’s socio-economic status as if socio-economic status and other inequities are not shaped by powerful structural forces. For example, some parents claimed that they could do more to “help themselves” to access sport, or even make more personal sacrifices for their children’s sporting development.

Why though, do parents commit to such extreme views when it comes to facilitating successful sport participation for their children? In a study conducted by Trussell and Shaw (2012) looking into this question, the research team concluded that parents may feel compelled to invest in their child’s sport participation to demonstrate their moral worth as care-givers. The authors suggest that success in sport within some parental circles may function as an indicator of high commitment to optimal child-rearing. The parents interviewed by these researchers seemed
to feel that sport would benefit their children through the teaching of lessons related to character-building, teamwork, responsibility, co-operation, and other traits that would prepare them to be successful in their adult years. Thus, these parents hoped to show, through investment of both their time and finances, that they were willing to provide the best opportunities to their children as they themselves judged other parents as “good” or “bad” by the provision of opportunities that they were able to provide.

2.2.2 Interference. As evidenced by the studies above, sport parents are often motivated to keep their children involved in sport and will go to great lengths to do so. While many of the papers discussed previously focus on the potential for positive outcomes of parental involvement in sport, it is evident that the results of sport parent behaviours can often, unfortunately, be much less positive. As discussed by Smoll, Cumming, and Smith (2011), frustrated sport parents can be seen as, at best, overbearing as well as controlling when it comes to their child’s sport experience and, at worst, prone to exhibit behaviours that could be deemed highly antisocial or even abusive.

Cumming and Ewing (2002) grouped these emotionally overinvolved parents into two categories, namely: excitable sport parents and fanatical sports parents. Excitable sport parents are described as typically loud and emotionally triggered by instances affecting their child (e.g., penalties, injuries, victories, and defeats). These parents clearly care about their children but express their emotions and concerns in ways that may be perceived as distracting or embarrassing to their young athletes. Fanatical sport parents also appear to care a great deal about their child’s sporting experiences but behave in ways that may hinder the achievement of any positive developmental outcomes that their children could otherwise attain. Fanatical parents are described as controlling, confrontational, preoccupied with winning and losing, and may
often have unrealistic expectations for their children when it comes to their sport advancement and achievement.

Fanatical parental behaviours become a more troubling issue when they spill over from the sports arena out into the everyday world. Tamminen, Poucher, and Povilaitis (2017) illustrated this by interviewing young athletes about what a typical car ride home with parents following sport activities can look like. They found that, while some athletes view these temporary spaces as a venue for support and positive feedback, more often than not, the goals of parents and the outcomes experienced by their children through regular car-ride “debriefs” may prove incongruent. Here, similar to the findings described previously by Cumming and Ewing (2012), young athletes reported feeling that they had to ‘endure’ or ‘wait out’ these conversations with enthusiastic parents as a captive audience after practices or games. Further, the authors suggested that these conversations could contribute in negatively influencing an athlete’s enjoyment of sport, their sport performance, as well as their motivation to continue playing sports in the future.

From a more practical perspective, fanatical parent behaviour has also been shown to directly impact the perceptions that coaches have of young athletes and their families. In a focus group of youth sport coaches led by Wiersma and Sherman (2005), it was revealed that parents who overemphasize winning, complain about coaching decisions, and attempt to discuss strategy with coaches can affect the probability of their child being selected by that coach in the future. Responses from the members of the focus group seemed to indicate that coaches believe a group of ‘good’ parents can often correlate to a ‘good’ or successful season, participants even stating that: “We all know that...the better your parents, the better your team is going to be” (Wiersma & Sherman, 2005, p. 330). Omli and LaVoi (2009) also note that any time conflict, specifically
anger, occurs in sport between adults, such as between parents and coaches, children are often left feeling distressed long after the conflict itself has ended.

2.3 Behaviour Change and Best Practices

It is evident that the adults involved in youth sport have a responsibility to ensure their behaviours do not create negative environments or experiences for the children involved in their programs. As such, researchers have begun to explore the ways in which interventions may be used to help sport parents alter their behaviours in order to create more positive and functional sport experiences for all parties involved.

Looking at the environmental make-up of any particular sporting context could prove useful to understanding what kinds of behaviours parents might exhibit and how to address them. According to Knight, Dorsch, Osai, Haderlie, and Sellars (2016), the interaction of six major factors of a particular sporting context are important in understanding how parents will behave and what role they will assume within a given environment. The environmental features they identified were (a) the context (level of sport), (b) the other parents and coaches, (c) awareness of their own behaviours, (d) personal knowledge of the sport, (e) previous experience (familiarity), and (f) their expectations and beliefs of their child. Armed with this knowledge, the research team suggested that perhaps sport programmers and coaches could work together to optimize environments for the facilitation of supportive and positive parental behaviours. Making parents aware of their behaviours and increasing their personal knowledge of the sport they are involved in were suggested as two easy ways to identify and address these issues.

Harwood and Knight (2015) also sought to improve sport parent behaviours. To do so, these researchers reviewed the literature on sport parent behaviours and created six postulates for programmers attempting to build parent education programs to follow. They suggested that
parents should be educated to: (a) select appropriate sporting opportunities, (b) apply appropriate
parenting styles, (c) actively manage emotion during competition, (d) actively attempt to foster
healthy relationships, (e) recognize and manage organizational demands associated with sport,
and (f) be willing to adapt behaviours to different settings and scenarios.

Although behavioural guides such as those discussed above are a positive start, it is clear
that more research must be done to address the ways in which sport parents shape the sport
experience for young athletes. For meaningful progress to be made, researchers assert that any
changes in behaviour will take active labour and high levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal
development from sport parents themselves (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Devoting continued
research efforts into understanding more clearly what specifically sport parents want and why
they behave in the ways that they do may be a useful endeavour in the pursuit of creating optimal
sporting environments both for children hoping to develop into capable athletes and for parents
hoping to develop the next generation of healthy adults.

2.4 Sport Program Selection

Trussell and Shaw’s (2012) inquiry into the sport parent experience sought to answer this
call for more person-centric approaches to research. The authors looked to explore the reasons
why parents enrolled their children in sport, the barriers they encountered, and what sport meant
to their (i.e. the parents’) identity as caregivers. They found that participants involved in their
study were often willing to alter family budgets and sacrifice personal time for their child’s sport
participation as a result of perceiving these actions as indicators of good parenting. Specifically,
these participants seemed to feel as though sport would help to prepare their children for
adulthood and that their moral worth as parents could be proven through displays of visible
engagement as well as self-sacrifice through the provision sporting opportunities for their children.

Similarly, in a focus group study conducted by Wiersma and Fifer (2008), many participants reported experiencing joy as a result of observing their child develop and grow through sport participation. Within their discussion with participants, researchers recognized that distinct benefits were not only afforded to the athletes enrolled in youth sport programming (e.g., skill acquisition, confidence, sportspersonship), but that the parents of these athletes may also gain something through their child’s sport participation (e.g., observation of growth, social development, time spent with child). Despite this, parents also reported negative feelings when describing the barriers and recurring challenges they came up against within youth sport programming, including: quality of programming (organization, poor coaching and officiating), inequality within programming (selection and playing-time politics, unfair play), and the subsequent provision of support. Here, it seemed that parents, although not physically out on the playing surface, were similarly affected by the various aspects of the youth sport program environment that their children were a part of and that these experiences contributed in shaping the entire family’s perceptions of particular sport programs and settings.

When considering the findings described above, it seems apparent that well-meaning sport parents may be making decisions related to the selection of youth sport programs and environments to best benefit their children. What parents might subjectively perceive to be beneficial, however, appears to drive and dictate the outcomes associated with these decisions. Indeed, in a recent study conducted by Wright (2017) it was found that parents scoring high in indicators of perfectionism were more likely to have their children participate in professionalized sport programs before they reached their teenage years. Additional findings appeared to indicate
that this group of parents felt that specializing early in a single sport would give their child the best chance of being a successful athlete within their sport of choice. In contrast to this, parents hoping to achieve different outcomes have been shown to seek out different programs. As described by Vierimaa, Turnnidge, Bruner, and Côté (2017) in their examination of a meticulously governed recreational youth basketball league, generations of family members had sought enrollment within this context due to the league’s intentional privileging of fun and relationship-building over competition.

Through an examination of the literature discussing what factors could influence parents in enrolling their children in specific sport leagues and programs, what has become apparent is the idea that while, presumably, parents encourage their children to play sports in an effort to promote physiological health and social development, additional factors such as a desire to be perceived as morally good, competent, caring, and capable in their roles as parental figures might also play a role in the sport parent decision-making process. With this in mind, it could prove useful to conceptualize parents as consumers of youth sport programs, perhaps not to the same extent as athlete participants, but nevertheless as unique consumers, in order to further explore the behaviours observed within this population.

2.5 Consumer Science and Consumer Behaviour

2.5.1 Consumer behaviour. Broadly, consumer behaviour can be thought of as the study of any processes associated with an individual’s or a group’s selection, purchase, usage, or disposal of products, services, ideas, or experiences (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg, 2006). Due to the complex and multi-faceted interactions involved within this process, modern approaches in the study of consumer behaviour have drawn on perspectives from a variety of disciplines including psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, and neuroscience
(Stephens, 2017). Within the discipline of psychology, the study of consumer behaviour is generally taken up by behavioural, cognitive, and social-psychology researchers interested in the ways in which information is gathered by the mind, processed, and then utilized in the behaviour of consumption (O’Shaughnessy, 2013). This process is further detailed by Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) through their simple model of consumer decision making (see Figure 1). Within this model, consumption is thought to occur as a result of external influences acting upon individuals over time, constantly shaping their opinions and perceptions of the outside world and the consumable items within it. Directly following a purchase of any kind, new information is added to an individual’s purview that acts to form fresh associations known as post-purchase assessments. These assessments are then stored as information to further shape consumers’ opinions and perceptions which continue to influence future patterns of consumption and decision-making as more purchases are made and assessed.

**Figure 1**

*A simple model of consumer decision making (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009).*
2.5.2 Parents as youth sport program consumers. As discussed previously, an argument can be made to conceptualize youth sport programming as a product purchased for both the benefit of the young athletes participating as well as for the parents watching on the sidelines or in the stands. This point is taken up by Pugh (2009) in their text looking at the ways in which childhood has become commodified in the Western, ‘developed’ world. For the author, the consumption of contexts such as day-cares, schools, and neighborhoods for the purpose of potentially shaping a child’s future can be conceptualized as instances of *pathway consumption*. When conceived of in this way, it is apparent that, for the parent-consumer, certain pathways or trajectories could be conceived of as more precious or valuable in setting a child up for future success than others. As with any other commodity available for purchase, Pugh laments the fact that, should a market deem commodities (e.g., education or even safety) to be perceived of as valuable to consumers, the cost of that commodity will inevitably increase.

As it relates to youth sport, the consumer behaviour literature has not appeared to have adopted the ideas put forth relating to pathway consumption in sport parents. Work from Andrews (2011) for instance, suggests that the creation of messages directed at youth which convey the fun, challenging, and non-threatening nature of youth sport programming could be effective in bolstering participation. Likewise, Funk’s (2017) creation of the Sport Experience Design Framework for Consumer Behaviour focuses exclusively on the perspective of the sport program user. Funk suggests that the specific needs of a program consumer along with their assessments of previous program experiences should be considered in tandem with the goals of the sport organizations in the formation of more effective sport programs and settings. Similarly, in a position paper by Funk, Mahony, and Havitz (2003), it was recognized that future research in the growing field of sport consumer behaviour must broaden its scope along the lines of
method, content, and collaboration; however, their consideration of what a sport consumer might look like, the author’s definitions were limited to sport program participants and sport spectators (i.e. people who purchase a ticket to attend sporting events). Likewise, in a study by Fernandes, Correia, Abreu, and Biscaia (2013) exploring the effect of sport commitment on sport consumption behaviours, a similar issue was encountered in that participants were asked to simply report on their own behaviours and their own perceived commitment to sport. Here, researchers used a four-question measure assessing commitment to sport to see if a relationship between levels of sport commitment influenced sport media consumption, participation in sport, and the purchase of sporting goods. At the end of the investigation, it was found that a higher sport commitment was associated with increased sport spending in each area. Adopting the model created by this research team might prove fruitful for future research on sport parents if the questions and measures were adjusted to focus on parent perceptions and beliefs related to their children’s outcomes while simultaneously considering their own. Commitment to sport could be an interesting and fruitful metric to consider within this area of study as many questions have been posed in the past regarding parents living vicariously through their children in this domain (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

2.5.3 Media influences on youth sport. Although youth sport organizations do not typically advertise programing or services directly to their target audience, messages related to sport program consumption are plentiful in the mass media space. In the Canadian context specifically, advertisers have utilized the popularity surrounding ice hockey since the days of radio broadcasts to market products and services (Whitson & Gruneau, 2012). Today, ice hockey’s omnipresence in Canadian media is reflected through brands such as Tim Hortons and Timbits Hockey, Chevrolet and Chevrolet Safe and Fun Hockey, and McDonald’s’ Atomic
Hockey. In each case, a company from outside of the hockey world has endeavored to align itself with the development of young hockey players through the sponsorship of various leagues, clinics, and camps. This alignment between corporate brands and sport is a common strategy that successfully allows brands to take on the dominant, positive brand dimension of their sponsored entity while still maintaining their original character (Rutter, Nadeau, Aagerup, & Lettice, 2019).

An example of brand alignment specific to youth ice hockey was outlined by Caswell and Hanning (2018) in their study examining the food-related perspectives of youth ice hockey players. Here, the authors expressed concern over the apparent influence that brands have over the food perceptions of children involved in ice hockey simply by advertising alongside hockey-related programming (e.g., the often-skewed appropriateness and health value of specific restaurants and products).

The kinds of media messages deployed within the sporting context are also important to consider. For example, work from Lee and Heere (2018) highlights how college sport fans responded when presented with different sport marketing messages (i.e. messages that were emotionally targeted, rationally targeted, and a combination of emotionally/rationally targeted). Researchers found that emotionally laden images and messages were most effective in generating positive brand perceptions, creating purchase intentions, and influencing merchandise consumption. A possible explanation for this, as discussed by Funk, Jordan, Ridinger, and Kaplanidou (2011), is the simple idea that, save for equipment, events, or playing time, sport is inherently an intangible product, therefore advertisers and promoters must focus on selling the benefits felt as a result of being involved in sport or the feelings associated with a sporting atmosphere. This is further complicated when considering the positionality of parents as consumers within the youth sport marketplace. Messages related to how participating in youth
sport makes parents *feel* and the benefits that sport can have for their children are highly visible; however, if these messages are linked to products other than the youth sport programs themselves, where does that leave consumers? Additionally, given that sport parents will not necessarily feel or experience the direct benefits of the youth sport programs which they are purchasing, how might that level of disconnect affect their attitudes and experiences within the youth sport context?

### 2.6 Literature Review Summary and Next Steps

Throughout the course of this chapter, literature focused on youth sport parents, consumer behaviour, and the small overlap between each was highlighted and discussed. Although an existing gap within the literature will hopefully be addressed through the completion of this thesis project, admittedly, the impetus for conducting this research stemmed from personal involvement within the youth sport context as a youth ice hockey coach and a desire to troubleshoot some common issues epidemic within that context. As is well publicized within Canadian youth ice hockey contexts as well as in Canadian media, conflicts between parents and coaches, parents and program administrators, parents and officials, as well as parents and other parents are unfortunately quite commonplace. As outlined by Bean and colleagues (2016) through their work conducting semi-structured interviews with hockey insiders,¹ it was suggested that parental overinvestment within the youth ice hockey context exemplified through an over-stepping of boundaries with coaches and officials and through the encouragement of aggressive behaviour has been shown to create negative experiences for all involved. Having

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¹ Hockey insider was defined as an individual who had experience within the elite minor hockey context (representative or travel) and/or within the elite adult hockey context (junior, collegiate, professional). Insiders might have inhabited a diversity of hockey roles including: athlete, parent, coach, official, and/or media.
experienced this firsthand in the past and as a newly accepted graduate student, I decided to look at what the science had to say regarding this issue.

Although I believe that important scholarship has been dedicated to this topic in the past, I aim to undertake a slightly different approach than what has been seen previously through my investigation of the sport parent subject. This small departure lies in my desire to bring parents into the conversation and to open dialogues among all stakeholders involved in the youth sport program equation. To do this, I saw an opportunity to place parents in a greater position of power than what they traditionally occupy in youth sport research and practice, that being in the role of consumer. As active consumers of sport programming rather than external threats to program successes, I hope to shed new light on some of the common issues seen within youth ice hockey culture through the formulation of suggestions and actionable steps which could be taken by all stakeholders to better leagues, programs, and arenas for all.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the why behind sport parent behaviours within the youth sport context, instead of simply describing what these behaviours appear to be. Thus, the two primary research questions guiding the direction of this study are: (a) “Why do parents choose ice hockey as an extra-curricular activity for their children?” and (b) “How do parents make decisions about enrolling their children in specific ice hockey programs?” It is hoped that findings generated through this process might add at least some small, useable perspectives to the understandings that practitioners and parents have of each other as they continue to work towards the betterment of the youth sport landscape in the future.
Chapter 3

Methods

3.1 Positionality

I am interested in the questions posed in this thesis project as a researcher and as an ice hockey participant. I have been participating in ice hockey as a player from an early age in both recreational and high-performance contexts. Additionally, I have remained connected with the youth ice hockey community through various opportunities offered to me to instruct and coach current, developing players. At this time, I am involved as a coach for three boys’ youth ice hockey teams. For these reasons, I pursued this research project, equipped with a somewhat intimate understanding of the culture and norms embedded within the sport of ice hockey.

As described by Chavez (2008), this unique positionality as a partial insider (i.e. a researcher sharing several identities with participants) within the context of the project, if left unacknowledged, could potentially compromise the quality of any potential results due to an obstruction or co-opting of the researcher role. This might look like a blending of the researcher-participant roles or a straining of the researcher and community member relationship. As a coach embedded within some of the community groups that I was looking to source for my data, there was also the issue of potentially creating a harmful power dynamic through both the recruitment and data collection stages of the project. As a result, participants could potentially feel coerced into participating in the study or might exhibit instances of selective response bias.

To mitigate the issues associated with my unique positionality, I had the help of a variety of colleagues and mentors in the academic community. Throughout each stage of the project’s proposal process, I received invaluable insights, suggestions, and feedback that led to the strengthening of the project’s methodology and scope. To begin, I worked closely with my
supervisor, Dr. Jean Côté, over several months to negotiate how best to mitigate potential biases that I might bring to the project and to develop a methodology that might best reduce power imbalances associated with the researcher-participant relationship. Next, I presented a proposal of the project to conference attendees at the 2019 Eastern Canadian Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium in March of 2019 and, following feedback from this presentation, I presented a finalized version of my proposal to members of my thesis committee at Queen’s University in April of 2019.

Although, admittedly, a variety of risks are evident with regard to the proximity between participants and researchers through shared community or cultural groups, it is also apparent that these unique relationships might benefit the research process in several ways. As discussed by Greene (2014), having an insider or partial insider perspective allows researchers to more easily orient themselves within the research environment, ask more meaningful questions, more effectively blend into the research setting without disturbance, and be granted access to individuals as well as information more readily and intimately compared to non-insiders. Insiders or partial insiders are also said to be better equipped to build rapport, legitimize themselves, and bring a more nuanced frame of reference to the observation and interpretation of results (Chavez, 2008). Indeed, I believe that my current role within my community of interest’s minor youth ice hockey program afforded me easier access to a variety of interested individuals and many deep discussions with participants to which I may not have had access as an outsider.

3.2 Philosophical Frameworks

Due to both my positionality as well as the nature of this study’s objectives and research questions, a relativist ontological perspective was adopted to guide this project. A relativist view assumes that no objective, singular reality or truth exists and, instead, posits that specific realities
or worldviews exist as a result of compilations or constructions of experience, specific histories, and external factors such as societal and cultural contexts (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014). Here, it is assumed that the unique, lived experience brought to the youth hockey context by each participant would provide rich insights into how the common, shared environmental context of interest might be interpreted uniquely by individuals through their personal histories, contexts, and subjective worldviews.

Epistemologically, a social constructionist lens was applied for the collection and processing of participant knowledge that informed the foundation of this research project. As such, the knowledge I sought was assumed to be actively constructed by participants through their engagement with various objects and environments in the world (Chamberlain, 2014). Through this lens, any knowledge presented through the research process was, therefore, thought to have been generated collaboratively by both the participant and researcher (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014).

Finally, this project adopted methodological and analytical approaches from Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Researchers implementing IPA aim to capture and describe psychosocial knowledge related to an individual’s internal psychological state—generally stemming from a personal, lived experience (Eatough & Smith, 1999). The methods and procedures associated with IPA are designed to explore data and knowledges related to the meaning individuals attach to lived experiences with a specific focus centered around what these experiences were like (Ormston et al., 2014). Thus, this methodological approach aligns well with the objectives of my study, given that I aim to investigate how the parents of young ice hockey players experience the youth hockey context, with specific attention to what they experience as positive or negative.
3.3 Project Design

Being of an exploratory nature, this project followed an inductive, cross-sectional design and employed qualitative methods of inquiry. As discussed by Stebbins (2001), an exploratory design is most appropriate when few studies on the chosen topic have been completed previously. Because exploratory studies often focus on understudied or novel phenomena, they often exist as precursors to large, deductively oriented research programs and, as a result, are generally best suited to address research questions inductively without the use of hypothesis testing or predictive, quantitative research methods (Shaffir, Stebbins, & Turowetz, 1991).

As previous research examining ice hockey parent perceptions of specific sport programs is limited, this project used semi-structured interviews with parents to obtain a view of their personal thoughts and experiences within youth sport. The project’s interview guide was developed using Schiffman and Kanuk’s (2009) three stage framework of consumer behaviour with interview questions adapted to specifically examine youth ice hockey context-specific consumer behaviours. Analysis was performed by inductively generating themes and sub-themes from the interview transcripts.

3.4Participants

In total, 15 parents consented to participate in this study. Each parent identified as a primary caregiver of a child who had participated in an Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) sanctioned youth ice hockey program during the 2018-2019 ice hockey season and each had attended multiple sessions of their child’s ice hockey program during the previous year. Only parents with children enrolled in the “Atom” (children aged nine and 10), “Pee-Wee” (children aged 11 and 12), or “Bantam” (children aged 13 and 14) divisions during the previous ice hockey season were selected. While it has been theorized that participation in multiple, less
competitive sporting environments could be most beneficial for children within this age demographic, it is nevertheless common that at approximately these ages, single sport specialization and/or elite sport participation occurs, or has already occurred (Côté & Vierimaa, 2016; Côté, Lidor, & Hackford, 2009; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003). Therefore, parents with children within these age brackets were of interest due to the many transitions that the children may be experiencing during this period of development (e.g., transition into puberty, transition out of elementary school).

Of the 15 total participants, seven identified as inhabiting the parental role of mother (or “mom”), while eight identified as inhabiting the role of father (or “dad”). No current or former participant partners or spouses were included in this sample to ensure that the perspectives from 15 independent households were represented within the data. Recruitment for this study took place within a mid-sized Canadian city between May and August of 2019. Three local, independently-governed minor hockey programs were in operation within the region in which this study took place. Each program progressed in competition level from a purely recreational house league operation to a mid-sized mixed house league and representative association and, finally, to a purely competitive ‘AAA’ association (described below as Recreational Competition, Mixed-Competition, and Elite Competition, respectively). To representation from each league, parents from each association were recruited purposefully in hopes of gaining equal representation across both parental role as well as program type (see Table 1). A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used in the recruitment of participants and a sampling matrix was developed to ensure that participant quotas were filled and remained representative (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2014). After six personal contacts were solicited to participate in the study (two participants from each of the three minor hockey league contexts),
snowball sampling was implemented and each participant was asked to pass on the study’s letter of information to their respective networks, yielding nine additional participants (Creswell, 2013).

**Table 1**

*Participant breakdown by parental role and hockey program (n = 15)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental role</th>
<th>Elite Competition</th>
<th>Mixed-Competition</th>
<th>Recreational Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of Participants</td>
<td># of Participants</td>
<td># of Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *One* father in the *mixed-competition* category reported consumption behaviours related to their daughter playing boys hockey.

### 3.5 Interview Guide(s)

**3.5.1 Retrospective charts.** For the duration of the data collection procedure, parents were instructed to focus on and answer all questions with a single one of their children aged nine to 14 in mind. To begin, each participant completed two preliminary charts using pen and paper with the help of the researcher. In Chart One, participants were asked to recall and record each previous sport program that they had paid for and in which their child of interest was enrolled.
starting from their most recent purchase (see Appendix J). For Chart Two, parents were asked to imagine that they were filling out a week-long schedule in preparation for a typical seven-day period during last year’s hockey season (see Appendix K). They were instructed to record each hockey-specific activity that would have taken place and/or require planning during a typical week (e.g., games, practices, power skating, dry land training) as well as any additional tasks that they would consider to be labour which needed to be performed to facilitate these activities (e.g., driving, laundry, meal preparation).

Typically, this process took approximately 20 minutes for each participant to complete. Unlike validated retrospective methods in sport psychology such as Côté, Ericsson, and Law’s (2005) work on the development of expert-performance, this procedure did not have a means of confirming the validity of the past-sport program enrollment information provided. Despite this, previous research indicates that life calendars, similar to the ones employed in this study, have been highly effective in aiding research subjects to chart and record complex life histories and other sequencing events more effectively than through other methods (Axinn, Pearce, & Ghimire, 1999; Caspi et al., 1996). Despite the high probability of validity potentially achievable within these measures, rather than represent perfectly accurate sport family histories, the main purpose for including the timeline and calendar activity within the interview process was to stimulate the recall of past sport and hockey-specific memories in hopes of situating participants to more easily complete the subsequent semi-structured interview procedure.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interview guide. For each interview, a semi-structured interview guide was used. This interview guide was developed in accordance with the three stages proposed through Schiffman and Kanuk’s (2009) model of consumer decision-making (see Figure 1). This model postulates that a potential consumer’s (a) historical and present
sociocultural context, (b) learned psychological perceptions, motivations, and attitudes, as well as their (c) recent, salient purchase evaluations all contribute in influencing their consumption-related decision-making behaviours (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). These three components seen within the consumer behaviour process can be broken down further into input, process, and output related factors. Participants were asked a total of 13 open-ended questions regarding their past youth sport program consumption to which they responded at varying length and detail. Additional probing questions were also asked on occasion with the intent of amplifying, expanding, or requesting further information to supplement the initial breadth or depth of participant responses (Yeo et al., 2014). At times, both interviewer and interviewee referred back to scenarios or events previously discussed within the introductory retrospective interview portion of the study.

Two pilot interviews were completed prior to the start of the data collection component of this project. The first occurred in late April of 2019 and the second in early May of 2019. Meetings between myself and my supervisor were carried out following each pilot interview and issues related to question order as well as adjustments to the pre-interview retrospective charts were worked through and refined collaboratively. Of note, the pre-interview retrospective questionnaire procedure was reformatted which allowed participants to complete the task in a more efficient and timely manner. After refinements and adjustments were made following the first pilot interview, the second pilot interview was completed with greater ease. Following the second interview, question wording was refined further before the interview guide was finalized with approval from my supervisor. After all adjustments were implemented, the recruitment process began and official interviews were scheduled and conducted.
3.6 Procedure

The project’s compulsory application for ethical approval was sent to the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) and was approved in June of 2019 (See Appendix B). Following this step, interviews began and continued until September 2019. The initial six participants were contacted via email (see Appendix C), provided with the project’s letter of information (see Appendix E), and invited to ask any questions regarding their potential participation. Participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation and the fact that they were free to drop out of the study at any time for any reason.

All willing participants were asked to indicate dates, times, and locations that best suited them and were met in person to be interviewed. Locations where interviews took place included family homes, coffee shops, and ice hockey arenas. All interviews (n = 15) took place in person and were audio recorded using QuickTime Player, Version 10.5 software on a 2017 Macbook, Retina 12-inch laptop computer. The audio files were stored on an encrypted G-Technology G-Drive Mobile USB-C external hard drive in the .mp3 file format. Files were then transcribed verbatim using NCH Software’s Express Scribe, Versin 8.20 into a Microsoft Word document for Mac. Audio interviews ranged from 23 minutes to 52 minutes in duration and yielded 144 pages of single-spaced written interview data.

Participants received and reviewed their interview transcripts for accuracy and were invited to identify and request an omission of any information that they were uncomfortable with being included in the project’s final analysis. No participants reported concerns regarding accuracy or requested that information be omitted. Additionally, no issues with regard to lost data, missing, or corrupt data were encountered during the completion of this project. Interview audio files, transcripts, and project consent forms will be kept on an encrypted hard drive in an
access-controlled laboratory in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies building at Queen’s University and will be destroyed after seven years.

3.7 Analysis

Thematic analysis was the method chosen to complete the analytical component of this project. As outlined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis is a highly popular analytical method as it allows researchers to identify themes and patterns within the majority of sets and types of qualitative data. The analytical stage of this project followed the six-stage framework for completing thematic analysis laid out by Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, and Terry (2018). In stage one, I became familiar with the dataset through the verbatim transcription of interview audio files and repeated reading through completed transcripts. In stages two and three, initial codes were generated and higher order themes were identified. A deductive-inductive strategy was applied when coding for themes within this particular dataset. Lower level codes (or meaning units) were first identified and grouped in accordance with the three components of Schiffman and Kanuk’s (2009) consumer behaviour framework (which also structured my interview guide). In this way, lower level codes were generated deductively. By contrast, higher order categories and themes were generated inductively, over the course of several weeks, upon reading and rereading interview transcripts, and reflecting on my meetings with each participant. In stage four, a preliminary set of themes was reviewed and evaluated for clarity, overlap, and to assess whether further subthemes could be identified, before a final list of themes was defined in stage five. Stage six consisted of writing the reported analysis into the project’s results section.

Participants were given two-letter codes as identifiers to ensure preservation of their anonymity throughout the analysis and writing components of the project (e.g., PB, JL). Each participant was additionally colour-coded within the analytical software to identify each as either
inhabiting the role of mother or father. All analytical procedures conducted on the interview data were completed using NVivo 12, version 12.5.0 software for Mac.

3.8 Methodological Rigor

After it was decided that adopting a qualitative methodology would be the most appropriate means of completing this project, recommendations laid out by Tracy and Hinrich (2017), who capture eight “big tent” criteria for the creation of qualitative research, were followed in the design and conceptualization of this project’s purpose and objectives (see Appendix G). Additionally, the study design, methods, and procedures were constructed in line with the recommendations laid out by O’Brien and colleagues’ (2014) synthesized recommendations and standards for the reporting of qualitative research (see Appendix H). This guide provided 21 specific criteria that were generated empirically through a systematic search of appropriate literature and collaboration with external reviewers. Following the steps, stages, and quality checks laid out in both papers aided in ensuring that I was on track in the production of all necessary components within each stage of the research project. These guides were not prescriptive regarding the kinds of methods or analysis required for success or rigor within a specific qualitative research project but instead acted more like a checklist to confirm that all important stages and components were included.

Within the fields of sport and exercise psychology, it has been recommended that some form of respondent validation be implemented to ensure accuracy as well as quality within the data collected for qualitative investigations (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Therefore, member checking was carried out following the completion of each fully transcribed, verbatim interview transcript. Upon completing a transcription, I would return typed interviews to participants via email to ensure that each individual felt that their representation within the context of the study
was fair and accurate. Participants were asked to read over their interview and were given the option to request any excerpt from their transcript be omitted from the final analysis phase of the project. It can be noted that no participant elected to follow through on this opportunity with regard to this study. This stage in the process was important as it provided participants with a transparent view into what their data would look like within the study. It also served as a quality check for myself, as in two cases, participants provided me with copy-editing revisions to fix within their interview document.

NVivo 12 software was employed to complete the analytical component of this project. Maguire and Delahunt’s (2017) step-by-step guide for learning thematic analysis was relied on as the primary resource in completion of the analytical process. I had previously completed a graduate level research methods course (with a focus on qualitative methodologies) that provided instruction with regard to conducting thematic analysis; however, Maguire and Delahunt’s guidelines acted to refresh my knowledge and guide me through the finer processes necessary to complete the procedure. Hilal and Alabri’s (2013) work outlining how to properly run the NVivo 12 program for qualitative data analysis was also used to better understand the capabilities of the software for the purposes of my analysis.
Chapter 4

Results

As discussed at the beginning of this document, two research questions were generated that formed the impetus behind the completion of this research project, which were: (a) “Why do parents choose ice hockey as an extra-curricular activity for their children?” and (b) “How do parents make decisions about enrolling their children in specific ice hockey programs?” Through hours of interview transcription, multiple readings of completed interview transcripts, and an intensive five-week process of analysis, seven themes were constructed as a response to these questions.

As both the project’s interview guide and first round of deductive coding were based around Schiffman and Kanuk’s (2009) model of consumer behaviour, final themes were likewise sorted by their corresponding component within the consumer behaviour process. As such, two themes fell under the input factor, two corresponded with the process factor, while three themes were best aligned with the output factor (see Table 2). In the following section, second level headings will signify a brief discussion outlining each of the three components of consumer behaviour while each section’s subsequent themes will be discussed at length embedded within their respective third level headings. As such, this section begins with an examination of the theme: “Its Canada’s game”, under the consumer behaviour component: “input”.

4.1 Input

Through the initial deductive coding process, responses to questions dealing with the external factors influencing youth hockey and youth sport participation were grouped into the highest order category, “input.” From there, additional codes were generated inductively until two specific themes became apparent, these being excerpts related to the link between Canada
and ice hockey ("It’s Canada’s game") and excerpts describing what participants all seemed to recognize as an informal social group of sorts known as “The hockey family.”

Table 2
Themes and theme descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of consumer behaviour</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Theme description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>It’s Canada’s game</td>
<td>Ice hockey is something all Canadians are tied to in some way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The hockey family</td>
<td>Close knit networks and relationships form as a result of youth ice hockey participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Whatever they want</td>
<td>Parents pledge to support development in whichever activity their child wishes to pursue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up for success</td>
<td>Young ice hockey players will learn life lessons through their participation in the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>They’re doing their best, but…</td>
<td>Youth ice hockey programs have many flaws but are generally run by individuals trying their best with what they have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make it more accessible</td>
<td>Many aspects of youth ice hockey could be changed to make the game more accessible and easier for families to remain involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The little moments</td>
<td>The little moments stay with parents as positive memories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1 It’s Canada’s game. In response to questions related to their personal background with ice hockey as well as when asked to think about the place ice hockey currently occupies in their lives, parents often described ice hockey or aspects of the ice hockey season as a distinctly
Canadian tradition: “I think when you think of Canada you just think of hockey and we’re just your typical Canadian family” (AH), “. . .there’s a culture in Canada, you know, we love our hockey teams, our junior teams, the world junior championships during Christmas. It’s just part of being here and our kids get wrapped up in that” (JL). Due to the position ice hockey appeared to occupy within Canadian society, parents perceived ice hockey programming to be taken more seriously or even to be of a higher quality than other sport programs accessible to them:

I think that’s just in the culture of hockey in Canada, people just take it more seriously and you’ve got more people volunteering, parents seem way more willing to be involved and to do stuff as opposed to say soccer where maybe the coach won’t show up or the other team won’t show up. . .you just don’t see those things in hockey. . .I think you’d see a lot of people going bonkers if they showed up and no one was there. . .it’s just a little bit more serious. (JC)

Additionally, for some parents without as much personal experience within hockey previous to their child’s involvement, their distance from the game was described as unusual: “I didn’t gain a real interest until around high school in terms of really watching it, following it. . .but then I got kind of wrapped up like every other Canadian kid” (JC), “I was honestly a bit of a black sheep in terms of my friends, like my friends all played hockey and I didn’t” (RS). These responses highlighted the perception of ice hockey as something unique within the Canadian cultural landscape and something that it seems is somewhat important or at least unique in the socialization of youth within the Canadian context.

4.1.2 The hockey family. Parents made specific references about the social experience of being a part of the ice hockey community as having a somewhat familial quality: “You’re not going to get along with everybody but the people that you tend to get along with seem to stay
close together and I value that a lot. Having that tight knit group is key” (RS), “I always remember the tournaments, watching him and the other kids around the hotel, watching other parents treat your child like their own because you spend so much time together building that reliance on each other, just that family aspect” (PB),

I love the feeling of knowing these kids and I want to cheer them on as well and I start seeing their skills developing. . .I just kind of felt like I fell in love with all the kids from the team and I feel that way now when I see them—there’s just a special place in my heart for all these kids (JM)

In addition to the bonds that can be formed between parents and other members of their child’s ice hockey circle, the ways in which parents perceive their personal family unit and friend groups to exist in relation to their ice hockey relationships is also interesting to note: “I guess I’d say we have our hockey friends that we’ll see more during the hockey season, then we might not see them as much over the summer” (JL), “I’d say that right now we hang out with hockey families just because you’re with them a lot more than your personal friends and childhood friends are kind of on the backburner” (AH). Due to the time commitments and immersive atmosphere described by parents as a fixture of the youth ice hockey context, particularly at the highest levels, it appears as though unique social relationships are formed that can be perceived as both positive and negative by ice hockey parents.

4.2 Process

In identical fashion with the input section discussed previously, the initial coding process sorted text excerpts into the broad categories corresponding to the project’s overarching framework and interview guide. As such, all responses to questions dealing with the internal factors, or more internalized ideas and beliefs, influencing youth hockey and youth sport
participation for parents were grouped into the highest order category “process”. Through additional rounds of coding, the internal processes described by parents with regard to their child’s ice hockey participation were sorted into two main themes, the first being excerpts related to their child’s desire to participate in the sport (“Whatever they want”) and the second describing any perceived benefits participation in ice hockey was perceived to have granted their children (“Set up for success”).

4.2.1 Whatever they want. All 15 parents interviewed through this project stated that the primary reason for their child’s participation in ice hockey was due to their child’s desire to play ice hockey: “every year we ask (our son) ‘so do you want to play hockey?’ So that’s the first part of the decision-making process” (PC), “he’s excited to get up at five in the morning to go to practices. . .so that’s the number one reason why we keep doing it because that’s what he wants to do and it’s fun” (JS). Parents also described the need to ultimately ensure that their children were involved in some form of extra-curricular activity involving exercise, but that that activity did not have to be ice hockey: “I just want him to be active so as long as he’s having fun. . .getting some type of exercise. . .growing and learning in some way,” “I honestly think that if (my son) didn’t want to play hockey, we just wouldn’t be here,” “it’s now a choice being driven by our son. If he were to say he didn’t want to play next season we would be okay with that because we now know that there are other activities out there” (DC).

4.2.2 Set up for success. Although participation in ice hockey did appear to be largely child-driven, parents did perceive that certain benefits were available to their children through their continued ice hockey participation that might be fleeting in other contexts: “I would say an unexpected benefit I see is the discipline aspect and that’s really helped him. . .just the whole seriousness of the sport. . .” (JC). Another parent described:
I think hockey is more than just a sport, all the lessons they’re learning on the ice and all the stuff off the ice and all the friendships that are developing. . .the structure, you know you need to get up for early morning practices and things like that those are all life skills. . .I think hockey is a gateway for him to learn how to be a better person if that makes sense. (JD)

For the majority of parents, participation in youth sport programming writ large came with a variety of benefits: “I think they provide a lot of healthy outlets and you get a lot of intangibles that you might not get in a school environment” (DC), yet it appeared that specific tasks related to ice hockey equipment provided additional value perhaps not easily acquired in other sport contexts: “Responsibility has been good with hockey in particular. There’s a lot of equipment. . .we’ve been at the rink and we’ve realized that we’ve forgotten an essential piece of equipment. . .and then . . .[there’s] . . .that learning moment” (PC), “so he’s carried his own bag since he was eight. He takes his own bag home, he lays the gear out, he packs it up because every time I pack it, he loses something!” (PB). The value parents see in enrolling their children in various youth sport programming has been widely documented in the past and it appears as though youth ice hockey within the Canadian context has the potential to deliver similar benefits to its young participants. Intangibles such as responsibility were brought up continuously by all parents in relation to ice hockey and all other sporting contexts:

We might say, ‘do you really want to go to a game?’ if there was. . .[any kind of issue]. . .and he’s always like, ‘no, it’s important that I’m there for my team’ so those are things that we might not necessarily be able to teach and he learned them in a rather organic way that he isn’t just responsible for himself. (DC)
It appears as though, that for parents who do enroll their children in youth ice hockey and other sport programs, the perceived value of these activities lies in the benefits their children might accrue which translate out of the sporting arena to benefit them across the entire spectrum of their lives.

4.3 Output

The final section of excerpts were coded at the highest level as *output* factors of the consumer behaviour process. Themes crafted through the analysis of these excerpts explored the various thoughts and feelings ice hockey parents were left with after the “purchase” of their child’s most recent ice hockey season. The themes generated in this section dealt with program shortcomings (e.g., “They’re doing their best, but. . .”) and the positive aspects related to their child’s ice hockey participation (“The little moments”).

4.3.1 They’re doing their best, but. . . All 15 parents except for two would change aspects of their child’s ice hockey organization if given the chance. Issues of note stemmed from a lack of league transparency and the internal politics of each league: “I wish communication was better. . .but, also realizing that everyone’s a volunteer and people aren’t being paid to run this organization” (AB), “The politics and the rumour mill stuff. . .hockey is just a sport that people are really passionate about. . .we want to be proud of something, but that can get misguided and can turn into those ugly things” (RS), “I feel like the political game in (our association) right now is pretty volatile. . .I feel like the organization tries to do a good job in just letting the kids play but there’s so many rules and things that can really get in the way” (JL). Parents clearly understand the community-oriented, volunteer-based nature of minor hockey programming, but unfortunately with high costs in capital and time necessary to participate, there
might be a conflict regarding how they feel they can deal with any potential frustrations that might crop up.

4.3.2 Make it more accessible. Related to this, parents do feel like certain aspects of minor hockey could certainly be made more accessible in a variety of ways:

One thing basketball did was that if you went on a Saturday road trip they would organize two basketball games so you’d tick off two in a row whereas in hockey so far it seems to be one game at a time versus driving and getting two games out of it which is a lot of time and investment that’s inefficient. (PL)

Another thing I would love to see in this city is the leagues merging so that. . .with just one league and with sufficient volume of players maybe that limits the travel outside of the region. . .I realize that everything behind the scenes is super complex and it would be a super arduous process, but just the volume would allow for us to keep our families in our city together. (SB)

Why do we play so many tournaments? Why are we playing in four tournaments in a year? You know that’s also a big cost and a big-time commitment and the kids are getting four hours of ice-time for a whole weekend. Could that money not be spent better on development? (JD)

In terms of affordability you know often we’d play teams in tournaments and we’d play these teams that didn’t have embroidered jerseys with the sponsors and they didn’t have
matching gloves but they’d go out and cream us and I’m like, wow! Their jerseys didn’t have an impact! (DC)

Traditionally, ice hockey has long been regarded as a fairly expensive endeavour when compared to sports such as soccer or basketball. However, it seems as though some costs associated with participation in hockey could be brought down without diluting the development of young players or robbing them of too many opportunities to develop.

4.3.3 The little moments. Despite the high cost and interpersonal issues encountered within the youth ice hockey context, parents remained committed to the activity. When asked about some of the positive outcomes they themselves have enjoyed as a result of their child’s participation in youth ice hockey, many described the little things or the little moments that they hang on to as the positives for them: “Yeah, just watching him have fun. . .seeing him in a shirt and tie holding doors open for his competitors. . .it’s those little things. Those are awesome” (PB); “Just being around that team environment and the way the kids would party or dance in the dressing room after a big win or if something good happens. . .they’re having a ton of fun” (CD). Another parent commented:

I love seeing her improve on the little things like this summer for example she hit the crossbar with her backhand two or three times and at the beginning of the summer she couldn’t lift the puck. . .she gets a kick out of that, so yeah, stuff like that has been awesome. (PL)

Parents also described similar encounters or memories that occurred outside of the rink or the ice hockey specific context that similarly brought them joy and fulfillment: “There’s a lot of friendships that have come out of it now, you know, when you’re in the community you’re able
to say ‘hi’ to a lot of people and there are a lot of those social connections” (DC). Another parent described:

When you’re walking on the street and you’re doing nothing hockey related whatsoever and you know you have a couple hockey guys come up and say, ‘hey what’s going on!’ (to my son) and high-fiving and that kind of stuff—it’s those memories that are maybe most important. (JL)
Chapter 5
Discussion

This study sought to explore the youth sport program consumption behaviours of Canadian ice hockey parents with the intent of fostering a better understanding of how this population might make decisions related to their children’s sport participation. In the following section, the themes constructed through the analysis of the study’s participants’ interview transcripts will be reviewed in greater depth and potential contributions to the greater sport parent literature will be discussed. Chapter Five will conclude by highlighting this project’s limitations and outlining potential suggestions for future research.

5.1 The youth sport product

Throughout the course of this manuscript, I have attempted to formulate an argument that might allow readers to conceptualize youth sport programs as simple items available for purchase by caregivers to benefit young athletes. In line with Pugh’s (2009) idea of pathway consumption, this being the spending of capital on opportunities with the potential to shape the future trajectory of developing children, youth sport programming has garnered a reputation as a means to achieve positive outcomes in developing youth in a multitude of ways.

Uncoincidentally, the concept of positive youth development (PYD) in itself is a well-studied area spanning a variety of research domains. PYD research can be thought of as a field of research in which researchers assess the kinds of youth activity which lead to positive outcomes for youth in adulthood (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004; Larson, 2000). As it relates to sport, previous research has found connections between youth sport participation and positive, long-term outcomes ranging from the physical, emotional, and social domains of development (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Holt & Neely, 2011). Parental perceptions of these
developmental benefits were outlined by Trussell and Shaw (2012) in their study examining how parenting appears within the youth sport domain. Here, it was found that parents deemed sport important for their children and worth the cost of participation due to perceptions of its potential to teach young athletes skills such as cooperation, teamwork, and responsibility.

Similar sentiments were expressed by the youth ice hockey parents involved in the present study. Regardless of level of play (e.g., recreational, competitive, elite), parents expressed beliefs that participation in ice hockey has been responsible for development in their children outside of their involvement in the game such as: bolstered social skills, confidence, scheduling and time management abilities, discipline, and healthy eating. Among the available options within the participants’ region, ice hockey was also described as the sport best suited to set children up for success due to the level of commitment expected of athletes when compared to other youth sport offerings. Concrete examples of these benefits were described through parental observations of players taking responsibility for their hockey equipment at a young age and in young players committing to the demanding aspects (e.g., travel and early mornings) of the youth ice hockey season.

It is important to note, however, that simply participating in sport most likely will not be sufficient in achieving these positive, life-long outcomes. As theorized by Coakley (2016), if the sporting contexts within which PYD are not carefully designed, the outcomes of sport participation can be damaging for young athletes looking to participate in and develop through sport. Further, the author is dubious as to how much sport itself can do to broaden societal progression and development, even with purposeful design that considers the objectives and worldviews of those agents generally at the helm of youth sport programming.
In line with this, despite a few unique features of ice hockey specifically, such as early morning practices for instance, the identification of ice hockey’s importance within Canadian culture appeared almost more important in dictating the ways in which children’s development took place through the activity. To this point, ice hockey was described as a distinctly Canadian activity or as Canada’s game by many if not all participants. Parents noted instances wherein the intensity or seriousness of youth ice hockey appeared to bolster the quality of the sport experience for their children which, in turn, granted them additional benefits through more structured or regimented programming compared with other activities. Parents also described a normalcy that was maintained through their familial participation in youth ice hockey as Canadians. As discussed previously, ice hockey has been placed at the forefront of the social consciousness in Canada through media coverage and the use of marketing and advertising for close to a century (Lee & Heere, 2018; Whitson & Grueneau, 2012). As a result, there is no doubt that the sport has become a primary site of socialization for many young people, particularly young boys and men. As explained by MacDonald (2014), embedded within these perceptions and messages is an underlying narrative linking the game to the development of an idealized masculinity. Indeed, many of the benefits outlined by parents within this study aligned with ideals surrounding the development of self-sufficiency, physical and mental toughness, protection against boredom, and discipline—all tenets reminiscent of the colonial underpinnings influencing the education and child-rearing practices which formed the foundations of Canadian society (e.g., MacAloon, 2006; Watson, Weir, & Friend, 2005). As such, for many parents in Canada perhaps, a child’s participation in ice hockey grants them a sense of security and assurance that important skills might be learned, and that community and inclusion might be found.
As evidenced through parent responses, the sense of community surrounding ice hockey or the hockey family was not just limited to a child’s interaction with the game but, also, appeared to play a role in the social lives of parents as well. As discussed by Kim, Newman, and Kwon (2018) in their social network analysis of community youth baseball, softball, and basketball leagues, parental social circles appeared to shift and become larger as a result of the youth sport season. A slightly different shift was reported by the ice hockey parents in the present study which constituted lateral movements between multiple social circles, notably one associated strongly with participation in ice hockey and one curated by family members during the off season. It is important to note, however, that while in season, due to the time spent together and shared lived experiences, parents generally reported instances of families coming together to form larger, hockey-mediated seasonal familial units. Parents described instances of caring for children other than their own who were a part of their child’s team while also observing other families and parents providing care to their children throughout the course of the season.

5.2 Ice hockey parents as passively brand loyal

Despite the many positive social interactions and experiences described by parents within the present study, many negative assessments of youth ice hockey were also disclosed. Parents often discussed how programmers were doing their best, but often how issues related to poor program quality arose which detracted from their children’s as well as their own experience as consumers. Negative interpersonal interactions and behind the scenes “politicking” and “rumour mill stuff” were reported as an issue for parents across all associations and across all levels of play. Participants appeared resigned to the idea that this feature was most likely inescapable within groups such as those formed in minor hockey associations. In addition to issues seen
within the youth ice hockey social environment, a large component of parent dissatisfaction appeared to exist as a result of the lack of accessibility through some of the choices made by the administrators within their ice hockey programs. Examples of this included the high cost and frequency of travel, the high cost of uniforms, and costs related to other organizational practices deemed non-essential for children to play, compete, and develop as ice hockey players.

When considering Funk’s (2017) proposed Sport Experience Design Framework for Consumer Behaviour, it was suggested that an alignment between the needs of a program consumer, their assessments of previous program experiences, and the goals of their membership sport organization should create positive experiences in sport. While it appeared as though most parents felt that their ‘big picture’ consumer needs were being met by their sport organization (e.g., positive outcomes for their children, social connections), they anticipated that not all experiences within the minor hockey league context would be positive ones. Within the consumer satisfaction literature, a comprehensive definition of these parents’ states as somewhat reluctant repeat consumers was offered by Mehta, Rajiv, and Srinivasan (2001) in their description of passive brand loyalty. Here, researchers predicted this concept (also referred to as consumer lock-in) to occur in situations where high search costs associated with the exploration of alternative offerings within a specific context were present. This could be seen in some parents’ repeated, successive purchases of a particular ice hockey program despite negative program assessments. Parents explained that the lack of ice hockey alternatives as well as the lack of other sport offerings of a similar quality to ice hockey often drove repeat program purchases. Within most youth sport contexts, only a specific number of programs are sure to exist within a given region. Coupled with the often difficult process of transferring associations, these factors effectively trap families into enrolling their children in the few sport offerings
available locally. This lack of competition between youth sport program offerings coupled with the modest nature of many grassroots sport organizations (e.g., volunteer-run organizations) leaves parents looking to provide their children with sport participation opportunities with little choice regarding how this participation might play out.

5.3 Mending consumer relationships

When weighing the expense and time commitments against potential outcomes available to families participating in ice hockey, the cost can appear steep. Despite this, parents still reported finding fulfillment both through the provision of opportunities for their children and through the ability to support them in the pursuit of whatever they want. Referring back to the work completed by Wiersma and Fifer (2008), it seems as though parents similarly experienced joy when watching their children develop hockey related skills as well as more generalized outcomes such as confidence and teamwork. Parents also commented on the little moments which they experienced throughout the course of their child’s ice hockey participation and how these provided them with value in the form of life-long memories and stories. These instances ranged from a child’s first goal to the dedication of a goal to a parent to the first time a parent saw their child in a suit and tie ready for a road trip.

In examining what it is that parents directly take away from their purchase of a youth ice hockey program, it appears as though a single category of commodification may be hard to define. Ultimately, however, through an examination of the themes generated through the completion of this project, it appears as though parents’ motivations for enrolling their children in the sport were largely altruistic. While this may not be a novel finding within the sport parent literature, with many studies exploring the issues surrounding troublesome parents suggest this group to be involved in youth sport as a way to live vicariously through their children or to
demonstrate their own sport knowledge and expertise (e.g., Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008; Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoI, & Power, 2005; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). Assuming, instead, that sport parents want what is best for their children could go a long way in providing youth sport coaches, administrators, and even young athletes with tools to better communicate and work together with parents towards the betterment of youth sport programming.

As previously discussed by Coakley (2016), an important step in ensuring that youth sport programming remains effective in helping participants to develop to their full potential is the formulation of a sound empirical approach which underlies the activities, environments, and policies governing a specific youth sport context. One such theoretical construct is the Personal Assets Framework (PAF), a three-phase model of athlete development first presented and described by Côté, Turnnidge, and Evans in 2014. In stage one of the PAF, it is suggested that three dynamic elements, these being (a) the sporting activity, (b) the relationships within the activity, and (c) the setting of the activity all interact to mediate the experience of any given youth sporting context. Moving to phase two, the authors propose that, should an optimal balance of these elements be found for a particular athlete, this individual will be better able to develop the personal assets of confidence, competence, connection, and character (the 4Cs) within their sport. Finally, on a larger timescale (e.g., multiple sport seasons), it is hypothesized that if an athlete were to cultivate each of the 4Cs, they would then enjoy improved (a) performance in sport, be more likely to (b) participate in sport again, and hopefully experience (c) personal development outside of the sporting context (the 3Ps).

Where this is relevant to the present study is the opportunity that the PAF presents to those in power within youth sport to hone-in on particular areas (e.g., the dynamic elements) within any given sporting context that could be improved upon through the adjustments of
identifiable, tangible features. In mending the fragile consumer relationship that appears to exist between youth ice hockey administrators and ice hockey parents, practitioners would be leading the charge in mending one of youth ice hockey’s largest issues, that being the relationships between ice hockey parents and other adults involved in the game. As it fits within the PAF, this social component of the youth ice hockey experience can be a major issue that, at minimum, can act as a distraction to the young athletes caught between disagreeing adults and, at worst, could potentially cause long-lasting trauma and an exit from the game in severe cases.

Thus, it is hoped that a better understanding of why parents enroll their children in ice hockey programming, how they make choices about enrolling their children in ice hockey programming, and what exactly it is that they are looking to get out of ice hockey programming might allow for a more productive dialogue to occur between parents and program administrators, coaches, and other stakeholders involved in the youth ice hockey context. It is also hoped that the conceptualization of sport parent behaviours as somewhat complex and multifaceted can be useful in future research endeavours. Within the current sport-parent canon, scholars have generally focused their attention exclusively on the outcome behaviours of parents if conceived of through Schiffman and Kanuk’s (2009) consumer behaviour framework. By presenting and describing the factors of input as well as process as additional influencers contributing to parent behaviours, researchers and practitioners alike have the opportunity to adopt a novel set of tools with which to examine and hopefully mitigate future negative parent behaviours in sport should they chose to use them.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the reasons why parents of youth ice hockey players chose to enroll their children in ice hockey and, additionally, how they made decisions regarding which specific contexts and programs they selected for their children. To complete this project, a framework from the consumer behaviour literature (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009) was chosen as a guide in the creation of both the project’s interview guide as well as within certain stages of the project’s analysis. This choice was made in hopes of introducing a new way to look at and make meaning of the interactions and behaviours observed within the Canadian youth ice hockey context.

As mentioned previously, parents are generally often regarded as the biggest challenge to be overcome by coaches, trainers, administrators, and other positions within the Canadian youth ice hockey context. Despite this perception, few steps seem to have been taken to better understand why the phenomenon of disruptive parent behaviour occurs so frequently and consistently season after season. To help combat these issues, excellent work has been done within the academy to create resources, online certifications, and even in-person workshops in an attempt to curb unwanted output behaviours in parents (e.g., Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008; Vincent & Christensen, 2015). However, it is hoped that additional research, such as what was completed within this thesis project, might act to supplement these parent behaviour courses and to give stakeholders on the front lines of youth ice hockey programing additional tools to better address negative instances through the recognition of input and process behavioural antecedents.
A consumer behaviour framework was chosen in an attempt to explain and describe parent behaviours through the easily understandable lens of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction as related to a purchased product or experience. In adopting this framework to answer the project’s research questions, it appeared as though parents were involved in hockey primarily because their children enjoy the game and because they perceive that involvement in ice hockey in Canada can offer their child a variety of skills, benefits, and lessons that may aid them throughout the course of their lives. Parents also appeared to make decisions regarding program selection using the same criteria, namely which program would give their child the most benefit.

6.1 Future directions

Though these findings might appear to simply confirm what those within the youth ice hockey community might have already assumed to know intuitively, it is hoped that what is done next with this information could prove somewhat novel. This study certainly does not advocate for parents to be let off of the hook, so to speak, with regard to responsibly mediating their own behaviours, however if youth ice hockey programming—and youth sport programming at large—was conceived of as a product for sale by programmers, perhaps more effort would be put towards ensuring that acceptable levels of customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and repeat purchase behaviours were reached. The meaningful creation of policy related to the assessment of quality control as well as consumer relations would also become important to consider within this model which, hopefully, would have the effect of creating a higher standard as well as a more dynamic and varied array of youth sport program offerings. From the consumer standpoint, if parents were to conceive of their children’s sport program purchases as simple products, they would be given a more intuitive paradigm within which to both express
themselves and communicate with program providers. Perhaps their frustrations with poor program delivery, poor coaching, or poor value for their money could be discussed and worked through in more direct, more meaningful, and more healthy ways compared to what is currently seen within the majority of contemporary sport systems.

Despite the careful consideration of participant differences between the categories of league type and parental role built into the methodological framework of this study, discernible differences with regard to interview responses along these segments did not seem to be present within the data. This is perhaps due to the nature of the interview guide and, potentially, a lack of sensitivity to these differences within the final question content and wording. Despite this, it is interesting to consider that the motivations parents appear have for enrolling their children in ice hockey do not appear to differ broadly regardless of competition type when examined as a simple program purchase. It seems more intuitive that individuals identifying as inhabiting the roles of mothers versus those identifying as fathers might not differ too widely in their reasoning for enrolling their children in ice hockey although these results are still somewhat surprising. Perhaps, in both cases, the importance of context and messaging as related to the assumed benefits of participation in youth ice hockey might be more salient than the effect of parental role or competition type on the development of sport program choice rationale within these populations. Future studies investigating these specific differences through the implementation of more sensitive methodologies or instruments for data collection would be extremely interesting to pursue.

Continued research focusing on the youth sport parent and their underlying behaviours would be welcomed as there is much more to be learned about this complex population. Broadly, it would be my hope that future investigations continue to probe deeper into the antecedents of
youth sport parent behaviours. I believe that gaining a better understanding of the reasons for the instances of negative behaviours seen within this context is key in changing the youth sport environment to perhaps create less stressful conditions for parents as well as their children. Looking at other sporting contexts would also be an extremely interesting continuation of this study. Of course, all sports are unique in their specific cultures, climates, and norms so it would be fascinating to see how answers differ or how much they might remain the same across differing sport contexts. Additionally, making blanket recommendations for changes in all youth sport programming as a result of studies focusing on a single sport is not appropriate, therefore it is almost as though there is an opportunity for researchers to adopt this framework and methodology for study in all sports save ice hockey in the future. Finally, more research must be conducted within girls’ ice hockey and within girls’ sport programming as a whole. This project’s interview guide and methodology is easily adaptable to the girl’s ice hockey context. Should no other researchers pursue such a study, I plan to adapt this guide and pursue such a study myself.

6.2 Limitations

Despite the best efforts of this project’s small research team in mitigating as many potential design and methodological issues as possible, this study is not without its limitations. The intimacy and nature of implementing in-person, face-to-face interviews can leave data vulnerable to social acceptability and social desirability bias within interview responses. Additionally, my positionality as a coach within the organization of which some participants were members could have further exacerbated the probability of encountering each of these issues. The use of convenience and snowball sampling also poses a risk of sample and response homogeneity as participants could, theoretically, all be members of the same social groups. Only
one participant responded to questions as the parent of a daughter in ice hockey, therefore perspectives related to athletes’ gender are not equally represented within this study. Finally, only two parents of the 15 interviewed were members of visible minority populations. Though some might argue that this breakdown may accurately reflect the ethnic distribution of hockey participants in Canada, undoubtably, some valuable perspectives and stories are missing from this study due to the relatively homogeneous sample of participants included. Admittedly, this breakdown may reflect an accurate, representative sample within many Canadian hockey communities; however, the picture painted through the findings of this project is surely missing the perspectives of a many Canadians along racial, ethnic, and gendered lines.

6.3 Personal reflection

Speaking as a current coach and former participant in a variety of youth sport programs, perhaps the most common refrain I have heard over the years is that, “parents ruin sport for everyone”. Despite the universality of this sentiment, however, little appears to have been done as far as addressing this issue at its root cause. Youth ice hockey specifically stands out as a sporting context where parent behaviours often make headlines in the news. Indeed, it would be difficult to find anyone involved in the sport who would not either have personal experience or would not be close to someone who has borne witness to an incident involving disgruntled or aggressive parents. It is my hope that gaining deeper insights into why these undesirable behaviours materialize might allow for the production of continued research or the implementation of concrete steps to be taken with the goal of limiting the frequency of these instances. Through the completion of this Master’s thesis project, I hope to have contributed, in some small way, in moving this process in the right direction. I look forward to dedicating more time to this issue in the future.
References


Appendix A

Statement of Change

I certify that no significant project changes occurred since the approved Thesis Proposal Defense which took place in: May, 2019.
Appendix B

General Research Ethic Board Letter of Approval

June 13, 2019

Mr. Alex Munta
Master’s Student
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
Queen’s University
28 Division Street
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GSKHS-315-19; TRAQ # 6024763
Title: “GSKHS-315-19 Why sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada”

Dear Mr. Munta:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GSKHS-315-19 Why sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2 (2014)) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405.001), your project has been cleared for one year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one-year period (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies." Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Ms. Gail Irving, at University Research Services for further review and clearance by the GREB or Chair, GREB.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

Chair, General Research Ethics Board (GREB)
Professor Dean A. Tripp, PhD
Departments of Psychology, Anesthesiology & Urology Queen’s University

cc: Dr. Jean Côté, Supervisor
Dr. Elaine Power, Chair, Unit REB
Appendix C

Recruitment Email Template

**Study Title:** Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada

My name is Alex Murata and I am a Master of Science Candidate in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies at Queen’s University. I would like to ask for your assistance with a study I am conducting with the Performance Lab for the Advancement of Youth Sport (PLAYS) in the sport psychology laboratory at Queen’s. Through this study, researchers are attempting to explore the reasons behind the choices sport parents make with regard to program selection for their children in hopes of improving future youth sport programs.

**Potential Study Benefits**

The findings of this study, informed by participants like you, have the potential to assist both researchers and sport program practitioners to develop new strategies, new interventions, and further research that can help to address many of the issues and barriers currently encountered by sport parents in Canada.

**Potential Study Risks**

The potential physical and psychological risk associated with your participation in this study is low. It is important to highlight that there will be no deception used in the completion of this study, however you may be asked to recall and reflect upon some of your or your child’s previous negative sport experiences. Resources will be provided to you in the event that you experience any measure of psychological distress as a result of your participation in this study.

**Participation in this study will include:**

- A 1-hr, one-on-one interview in person consisting of questions focusing on sport activities that young athletes have participated in throughout their lifetime.

I am confident that the study’s results will prove useful for youth sport policy makers and youth sport programmers to understand how they might positively move forward via the creation of optimal sporting environments for young athletes. Please see the attached Letter of Information for a more detailed description of the study.

Thank you so much for your time and for your consideration!

If you are interested in participating in this project or if you have any questions please contact:

**Primary Investigator:**

Alex Murata
MSc Candidate
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
Queen’s University
a.murata@queensu.ca
Recruitment Email Template Follow-Up

Study Title: Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada

Hello,

I had recently touched base with you regarding your potential participation in a study with the Sport Psychology department at Queen’s University. Attached is the study’s Letter of Information outlining our laboratory’s research objectives and your potential role as a study participant. If you are interested in participating in this project or have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

**Primary Investigator:**

Alex Murata  
MSc Candidate  
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies  
Queen’s University  
a.murata@queensu.ca

Thank you very much for your time and consideration!
Appendix E

Project Letters of Information

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Study Title: Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada

Primary Investigator: Alex Murata
MSc Candidate
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
Queen’s University
a.murata@queensu.ca

Lab Supervisor: Jean Côté, PhD
Professor
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
Queen’s University
613-533-6601
jc46@queensu.ca

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to explore the youth sport program consumption behaviours of Canadian families participating in ice hockey. The main objectives of this study are (a) to investigate what specific factors might influence sport program consumption choices for Canadian hockey families, (b) examine what might mediate feelings of program satisfaction, and (c) to see how perceptions of ice hockey and its cultural significance might influence specific patterns of ice hockey participation and ice hockey program choice.

Procedures Involved in the Study
Volunteering to participate in this study will entail a one-on-one interview procedure with the project’s primary researcher. During the course of this interview, you will be asked to reflect on your child’s past sport involvement which will include developing a physical timeline of their sporting career as well as filling out a schedule chronicling what is required from you during a typical week as a hockey parent. The interview procedure should not take longer than one hour to complete in its entirety and will be conducted in person at a public location of your choosing (such as the Queen’s University campus or a local coffee shop). All materials necessary to complete the interview will be provided by the primary researcher—just bring yourself!
Potential Benefits

Gaining a better understanding of sport parent perspectives could be crucial in improving Canadian youth sport programming in the future. Through the findings of this study, it is hoped that both researchers and sport program practitioners might continue to develop new strategies, new interventions, and additional research projects that can help to address many of the issues and barriers currently encountered by sport parents in Canada.

Potential Risks to Participants

It is important to highlight that there will be no deception used in the completion of this study, however you may be asked to recall and reflect upon some of your or your child’s previous negative sport experiences. If you happen to experience any measure of psychological distress as a result of your participation in this study, please contact the project’s lab supervisor, Dr. Jean Côté, using the information located at the top of this document. Alternatively, you can text “HOME” to 686868 to connect with a trained trauma professional working with the Canadian Crisis Text Line or you can call 613-544-4229 to connect with a trained trauma professional working with the Kingston & Frontenac Crisis Line. Both resources can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Confidentiality and Withdrawal

You have not waived any legal rights by consenting to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary and, should you wish, you may withdraw from the interview procedure at any time, for any reason, without explanation or consequence. The results from this study may be published in academic journals and / or presented at academic conferences, however your identity will always be kept confidential should any of these events occur. The research team may choose to highlight direct quotations from your interview, however, should this occur, you would be given a pseudonym (false name), and all potentially identifying information such as dates, names of persons, or names of places will be omitted.

An audio recording device will be used to document your interview responses and allow your interview to be transcribed for analysis. You will receive a digital copy of your complete interview transcript via email and may, within two weeks of this date, request to remove any of your interview responses from the project’s final analysis or withdraw from the study completely should you feel unsatisfied or uncomfortable in any way. Unfortunately, after any potential publication(s) involving your data have occurred (approximately 6 months to a year post-interview), removal will no longer be possible due to the publication process of third-party academic journals or other external organizations.

All information—Interview recordings, interview transcripts, and consent forms—obtained through the research procedure will be stored in a controlled-access location (a locked office or on a password protected electronic device) and will be destroyed five years after the study’s date of publication. Only the study’s primary researcher will have access to the study’s raw data previous to as well as following any potential publication(s), however the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (GREB) may wish to access your data for quality assurance purposes.

If you have any concerns regarding research ethics please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in North America) or chair.GREB@queensu.ca. Call 1-613-533-2988 if outside North America. Please note that GREB communicates in English only.
Appendix F

Record of Consent

Study Title: Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada

I have read the Letter of Information for the research study entitled ‘Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada’. I understand the voluntary nature of my participation in this study and I have been made aware of the confidentiality measures in place to ensure my anonymity. I acknowledge that I was made aware of procedures to follow should I feel any negative effects as a result of my participation in this study. I agree that all questions I had were answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may withdraw from the data collection process at any time.

I understand that any information I provide will not be used for any other purpose than the completion of this research project. I understand that any further questions regarding my participation in this study may be directed to Alex Murata or Dr. Jean Côté via their contact information located at the top of this document.

By signing below, I am acknowledging my status as a fully consenting participant in the research project conducted through the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies at Queen’s University titled; Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada.

Name of participant

___________________________________________
Signature

___________________________________________
Date

By initialing the following statement, _________ I am granting permission for the researcher to use an audio recorder for the duration of this interview.

Please indicate if you wish to receive a summary of the study findings: Yes_____ No_____

Please provide a contact email to receive your full and complete interview transcript for review (The email address provided below will also be used to provide you with a summary of the study’s findings if you chose to receive them):

________________________________________________________
# Appendix G

## Eight “Big Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for quality (end goal)</th>
<th>Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wordy topic</td>
<td>The topic of the research is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relevant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Timely</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Significant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich rigor</td>
<td>The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex</td>
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<td>• Theoretical constructs</td>
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<td>• Data and time in the field</td>
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<td>• Sample(s)</td>
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<td>• Context(s)</td>
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<td>• Data collection and analysis processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>The study is characterized by</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s)</td>
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<td>• Transparency about the methods and challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>The research is marked by</td>
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<td>• Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling</td>
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<td>• Triangulation or crystallization</td>
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<td>• Multivocality</td>
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<td>• Member reflections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resonance</td>
<td>The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Aesthetic, evocative representation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Naturalistic generalizations</td>
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<td>• Transferable findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant contribution</td>
<td>The research provides a significant contribution</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conceptually/theoretically</td>
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<td>• Practically</td>
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<td>• Morally</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Methodologically</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Heuristically</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>The research considers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Procedural ethics (such as human subjects)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Situational and culturally specific ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Relational ethics</td>
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<td>• Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful coherence</td>
<td>The study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Achieves what it purports to be about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Tracy, 2010)
## Appendix H

### Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Title and abstract</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Concise description of the nature and topic of the study identifying the study as qualitative or indicating the approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory) or data collection methods (e.g., interview, focus group) is recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Summary of key elements of the study using the abstract format of the intended publication; typically includes background, purpose, methods, results, and conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Problem formulation</td>
<td>Description and significance of the problem/phenomenon studied; review of relevant theory and empirical work; problem statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Purpose or research question</td>
<td>Purpose of the study and specific objectives or questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Qualitative approach and research paradigm</td>
<td>Qualitative approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, narrative research) and guiding theory (if appropriate); identifying the research paradigm (e.g., postpositivist, constructivist, interpretivist) is also recommended; rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Researcher characteristics and reflexivity</td>
<td>Researchers’ characteristics that may influence the research, including personal attributes, qualitative research experience, relationship with participants, assumptions, and/or presuppositions; potential or actual interaction between researchers’ characteristics and the research questions, approach, methods, results, and/or transferability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Setting and salient contextual factors; rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>Sampling strategy</td>
<td>How and why research participants, documents, or events were selected; criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary (e.g., sampling saturation); rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>Ethical issues pertaining to human subjects</td>
<td>Documentation of approval by an appropriate ethics review board and participant consent, or explanation for lack thereof; other confidentiality and data security issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>Data collection methods</td>
<td>Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures including (as appropriate) start and stop dates of data collection and analysis; iterative process, triangulation of sources/methods, and modification of procedures in response to evolving study findings; rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11</td>
<td>Data collection instruments and technologies</td>
<td>Description of instruments (e.g., interview guides, questionnaires) and devices (e.g., audio recorders) used for data collection; if/how the instrument(s) changed over the course of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S12</td>
<td>Units of study</td>
<td>Number and relevant characteristics of participants, documents, or events included in the study; level of participation (could be reported in results)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13</td>
<td>Data processing</td>
<td>Methods for processing data prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data entry, data management and security, verification of data integrity, data coding, and anonymization/identification of excerpts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S14</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Process by which inferences, themes, etc., were identified and developed, including the researchers involved in data analysis; usually references a specific paradigm or approach; rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S15</td>
<td>Techniques to enhance trustworthiness</td>
<td>Techniques to enhance trustworthiness and credibility of data analysis (e.g., member checking, audit trail, triangulation); rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Results/findings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>S16</td>
<td>Synthesis and interpretation</td>
<td>Main findings (e.g., interpretations, inferences, and themes); might include development of a theory or model, or integration with prior research or theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S17</td>
<td>Links to empirical data</td>
<td>Evidence (e.g., quotes, field notes, text excerpts, photographs) to substantiate analytic findings</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>S18</td>
<td>Integration with prior work, implications, transferability, and contribution(s) to the field</td>
<td>Short summary of main findings; explanation of how findings and conclusions connect to, support, elaborate on, or challenge conclusions of earlier scholarship; discussion of scope of application (generalizability; identification of unique contribution(s) to scholarship in a discipline or field)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S19</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>Trustworthiness and limitations of findings</td>
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(Table continues)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S20</td>
<td>Conflicts of interest</td>
<td>Potential sources of influence or perceived influence on study conduct and conclusions; how these were managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S21</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Sources of funding and other support; role of funders in data collection, interpretation, and reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. The authors created the SRQR by searching the literature to identify guidelines, reporting standards, and critical appraisal criteria for qualitative research; reviewing the reference lists of retrieved sources, and contacting experts to gain feedback. The SRQR aims to improve the transparency of all aspects of qualitative research by providing clear standards for reporting qualitative research.
2. The rationale should briefly discuss the justification for choosing the theory, approach, method, or technique rather than other options available, the assumptions and limitations implicit in those choices, and how those choices influence study conclusions and transferability. As appropriate, the rationale for several items might be discussed together.
Appendix I

Interview guide

Study Title: Why Sport? Sport Program Consumption Behaviours of Ice Hockey Parents in Canada

Primary researcher introduction: Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in our study! Before we begin, you will have to confirm that you have read and have understood the contents of the Letter of Information that was passed on to you by the research team. I must also let you know that we will be recording this interview and that the audio file containing your responses will be saved, transcribed, and analyzed as a component of this project. If you agree to have this interview recorded and if you acknowledge your understanding of and agreement with the contents of the Letter of Information, I invite you indicate your agreement by providing the research team with your written consent to volunteer as a participating in this study. Please let me know if you have any questions of if anything surrounding this process is unclear to you at this time. Thank you again for your time and for your participation!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>How has hockey played a role in your life? Did / do you play hockey? Are you a fan?</td>
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<td>How big of a role does hockey play within your current social circle?</td>
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<td>How important do you perceive hockey is within the broader Kingston (and Canadian) community?</td>
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<td>What are some differences between hockey and non-hockey parents that you have observed?</td>
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<td>Process</td>
<td>What does the title of hockey parent mean to you?</td>
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<td>In what ways does your child benefit from hockey (and sport) participation?</td>
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<td>What do you perceive your child has learned from hockey specifically that they might not have learned from other sports or extra-curricular activities?</td>
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<td>What motivates you to continue participating in hockey as a family? Does this differ from other sports?</td>
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<td>Output</td>
<td>What are some reasons that you chose and continue to choose to play in your current association?</td>
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<td>Tell me about some of the things you think your association does particularly well.</td>
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<td>What could be improved about your minor hockey association?</td>
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<td>Can you talk about some of the additional training programs that go along with your child’s hockey participation? Why are these so important?</td>
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<td>What are some standout moments from your child’s hockey career so far?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) *How do parents make decisions about enrolling their children in specific hockey programs?*

(b) *Why do parents choose hockey / sport as activities for their children?*
## Appendix J

### Retrospective Sport Participation Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity (Sport/Exercise Method)</th>
<th>City / Area</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Month/Year</th>
<th>hrs./week</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Equipment ($5)</th>
<th>Supplementary Program hrs./week</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Equipment ($5)</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
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## Appendix K

Weekly Task Sport Participation Chart

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
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<td>Approx. 11am</td>
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<td>Total Time:</td>
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