The Ethics of Categorization in Sport: An Analysis of the Possible Elimination of Under 19 Lightweight Rowing in Canada

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Abstract

In 2017 a proposed rule change was made by a working group appointed by Rowing Canada Aviron to eliminate the U19 lightweight rowing category in Canada. While this proposal did not come to fruition, it did raise questions about the purpose and ethics of maintaining such a category. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore the perceptions of those closely involved with U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and the ethical considerations and ramifications of a possible ban on this category. Ten interviews were conducted with coaches and administrators closely associated with the topic to ascertain individual and group perceptions of this proposal. Based on Charles Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology, this study uncovered and evaluated the ethical implications and validity of the possible elimination of U19 rowing in Canada and provided a commentary on categorization in sport more broadly. The results of the interviews revealed six main emergent themes that included concepts of; natural lightweights, opportunity and fairness, health and harm reduction, education, coaching abuse or neglect, and accountability. After analyzing the perceptions of participants and applying an ethical analysis to the issue, a possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada was deemed ethically unjustifiable.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” – Soren Kierkegaard

As the quote above suggests, this thesis reflects the background and perspectives of individuals to better understand how we ought to live in the present. In this case, the sport under investigation is rowing which has a long, rich history but an uncertain future. Rowing has existed in some pragmatic form ever since the first tree was hollowed out to produce a small craft that could float on water and be propelled by a paddle or oar. Beyond its ancient origins, competitive modern rowing was born in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Mallory, 2011). The first university boat race between Oxford and Cambridge universities was held in 1829 (Wigglesworth, 2013). Throughout the 19th century there was a proliferation of rowing clubs and enormous interest in amateur and professional rowing regattas and challenge competitions, especially in European countries and the northeast region of the United States and central and eastern Canada (Meuret, 1992).

National and international championship rowing races were held on a regular basis, the sport received substantial newspaper coverage, lucrative prize money could be won in professional rowing, and widespread gambling was associated with the sport (Mallory, 2011). The most successful professional of this era was Canadian Ned Hanlan, who rose to prominence in national and international rowing and has been dubbed Canada’s first sports hero (Giddens, 2019). In 1882, the Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) was founded to oversee rowing in England and represented the first attempt to standardize and classify amateur rowing (Wigglesworth, 2013). Ten years later, the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron (FISA) was established to govern amateur rowing initially only in Europe. It now oversees rowing globally and is the oldest international sport federation of its kind (Meuret, 1992).
Rowing in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the epitome of popularity, advancement and progress in the burgeoning modern sport era.

The origins of competitive rowing in British universities led to the sport being identified as class-based and prevalent among upper class boys and Englishmen who espoused a strict amateur code. The middle classes only gained entry to rowing when pressures on amateur governing bodies were successful to relax their codes on the status of a gentleman (Halladay, 1987; 1990). In parallel to these advances was the advent of professional rowing. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the merits of professionalism and amateurism were constantly redefined and contested by social and athletic standards of the day (Halladay, 1987; Wigglesworth, 2013). Professionals were often described as mercenaries or working-class watermen; men who rowed for a living out of necessity and could not occupy the same ‘gentleman’ status as amateur (elite white males, non-paid, non-workers) rowers (Halladay, 1987; 1990).

Amateur rowers, even at the turn of the 20th century, were never clearly defined by specific rules or regulations and were associated more by their elite social class and higher education in most European countries (Halladay, 1990; Meuret, 1992). Through the early years of competitive racing, amateur rowing took precedence over professional races both in England and Europe. The reasons for this are somewhat intersectional and attributed to employment uncertainty, technical factors such as “intellectual advantages” of amateur oarsmen (Wigglesworth, 2013, p. 9) and a general social and normative leaning toward the sport being performed for its own sake rather than for profit (Halladay, 1987). The need for organized rules and amateur-professional distinctions was also necessary due to controversies regarding different standards countries maintained (Meuret, 1992; FISA, 2019). As a result, social class and the
regulatory demands of an increasingly popular sport led to the creation of amateur organizations like the ARA and FISA, two major sport governing bodies whose disagreement over the definition and classification of amateur athletes prevented the ARA’s entry into FISA until 1947 (Meuret, 1992).

Since the first internationally recognized European championships in 1883 (Meuret, 1992), rowing has been and continues to be in many ways an exclusionary sport. Evidence for this besides the professional-amateur debate are the relatively late (1954) inclusion of female categories in championship regattas (Meuret, 1992) and the lack of ethnic diversity in world class racing. Where discrimination based on social class, gender and ethnicity is perhaps no longer a major issue in the sport, other aspects of competitive rowing have ethical implications. For example, lightweight rowing has been in existence for over 100 years in the North American collegiate rowing system (Penn, 2005) and formally in Canadian high schools since the 1940s (Stevens, 2012). Despite this, “making weight” and other aspects of the lightweight category, as will be described below, may be morally problematic.

Lightweight rowing was part of the proliferation of the sport which is practiced in many countries around the world. Today, FISA recognizes 155 national rowing federations, and athletes of all ages participate in the sport (FISA, 2019). As rowing expanded to diverse populations, it also introduced new competitive classifications such as the lightweight rowing category. Distinct from “heavyweight” or “open” rowing, lightweight rowers are required to “weigh-in” prior to races in front of an umpire and their weight is recorded. Sometimes this occurs less than two hours before a race and athletes often try to lose a significant portion of their body weight before the “weigh-in” (Karlson, Becker & Merkur, 2001; Pustivsek, Hadzik & Dervisevic, 2014; Sykora, Grilo, Wilfley & Brownell, 1993). Once their weight is recorded,
lightweight rowers try to quickly rehydrate and consume nutritious foodstuffs to revive their strength and stamina and achieve success. This intense down and up diet regimen can substantially affect one’s personality, performance and produce potential health risks (Karlson et al. 2001; Pustivsek et al. 2014; Sykora et al., 1993).

Lightweight rowing was first introduced to the collegiate system in 1917 at the University of Pennsylvania for college students who wanted to race similar sized competitors to provide better and fairer competition (Mallory, 2011). The need for a lighter weight category for male high school athletes (granted it was only men who were initially allowed to participate), who generally may weigh between 120 and 160 pounds, was due to the smaller stature and variations of physical development among adolescent youth (Stevens, 2012). On a slightly larger scale it was also proposed that a lightweight category created a level playing field for nations with “less statuesque” people (Chapman, 1997; Sykora et al. 1993). For example, FISA had been under fire after the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games for having 64% of the rowing participants represent European countries (Oswald, 1999). This uneven representation on the national stage prompted FISA president Dennis Oswald to promote lightweight rowing in the interest of encouraging other nations to participate at the Olympic and international level (Oswald, 1999). More specific reasons for the decision to include lightweight rowing and actual weight designations themselves (as they are notoriously arbitrary) has been vague but FISA does offer some insight into their introduction of the first lightweight championship in 1974 as an attempt to “… give positive encouragement to all those in the world under 70 kilos who had until then been frustrated by the fact that 90 kilos was the average weight needed to have any chance of winning.” (Meuret, 1992, p. 169).
The ambiguity and lack of transparency when it comes to the implementation and management of lightweight rowing in the history of the sport lies at the crux of this study. After the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, an unprecedented decision was made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FISA to exclude the lightweight men’s four category from the 2020 Tokyo Olympics racing program (the “four” being a four manned boat, each with one oar). The decision resulted in cutting the number of available lightweight team spots for men from six to two with only the lightweight double sculls event remaining (the “double” being a two manned boat with two oars each). The move was initially opposed by Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA), but that stance was eventually overturned shortly before the voting date (Rowbottom, 2017). On the heels of the IOC’s precedent setting decision, RCA designated a “working group” committee to reassess and revise the rules of racing as they do every quadrennial. In the fall of 2017, the working group proposed and published online within a slate of changes to the RCA rules a reform that no athlete under the age of 19 (U19) be allowed to row in the lightweight category [see Appendix A, Rule # 2.10]. In protest, the Canadian Secondary School Rowing Association (CSSRA) made clear its support for lightweight rowing on social media and presented a formal position of their support for the category in a public statement [see Appendix B]. RCA proceeded to withdraw the proposal without taking it to the annual RCA directors meeting shortly thereafter.

The preceding development sets the foundation for this study and is subsumed regarding the ethics of categorization in sport. The latter theme may branch into issues of human rights and the legal standing individuals have in national constitutions and international and Canadian charters of human rights. Age discrimination is a legal ground for discrimination in Canada (Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985) and a relevant aspect of U19 lightweight rowing. However,
age categorization is generally acceptable in sport to ensure competitive fairness and sometimes safety. A person’s weight however is not legally protected against discrimination in either Canadian or Ontario human rights legislation (Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013) and this thesis does not intend to argue for or against this type of discrimination. Whereas some academics have promoted the idea of including weight as protected in human rights law such as Luther (2010) and Puhl, Suh & Li (2016), this research will focus specifically on the ethical implications of the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.

One overarching feature of the ethics of categorization in sport is the presumption sport is voluntary, even sports classified and regulated by age and weight. Because these criteria discriminate between those eligible and ineligible to compete against each, it is imperative to understand the context and justification for these rules and their moral ramifications. In this sense, this study is interested in the general topic of the ethics of categorization in sport where issues related to athlete autonomy and equality may be implicated, as well as the specific issue related to U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.

Reasons for different categories in rowing are like other weight-based sports such as wrestling, boxing and weightlifting. The various categories in Canadian high school rowing demonstrate several classifications at this level of the sport [see Appendix C]. In combat sports, weight categories are used to protect athletes from harm and unfair advantages by ensuring competitors are equally matched in size. Such justification is synonymous in other sports that distinguish athletes based on age or gender such as Canadian ice hockey and soccer leagues. Where age and gender categories have sometimes been criticized for violating human rights and are not altogether unproblematic, discrimination based on supposedly relevant characteristics
such as age and weight to promote fairness and safety in sport is commonplace and often reasonably justified. However, one reason rowing categories are unlike combat sports is that they are not needed to protect opponents from physically harming each other due to size disparities. Thus, justification for implementing a category like lightweight rowing is based more on competitive fairness and equitable opportunities for participation rather than considerations of personal safety (Meuret, 1992; Mallory, 2011; Stevens, 2012).

Weightlifting and other comparable sports that have weight categories presumably do so in the interest of fairness, but this remains speculative due to the lack of published research on the topic. Such a knowledge gap demonstrates a need for more research on the topic and to take seriously the ethics of categorization in sport. Also, distinct from the two-pronged weight classification system in lightweight rowing (age and weight), weightlifting (as well as many combat sports) has numerous weight categories to presumably reduce the disadvantage of being a smaller statured competitor. While similarities may exist between weightlifting (and combat sports) and rowing, the cultural history and justification of weight-based categories in these sports are not identical and require further investigation. Research on the potential ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and its moral implications is needed to reveal distinctions and parallels to other weight-based sports.

Despite promoting competitive fairness and accessibility to a broad spectrum of athletes, the issues that arise with weight-based categories in sport are significant. A substantial amount of research has examined eating disorders in weight-based sports like boxing and rowing. Lightweight rowing and other elite sports do not causally result in eating disorders among athletes but do pose greater risks to health and safety because of dieting, disordered eating, social pressures and other weight-cutting measures (Kraus & Legenbauer, 2018; Karlson, Becker, &
Merkur 2001; Martinsen & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013; Pustivsek et al., 2014; Sykora et al., 1993; Taub & Blinde, 1992). The risks involved in sports with weight classifications, including combat sports and weightlifting, have given rise to suggestions to find alternatives, such as height, to negate some of the potential risks posed by focusing primarily on weight and weight reduction measures (De La Fuente, 2018).

Besides health-related concerns, ethical implications of creating weight-based categories may be unjustifiably discriminatory and potentially subordinate the character of lightweight rowing as a division with less inherent value. This may also impart less value to those who are smaller statured which may in turn impact some ethnicities and races more than others. Whether or not the proposal made by RCA’s working group to eliminate U19 lightweight rowing in Canada recognized these concerns is unknown. No information on its rationale has been published in the minutes of meetings on the RCA website. Perhaps the proposal was based on economics or other non-ethical values. Since no public rationale for the proposal has yet been identified, the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and its ethical implications warrants further investigation.

The purpose of the study then is to examine the perceptions of coaches and administrators regarding this proposal who are largely responsible for creating, enforcing and adhering to the policies and rules of rowing. They more than others may shed light as to why U19 lightweight rowing is being questioned and if its possible elimination is ethically defensible. The investigation here follows in the spirit of social justice movements in Western societies that promote equality and accessibility, topics that are also analyzed in law and social discourse. The extension of ethical notions of equality permeate the sporting world as fairness and equality as stipulated by rules and regulations of sport governing bodies. For example, these concepts
inform all Olympic level sports which are subject to the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA) guidelines. WADA’s code is perhaps the most explicit in its promotion of “health, fairness and equality for athletes world-wide…” (WADA, 2015), and these tenets are ones all sporting bodies such as RCA must abide by. The potential ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada therefore has serious ethical ramifications.

The concepts of health, fairness and equality were utilized in this study to help identify the central normative frameworks related to the ethics of categorization and U19 lightweight rowing. Through the data collection and analysis process, themes emerged from the data that were mostly characterized by these concepts. Where health is concerned, the primary ethical implications refer to harm reduction, safety, eating disorders and health risks. Each of the health-related implications are important considerations for adults caring for non-adult athletes and are of significant ethical concern given that health is an intrinsically desirable good.

In U19 lightweight rowing the ability to compete freely and within socially constructed and agreed upon rules of the sport is important. Respecting the autonomy of U19 athletes and optimizing competitive fairness within the rules of the sport is a concern coaches and administrators must recognize. In rowing, justice and fairness concern the creation and promotion of rules and categories that are validated by reasonable grounds to promote individual liberty and socially accepted norms.

It is essential that meaningful considerations of equality be understood within society broadly where matters of equality and inequality reside and the social structures that support these ideas (MacKinnon, 2016). For this reason, the concept of hierarchy in relation to advantages and disadvantages between individuals must be evaluated to appreciate the inherent value of equality (MacKinnon, 2016). Substantive equality therefore requires contextual
consideration for it to be inherently valuable (Girgis, 2014), and so the perceptions of coaches and administrators are essential to illuminate these moral aspects of a potential ban. Establishing the moral importance of equality is necessary even among scholars who disagree that equality is inherently valuable (Frankfurt, 1997; Westen, 1990).

Rationale for the Study

Although the risks inherent in sport and weight-based categories in rowing have been researched, few studies have examined the ethical implications of sport categories, specifically in rowing and among adolescent teens. The possible elimination of U19 lightweight in Canada as listed in the 2017 RCA’s rules of racing review consultation process document is an opportunity to scrutinize this subject. The need for such research is essential to the governance of rowing. Informed and ethically relevant policy decisions must be made regarding the future of this weight class in rowing. If the elimination of U19 lightweight rowing at the national and international levels were to occur, it may disenfranchise a significant number of young athletes. The purpose of this study therefore is to investigate and understand the perceptions of coaches and administrators who can illuminate the ethical implications of such a prospect and perhaps shed light on the ethics of categorization in sport generally.

Research Questions

In this study, the following main research questions will be asked:

1. How do coaches and administrators perceive U19 lightweight rowing?
2. How do coaches and administrators perceive the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and what are the ethical ramifications if this were to occur?
3. How might a possible ban on U19 lightweight rowing be related to moral goods?
Methodology

Based on the nature of the topic and the normative interests of this research, qualitative methods were used to find answers to the above research questions. Qualitative research was appropriate because the themes of the study were situated in a philosophical context and interpretations of social realities (Dupius, 1999). This study utilized qualitative data collection procedures and techniques such as participant interviews, semi-structured interview guides, interview note-taking, reflexive journaling and member checking. These research techniques are contrary to a positivist approach which is guided by ‘objectivity’ and quantitative data. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed to analyze the perceptions of coaches and administrators who answered the above research questions. I also incorporated my own experiences and views of the topic and sub-topics to clarify the meaning of participant perceptions, again through a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis.

Based on the study’s need to interpret individual realities of the ethical nature of adolescent weight categorization in rowing, I chose to use a constructivist epistemological framework that reflects the nature of how people create meaning and link new knowledge to existing understanding (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Constructivist paradigms allow for the researcher and researched to co-create the data and findings because no objective understanding is conclusively possible (Hunt & Carnevale, 2011). Because of my own history as a lightweight rower, I will refer to my experiences and knowledge of the sport to complement the data gleaned from participant responses. Co-creating the data with the participants through an interpretive approach will provide a more accurate account of the central issues under examination. This is exceedingly important in sports such as rowing where nautical terminology and rowing jargon
are commonly used, and meaningful dialogue are often dependent on historical and sociocultural contexts.

Within the preceding paradigm, I will refer to Charles Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology to interpret the data. Phenomenology explores the subjective meaning and essence of lived human experiences (Glesne, 2016). This type of methodology requires extensive notetaking and reflexive techniques to adequately interpret the data and the perceptions of participants (Jones et al. 2014). Using phenomenology to understand coaches’ and administrators’ experiences and perceptions regarding U19 lightweight rowing is essential to comprehend the social and ethical climate of this category. Some phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl attempt to interpret experiences by bracketing their own assumptions and preconceptions of a specific phenomena. However, this study will follow the Heideggerian school of thought that rejects the idea of bracketing, and instead, recommends researchers embed themselves in the data when interpreting the lived experiences of others (Laverty, 2003).

Following Heidegger’s brand of hermeneutic phenomenology, Charles Taylor’s moral framework for interpreting moral experiences of individuals will be employed to understand the moral relationships between experiences and sport categorization ethics. Taylor argues that people can engage in moral decision making despite any formal training in philosophy or ethics that might otherwise inform their judgments (Taylor, 2004). This *a posteriori* truth that Taylor recognizes not only supports the philosophical foundations of phenomenology but presents a method by which I can analyze and understand the normative realities people experience.

Taylor (2004) sees our normative perceptions and relationships toward others as being influenced by our social histories and contexts that are unique to every individual. The way people perceive their social existence and personal morality in the world based on these
experiences and interactions is called the “social imaginary” (Taylor, 2004). Social imaginaries make up the entire phenomenological experience of an individual including their normative perceptions and are often shared to some degree with people who have similar histories and experiences. How coaches and administrators perceive U19 lightweight rowing in this study is therefore captured within their social imaginaries. Of course not every action or experience a person has is normatively charged and “[t]hings [only] take on importance against a background of intelligibility,” meaning that for anything in our lives to have moral significance there must be something engrained in our social realities that is related to our choices that makes them valuable (Taylor, 1991, p. 37).

Things that give moral value to certain aspects of our social imaginaries are called “horizons of significance” and may be a key to understanding what ethical concerns are associated with the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing (Taylor, 1991). The horizons of significance characterize what ethical principles people value within their unique social imaginary. Together these constructs form the “moral order” of society that establishes what is right and wrong, good and bad (Taylor, 2004). The moral order as Taylor describes it reflects the current moral ideals of a specific group. These aspects of Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology can be effectively applied to understand how, in the context of participants’ backgrounds and cultural spheres, moral standards are developed and shared within the culture of rowing. This moral framework will be used to show how coaches and administrators view the ethical dimensions of their experiences in rowing and can be applied to their perceptions of the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. By interviewing these participants, I will explore their social imaginaries and horizons of significance. I will then analyze their perceptions
of the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing and discover their understanding of the moral order in rowing.

**Research Design**

In general, phenomenological research has relatively few restrictions on minimum participant numbers and data analysis techniques (Laverty, 2003). In this study I chose to interview 10 participants all residing in south-central Ontario, six were coaches and four were administrators on either RCA or CSSRA boards. Due to time and financial constraints a sample size greater than 10 would have been unmanageable. The 10 participants in this study provided enough diverse opinions and perspectives to comprehend the ethical implications of the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. The coaching cohort consisted of head coaches of high school or U19 rowing programs who had a minimum of five years experience at the head coaching level. These coaches had first-hand experience with U19 lightweight rowing and close personal relationships with high school rowers, their parents and rowing officials at many levels. Their coaching experience in rowing made them qualified to comment on the potential ban of U19 lightweight rowing and the ethical fallout that might result if this policy was implemented.

The administrator participants in this study were either RCA or CSSRA board members who had at least five years of experience on a rowing executive board. These executives were largely responsible for the implementation and structuring of rowing including the U19 lightweight category. Some had competitive rowing and rowing coaching backgrounds, but others did not. Nevertheless, they all were in positions of power to set rules and regulations to influence rowing and the future of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. They represented a different but significant perspective from that of coaches. Gender parity was achieved in this
study by having five female and five male participants whose age range was between late 30s and early 70s.

Intentional recruitment and sampling were used to identify the interviewees and reflect a diverse body of perceptions regarding U19 lightweight rowing (Laverty, 2003). Coaches and administrators were identified by contacting high schools, rowing clubs and rowing organizations. Invitation letters were sent to potential participants via e-mail that included the eligibility requirements [see Appendix F]. Once replies were received expressing a willingness to be part of the study, participants were sent via e-mail a copy of the consent form [see Appendix G] and the Research Ethics Board Certification [see Appendix G]. It was decided that 10 participants would be sufficient to answer the research questions, and this number is not uncommon in qualitative phenomenological research that seeks in-depth analysis and understanding.

Contact was then made with participants to arrange face to face meetings. Interviews took place at convenient times and places of the participants’ choosing to ensure a comfortable and private atmosphere for unencumbered conversation. At the time of the interview participants handed me a signed copy of the consent form. Recorded interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, and I took notes throughout the interview process. Verbatim transcripts were generated immediately after the interviews were finished and notes were attached to each interview transcript. The notes were used to develop a phenomenological device called a “hermeneutic circle,” which is a reflective process that compares smaller parts of a text to the whole and visa versa to create a reflexive awareness of the meaning of responses (Cohen, Kahn & Steeves, 2000).
This method of analysis of the interview data is dialectic in nature where smaller quotes from the text are placed within a larger context. The notes I took tracked and uncovered personal impressions and biases and any subversive meanings within the text (Cohen et al. 2000). In this study, rowing jargon helped compare general social meanings. For example, “ergs don’t float” is a popular saying in rowing and is sometimes used to characterize the differences in strength of certain rowers on indoor rowing machines despite such strength differentials not always transferring over to racing speed on the water. Colloquialisms such as these need to not only be understood by the researcher who has a background in the sport, but they also need to be framed within a larger social context. By analyzing brief quotes and comparing them to their social meaning and the social imaginary of individuals, Taylor’s “horizons of significance” and “moral order” were revealed. This also established the participants’ understanding and relationship to the moral good in rowing, which in this case were assessments related to the concepts of health, fairness and equality (Hunt & Carnevale, 2011).

Once transcripts and my notes were completed, I contacted participants and asked for their feedback regarding these documents. Member-checking in qualitative research gives participants the opportunity to correct and ensure their perspectives are accurately stated and interpreted and resolve any misconceptions and misunderstandings in the data. This mutual constructive process of the data is co-created between participants and me as the researcher (Cohen et al. 2000). I next incorporated any feedback and revisions I received from the participants and this became the final version of the data. The co-created data enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the data.

I next analyzed the edited data to construct any overarching emergent themes using the hermeneutic circle. These themes were then assessed in relation to Taylor’s moral framework
described above. The perceptions of participants reflected a diverse set of opinions in relation to
the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and the moral ramifications of this
prospect. Several conclusions were drawn from this research on this specific topic, as well as the
ethics of categorization in sport and suggestions for future research.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

*Trustworthiness and Credibility*

An inherent issue with phenomenological research is the subjective nature of its
epistemological paradigm. Because participants and the researcher co-create the data during the
findings and analysis phases, it is almost impossible to replicate the data and it is only valuable
when contextually interpreted (Glesne, 2016). To account for this feature, a trustworthy and
credibility measure I employed was member checking. Whereas member checking is a
significant aspect of the data analysis procedure, it further serves as a trustworthy and credibility
measure by ensuring the interpretations I make are not exclusively based on my own experiences
but are woven together with those of the participants (Glesne, 2016).

Adhering strictly to the coding and interpretive hermeneutic circle when analyzing the
data was also vital to ensure the credibility of the results. Considering there is a lack of specific
and prescriptive data analysis methods for hermeneutic phenomenology, clarity and transparency
of my own preconceptions and interpretations were crucial (Laverty, 2003). Hermeneutic
phenomenology positions my role as the researcher as integral to the interpretation of the data
and may include my own opinions and beliefs. My views were distinct from, yet supplemented,
the perceptions and interpretations of the participants (Laverty, 2003). I kept a reflexive journal
to record and elucidate my opinions separate from that of the participants, and this helped reduce representing the participants’ perceptions as my own (Laverty, 2003).

Another method I utilized to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in this study was the incorporation of openness and transparency with participants (Laverty, 2003). By choosing private and comfortable interview spaces and engaging with participants in a respectful and open way regarding my own positions and experiences in rowing, together with the research purposes, a more accurate and reflective interview took place (Laverty, 2003). In virtue of this transparency and rapport, the hierarchy of researcher-to-researched is diminished and potentially puts both on a more level ground. Such an environment was created in this study and encouraged participants and me to be honest and open about our experiences and perceptions (Glesne, 2016).

**Generalizability**

This study was conducted in south-central Ontario, so there may be some concern for the applicability of this research more broadly. Since the research utilized an epistemological constructivist paradigm its generalizability to other geographical locales is likely inapplicable. A limitation of this study was the lack of financial means to personally interview participants beyond south-central Ontario. Face to face interviews with participants from British Columbia, for example, might produce different findings because the climate there permits rowing as a year-round sport. The views of BC coaches and administrators toward the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing may therefore be dissimilar. While geographical differences may not alter the normative responses to the research questions in this study, the fact no interviews with BC participants were conducted is a limitation of the study. It should be noted, however, Ontario has the largest number of rowing clubs in Canada with 49 (Row Ontario, 2019), BC with 41 (Rowing British Columbia, 2019), and the rest of the country with 38 (Rowing Canada Aviron,
Ontario represents the largest share of Canadian rowing clubs, coaches and rowers as well as board members on executive committees.

Given the findings and conclusions of this research were limited to participants in south-central Ontario, the generalizability of the study is muted. This is typical of qualitative studies when trying to gain an in-depth understanding of selected participant views and interpretations. This dimension is more pertinent to the research questions than its applicability to broader contexts. The participants in the study were adults and gender parity was achieved. As for the U19 lightweight rowing debate, all interview questions presumed U19 female and male rowers were treated as a single cohort. A delimitation of the study is that gender, sexual identity and binary gender constructs were not specifically examined in this study, mainly because the risks of developing eating disorders and other health risks are practically equal (Kraus et al. 2018; Sykora et al. 1993). Age was restricted to the U19 category because of the RCA’s working group proposal and the added ethical complexity when dealing with adolescent athletes who may be less informed and are treated more paternalistically. Because young rowers are not engaged in setting policies and implementing regulations, their input was not sought regarding the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. Perhaps a future study could solicit the views of this cohort. A decision was made to delimit the interviews to coaches and administrators who are more directly involved regarding the policies, rules and regulations of rowing.

Reliability

As previously mentioned, reproducing phenomenological studies is nearly impossible, especially when hermeneutics involve the researcher’s own interpretation in the creation of the data (Laverty, 2003). Because of this, it is unlikely another researcher could replicate the study and gather and produce the same data. Even though a similar analysis of the possible elimination
of U19 lightweight rowing may be possible if the same cohort of participants were questioned and their responses applied to the Taylor’s moral frameworks and social constructs, this result would be unlikely.

**Authenticity of the Data**

At the heart of this research and its methodological underpinnings is a philosophy that seeks to reflect the most authentic data phenomenology can provide. Authenticity requires researchers present their data in the most accurate and representative way possible. In this case, phenomenological hermeneutics was an attempt to portray the data in the most appropriate and authentic light possible. It was my ethical duty to represent the participants and their experiences, together with my own thoughts and background, with precision and honesty, and to do so in the best way possible using the methodology I selected.

**Chapter Development**

This first chapter provided a brief historical account of rowing and specifically lightweight rowing, and a general overview of the structure of the thesis. It discussed the purpose and importance of the study, identified and stated the research questions, methodology and how the data would be analyzed, as well as state its limitations and delimitations. In short, the first chapter established the roadmap of the study. The second chapter was a review of the literature. This chapter explicated ethical concepts like fairness, health and substantive equality as they apply to the ethics of categorization in sport generally and the U19 lightweight rowing question specifically. It also provided a detailed examination of the context and history of lightweight rowing against which the proposal of a potential ban on U19 lightweight rowing could be understood. The third chapter described the methodology and research design of the study. It
presented how Taylor’s hermeneutic moral phenomenology relates and applies to the data collection and analysis procedures. The fourth chapter presented and analyzed the findings of the data collected from the interviews. By referring to transcript excerpts, interpretations and thematic analyses of the data, including the insertion of my own opinions, I provided a deeper understanding of the perceptions held by coaches and administrators regarding the moral status of U19 lightweight rowing were it to be eliminated. The data analysis was primarily based on the application of the “hermeneutic circle.” The fifth and final chapter summarized the findings, drew conclusions and provided suggestions for further research and its contribution to categorization ethics in sport.

Reflexivity

My perspectives and biases regarding U19 lightweight rowing were embedded in virtually all stages of the research. Yet throughout the study it was important I remain transparent and disclose my positions as I co-created the data with participants (Laverty, 2003; Glesne, 2016). As part of this disclosure, the following describes my rowing background and position regarding the controversy surrounding U19 lightweight rowing and the ethical implications of its possible elimination.

I grew up as an athletic child and was always involved in sport in my community. In the summer I played soccer and in the winter ice hockey. Dreams of joining the NHL quickly dissipated when I turned 11 when I realized that to be exceptional in sport you needed to have special talents, skills and motivation at an early age. Despite this disheartening realization, I continued to enjoy sport for its own sake. In the summer before I entered high school, my twin sister took up rowing because our older female cousins rowed, and this made an impression on her. Due to sibling rivalry, I reluctantly joined my sister’s rowing venture and didn’t enjoy it at
first. If it weren’t for a local role model who was several years older and encouraged me to row later that fall, I never would have picked up an oar again. When I competed for E. L. Crossley high school I fell in love with the sport. Success in rowing was constantly reinforced as a product of hard work and conviction rather than talent, and after seeing fellow athletes only a few years older than me representing Canada on the international stage, dreams of athletic greatness took hold.

As a “natural lightweight” in my first year of rowing, I didn’t need to seriously diet or “cut weight” for any of the competitions I entered. However, as the years went on and my passion and stature grew proportionally, making weight became increasingly difficult. Dieting techniques and weigh-in tricks were taught by fellow athletes, and random trial and error techniques were unacceptable because not making weight was not an option. Coaches were reluctant to provide dieting advice to junior rowers because if they were caught doing so it would be a serious breach of responsibility. Looking back, I now know “old school” coaches who did provide dieting advice and should not have done so due to the potential harms and risks to young athletes. Despite the lack of accurate and appropriate information on how to manage my developing teenage body, I went through the trials of competing as a lightweight for all five years of my high school experience and continue to compete as a high-performance lightweight rower today.

Participation in rowing changed my life and presented me with successes I never imagined possible. Lightweight rowing permitted a boy my size to compete in a sport that valued a serious work ethic and commitment. Although I was admittedly fast enough to compete with some of the best heavyweights in my age category, the lightweight division was a naturally more competitive and appropriate field for me, and hundreds like me. Rowing as a lightweight has
been a love-hate relationship because while I gained so much appreciation for the classification it also made me miserable due to the physical pain of making weight. I share these sentiments with other rowers, and I’m aware others have been hurt more severely than me due to the pressures of competitive U19 lightweight rowing. For this reason, I sympathize with those who agree with and wish to defend the weight class, and those who believe it is problematic and perhaps ethically unjustifiable.

I cannot know what would have happened to me had the U19 lightweight division not existed when I started to row because most who join the sport are unaware such a category exists. For the past 11 years I have given my life to rowing; I identify with the sport and I love it. Understanding the ethical implications of U19 lightweight rowing and its possible elimination is how I want to give back to the sport which has deeply influenced my life. I also want to improve the sport, morally speaking. Embedding my story and views as a rower within this study will hopefully result in a deeper, richer understanding of the experiences and perceptions of coaches and administrators who will decide the future of U19 lightweight rowing. I must make my position apparent throughout the research given my intimate connection to rowing and the cohort under examination. I firmly believe my ethical convictions, dedication and honest appraisal of the data will serve to promote the quality and integrity of rowing.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Understanding the history of rowing is a relevant precursor to understanding the perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study. This is because the history of sport, whether consciously or not, is influenced by the practices and judgments of people and becomes the way sport is perceived by society (Mechikoff, 2010). The concept of sport categorization, the main topic of this thesis, is unique to rowing as will be shown below and therefore grasping the origins of this sport even briefly is required. Rowing as a mode of transportation existed for centuries but developed into its modern form in the early 17th century (Halladay, 1987). Before this time, rowing was often associated with naval war machines, where the supremacy of a nation’s fleet could bestow world renown and military superiority such as the famed Argos ships mentioned in Homer’s epic the *The Iliad*. For centuries thereafter, naval vessels used rowers to propel their ships in ports and in battle, where landing and boarding crafts were essential to at-sea warfare (Johnson, 1871). Speed and efficiency of rowing boats were necessary for survival and wartime strategy long before rowing became an amateur or professional sport. Coherent instruction and direction from an intelligent and trained naval captain were also paramount to succeed in naval battles (Johnson, 1871). Rowing laborers likely bemoaned the captain’s orders and may have been the antecedents of today’s modern rowers and coxswains.

Historic Eton College in England offered one of the first formal, modern rowing programs in the world and organized the first collegiate races in 1793 (Mallory, 2011; Halladay, 1990). While precise dates regarding the origins of competitive rowing are notoriously difficult to establish, the rowing program at Eton predated the elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge in England that established the first university boat race in the world in 1829. This event served
to entrench amateurism as a dominant model in rowing in contrast to professional rowing. The enormous publicity of hosting this famous rivalry known as the “Boat Race” was the exclusive domain of amateur upper-class oarsmen and firmly established the existing hierarchy in sport (Halladay, 1990).

Beyond educational institutions, it may be surmised that rowing laborers out of natural human instinct began racing one another to demonstrate their prowess and efficiency while plying their trade (Halladay, 1990). In the 17th century it was estimated that approximately 10,000 watermen worked in the metropolitan waterways on the river Thames (Halladay, 1987). Rowing was so ubiquitous in England that when competitive racing emerged, it was no surprise how profitable it would become in the 19th century as a venue for professionalism and gambling. Wealthy men were willing to stake a winner’s purse and engage in gambling that catapulted interest in the sport as a professional enterprise (Halladay, 1990). As such, competitive rowing in the 19th century catered to upper-class young men in British colleges and universities, in addition to lower-class working-class men – that is professionals – who made a living ferrying and transporting goods along many channels throughout England (Mallory, 2011; Wigglesworth, 2013).

Rowing’s binary existence as both a trade and a cultured sport in the 18th and 19th century is essentially what led to the conception of amateurism in rowing (Wigglesworth, 2013). The distinction between a professional and an amateur was relatively simple; those who made a living as a rower, either as a laborer or paid competitive athlete were deemed professionals, and those who rowed purely for the competitive spirit and as “gentlemen” were amateurs (Wigglesworth, 2013; Halladay, 1987; 1990). The distinction between these two categories in
rowing was contentious in the 19th century and part of the 20th century and characterized a socially divided British sport culture during that period (Wagg, 2006).

England’s Amateur Athletic Association (AAA), founded in 1880, was a major influence that segregated aristocratic gentlemen from paid working-class male athletes, and set rules and standards for the definition of an amateur in sports such as golf and cricket (Halladay, 1987). Such discrimination was not taken lightly however by many professional athletes. The AAA would eventually confine itself to overseeing amateur and youth sport, yet its impact to define and privilege amateurism was felt for decades in most sports (Halladay, 1987; Mallory, 2011). Regarding rowing, the elitist members of the AAA sought to distinguish itself from “…outsiders, artisans, mechanics, and such like troublesome persons” (Halladay, 1987, p. 40).

In 1882, these members created their own sport specific association called the Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) in England. Eight years later the National Amateur Rowing Association (NARA) was created to include working-class men who were excluded from the ARA (Halladay, 1987). Both the ARA and the NARA existed as separate entities because they disagreed over definitions of who was an amateur or professional oarsman. In 1937 the ARA abolished its definition of an amateur, but it still prohibited its rowers from competing against paid working-class oarsmen for the next 20 years. So strong were the prejudices of elite amateur oarsmen that they believed they were mentally superior over their professional counterparts. They also contended this gave them a technical advantage and were engaged in a completely different style of rowing (Wigglesworth, 2013; Halladay, 1990; Mallory, 2011). Finally, in 1956, both the ARA and NARA organizations merged, whereby 375 English rowing clubs became affiliated within a single sport governing body (Halladay, 1987).
Amateur rowers and wealthy supporters of amateur rowing were not only the major power brokers who organized major competitions and events but also determined how the ideology of amateurism would prevail over professional athletes and lower-class working oarsmen (Halladay, 1990). Professional races, often termed “wagers” or “matches” were profitable for rowers and spectators alike because gambling at the time was part and parcel of the competitions and interest in professional rowing was relatively high (Wigglesworth, 2013). Still, class bias and socioeconomic prejudice were so prevalent toward professional rowing, in addition to scandals like fixed races and shady betting practices, amateur rowing and its associations were socially perceived as being far more legitimate. This in large part was intentionally influenced by the ruling aristocratic class.

In a book published in 1871 titled *A History of Rowing in America* a small chapter on the “Morality of Rowing” (Johnson, 1871, p. 33) expounded on the responsibility of rowers to abstain from unhealthful activities such as smoking and drinking because such behavior outside of the sport was morally unjust to crewmates. While the morality of maintaining “clean” eating habits and proper training regimens are expected of most athletes today, the ability and privilege to be able to maintain such diets and training schedules was something mostly privileged gentlemen could exclusively sustain. In contrast to this “morality,” the origins of many professional clubs in England were established by local pubs and inns that sponsored professional races, could store boats, and house and feed patrons during rowing events (Halladay, 1990). Such assistance and patronage from the local community were necessary to support professional oarsmen/working-class watermen, however, doing so also contributed to their social subjugation and perceived immorality.
As the debate over the constitutions (definitions and by-laws) of amateur oarsmen persisted, a parallel issue regarding the standardization of the actual rules and parameters of rowing races also fuelled debate as the sport grew in popularity and competitors travelled more frequently (Meuret, 1992). Considering both quandaries, an international governing body in rowing was established in 1892 known as the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron (FISA). Today this organization is referred to as World Rowing. FISA was founded to firmly establish the definition of amateur oarsmen, and the rules, regulations and protocols of competitive rowing including standard race distances (Meuret, 1992). This governing body supported a more liberal definition of amateur oarsmen and not one merely based on class distinctions. It promoted the physical and social benefits of rowing open to all classes of people as a shared pursuit (Meuret, 1992). In 1909, FISA designated a weight limit for coxswains at 55kg and this became the first international rowing example of a technical weight classification. Lighter coxswains would have to carry up to a maximum of 5kg in added weight to create a level playing field (Meuret, 1992).

Given these developments, rowing was accepted, relatively speaking, as a segregated sport that followed the amateur code on one hand, and middle and lower-class professional rowing on the other hand (Mallory, 2011). Wagg (2006) contends that even at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games there was still strong evidence of social prejudice toward lower class oarsman despite their official status as an amateur athlete. By the second half of the 20th century, rowing would become less of a class-based sport because the socioeconomic status and backgrounds of athletes had diversified and the standard of living for the middle-classes improved significantly, particularly in Western countries (Mallory, 2011). However, the high costs individual rowers incur, the expense of buying and maintaining modern boats, and the
expenditures required to operate rowing clubs and sustain competitive racing courses make rowing somewhat of an exclusionary, elitist sport.

In many ways, rowing has mirrored the social protests of aristocratic society in some nations, while simultaneously falling prey to the pitfalls of liberal capitalism. While the amateur/professional issue faded into the background throughout the latter half of the 20th century, new issues began to emerge. Even though the idea of exclusion based on class and wealth has not been eliminated from rowing, and in many sports, the central topic of this thesis concerns another exclusionary factor. Namely, non gender-based segregation of athletes and competitions within a single sport grounded on specific weight categories.

**Categorization**

Categories are intrinsic in our everyday lives and in sport. Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) is a research tool that helps social study researchers understand how we associate and conform to socially constructed categories (Housley & Smith, 2015). How group membership plays a role in our social lives and the way in which we interact and perceive the world is well studied in sociological, psychological and anthropological contexts through linguistic and ethnographic research. The research methods in these disciplines are similar to the hermeneutic methodology to be explained in chapter three and used in this thesis. Tools such as MCA are often employed to understand and predict social identities and behaviors including the moral identities of individuals in certain situations (Housley & Smith, 2015).

This kind of analysis can assist one’s understanding of the nature of categories and competitive fairness in sports like boxing, wrestling, judo and rowing. In these specific sports, categories are often based on weight differentials, and in rowing this generally means either
lightweight or heavyweight. In rowing there are also categories related to the number of rowers in a boat, the skill or experience level of the athletes, or even the type of rowing performed such as non-sliding seat rowing [See Appendix C]. The latter is synonymous with the Royal St. John’s Regatta which held its first competitive race in 1816 on Quidi Vidi Lake, St. John’s, Newfoundland, and is the oldest known organized sporting event in North America (Marsh, 2015).

Other more common rowing categories include sculling or sweep rowing, where rowers have either two oars or one (respectively). For example, rowers compete in singles (1x), doubles (2x), pairs (2-), fours (4+/4-), quads (4x) and eights (8+). The annotations used to designate the shorthand of these boat categories indicates whether it is sculling by using an “X” and sweep rowing by using a “+” or a “-”, depending on whether the sweep boat is with or without a coxswain. A non-rower in mostly fours and eights (indicated by the “+”) is known as a coxswain and is the person who steers the boat and coordinates the timing and pace of the rowers. In some competitive regattas eligibility to compete in an event depends on the kinds of races that an athlete has won prior to the event. Events like the United States Club National Rowing Championships or the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta have (or have had) novice, intermediate, and senior divisions that were/are determined by previous winning performances or participation in high profile competitive races.

The ability to keep track and police such eligibility requirements is itself problematic on practical and perhaps moral grounds as well. Given these above variables and numerous types of competitions in rowing, this study will focus on the under 19 (U19) lightweight rowing category and the ethics of its possible elimination. Whereas the MCA is a methodological tool to investigate the meanings of group affiliations in relation to issues like identity and social
interaction, identity research is not the main purpose of this thesis and it will not be utilized directly here. Instead, the MCA is introduced because it reinforces the value membership identities have in social groups and among individuals that carries moral weight. These aspects of the MCA are relevant to this study. Identifying as a lightweight rower or those who support or reject this category is important to understand their beliefs, perceptions and arguments regarding whether the elimination of this category is ethically justifiable.

“Categorization” has been distinguished from “categories” by Jayyusi (1984). The former often refers to a person or persons within a group who have associations such as “bad drivers” or “intelligent persons.” The latter more often refers to general social categories and “umbrella” terms for individuals and groups such as “mother,” “poet” or “rower.” While these distinctions are not exhaustive, they are also not mutually exclusive as evidenced by the term “lightweight rower” or just “lightweight” in this research. Categories and categorization, while inferentially different in meaning, will often be used interchangeably in this study.

There are also several ways to conceptualize distinct categories and other differentiations within them. For example, the logico-grammatical relationships between concepts that individuals make and presume are indispensable to the understanding these relations (Jayyusi, 1984). By studying the relationships of words and their meaning, inferences can be made related to the comprehension of individuals regarding an issue and its context and perhaps better explain the moral basis of perceptions (Jayyusi, 1984). The words used to describe lightweights or even the descriptive term “lightweight” itself has many implications and meanings that individuals ascribe to them. For example, such meanings may refer to being proud of one’s personal rowing identity or being scornful of lightweight rowing seen as an unethical system. The context in
which people categorize others can therefore be subconscious or implied as functions of social and/or individualized interactions that can be ethically laden.

Categorization also complements other features of hierarchical logico-grammatical structures people use when making distinctions of things. As Jayyusi (1984) frames this point, “[C]ategorizations ‘collect’ features, hierarchies ‘order’ them, contrasts ‘differentiate’ them, and this ordering and differentiation of features takes place against an ordering and differentiation of tasks, relevance’s and values” (p. 166). Three essential features basically contribute to the moral substance of the categorization of a person or a thing, both at the micro linguistic level and the macro socio-cultural level on the topic of lightweight rowing. While not all categories or categorizations are morally relevant, standards of rationality and standards of morality are often intertwined. This means that what can be classified as purely a rational amoral action can in other contexts or uses of certain terms, be considered a moral action (Jayyusi, 1984).

To use rowing as an example, the term “making-weight” is an action that has specific meaning for those who identify as lightweight rowers. To most lightweight rowers, “making-weight” refers to a rational expression of how an individual might diet or lose water mass to be eligible for the lightweight category. The action however can also be associated with unsafe weight-making practices such as extreme dieting and “sweating-out” in garbage bags or in saunas for unhealthy amounts of time. This is especially questionable for junior athletes who may not be considered old enough to partake in such extreme weight-loss measures. Such behavior may even be morally problematic. Those who are categorized as “making-weight” are sometimes subjected to a moral assessment based on the context in which they are being categorized and understood. This phenomenon is important in relation to how participants in this study view and categorize lightweight rowing. Is the category understood as a practical matter or
a morally charged one? Thus, how categories are created, understood and perceived by people may be relevant to the moral issues in lightweight rowing.

**The Ethics of Categorization**

The ethics of categorization in this thesis is meant to highlight moral problems that arise when individuals are categorized in the context of sport. Categories in sport can deny individuals their fundamental human rights such as those that protect them from discrimination based on age, gender and place of birth (Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985). In sport however, these rights are sometimes surrendered and individuals who participate in sport voluntarily waive these rights in order to participate within presumably fair predetermined sets of rules, however arbitrary they may be. For example, in rowing the weight of a lightweight rower can vary between regattas, countries and even seasons, but all are valid considering the participants have agreed to conform to designated sets of rules. The arbitrary nature of rules in sport mean that discrimination based on a protected basis must be justified or otherwise such a rule may be vulnerable to legal action and repercussions. Given the essential nature of personal identities and the agreed upon conditions athletes accept before competitions, categorization itself may not be inherently unethical. However, if conditions and contexts are ill-conceived and unfair, categorization and categories may be unethical. In this sense, this study examines the ethical rather than legal context of stipulated categories and whether a future ban on U19 lightweight rowing is ethically defensible.

The ethical principles of categorization vary in terms of fairness, paternalism and transparency. For example, the MCA recognizes that belonging to a group or category is socially constructed by individuals who often share common needs, interests and desires (Housley & Smith, 2015). This means there may be no rigid, static rules that constitute group affiliations and
sport categories specifically can be altered provided there are moral grounds for their establishment and alterations. Moreover, the ethical principles that guide people’s rational judgments relating to the category of lightweight rowing may be unique to that subculture. Still, one can critically evaluate the moral reasoning of others to determine the level of cogency of their perceptions and arguments. Such an assessment is both individual and collective and is based in part on personal experiences and the ethos of lightweight rowing. In this study, the researcher and participants are or have been intimately involved in lightweight rowing for years and this may be a factor in declaring the importance of this research. The specific approach to uncover and examine the perceptions of participants, their moral reasoning and ethical principles on the question of the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing, known as hermeneutic phenomenology, will be explained in chapter three.

**Weight Categories in Sport**

Weight is not a protected right against discrimination. It is not found in Ontario’s or Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms and internationally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013; Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985; United Nations, 2019). However, discrimination based on weight is an everyday occurrence in social and professional contexts. This can be demonstrated professionally in the modeling industry or socially as fat shaming on social media. Athletes are no exception to the scrutiny society places on body shape and weight, and perhaps even more so due to their association with weight restricted events and perceptions on improved athleticism due to lower body fat percentages (Sykora et al., 1997; Kraus et al., 2018).

Weight discrimination does not only affect those who are heavier and larger based on Body Mass Index (BMI), but also those who are too small or skinny (Hunger, Dodd & Smith,
The perception of weight-based discrimination or negative attitudes towards an individual’s weight has been shown to increase the probability of someone having suicidal thoughts and other mental health issues. Quantitative measures like BMI are not the direct cause of poor mental health outcomes, but negative perceptions of one’s body often lead to these results (Hunger et al. 2019). Several other studies have shown that lightweight rowing and other weight-based sports can increase the risk of mental health issues as a result of dieting, social pressures and body perceptions (Kraus et al. 2018; Karlson et al., 2001; Martinsen & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013; Pustivsek, Hadzik & Dervisevic, 2014; Sykora et al., 1993; Taub & Blinde, 1992). These concerns become more complicated for those who govern rowing and supervise athletes who are not yet adults and depend on adult guidance and support for their wellbeing.

Rowing is not the only sport with weight categories. Combat sports like boxing, wrestling and judo have many weight classes to ensure competitive fairness and safety. Sport governing bodies do not explicitly publish the rationale to justify various weight categories. Without such reasoning, it is difficult to know precisely how and why such categories were created. As a result, the designations appear arbitrary and are accepted at face value. While it is understandable sport governing bodies have the authority to set rules that all stakeholders in a specific sport must adhere to, why certain rules apply and others do not is rarely, if ever, publicly disclosed. In certain sports weight-based distinctions are necessary to establish competitive fairness, however, in combat sports, serious risk behaviors are likely another reason weight categories are needed. Despite these reasons, controversy surrounding combat athletes who strive to make weight has been well documented (Artioli, Saunders, Iglesias & Franchini, 2016; Franchini, Brito & Artioli, 2012; Kazemi, Rahman & De Ciantis, 2011; Koral & Dosseville, 2009; Steen & Brownell, 1990). Interestingly, a suggestion has been made in striking sports like Taekwondo to employ
height as a category differential and not weight. Perhaps height is a more significant factor relative to competitive fairness and risk in such sports rather than weight, and again, sport governing bodies would make this determination (De La Fuente, 2018).

By contrast and unlike combat sports, rowing does not implement weight-based categories because of safety and health concerns. The only sports this research has identified where weight categories are utilized exclusively in the interest of competitive fairness are rowing, weightlifting (and those sports associated with or are like weightlifting) and equestrianism. Some equestrian sports use weight categories for the human participants in combination with their tack (horse equipment) in the interest of the horse’s welfare. A rider’s size can harm a horse that is too small and would also pose as a disadvantage to jumping or distance events (Equine Canada, 2016). While health and safety are being considered on behalf of the horse, it is much less so for the rider. For the rider competitive fairness is the main concern, but given this example there are clearly varying degrees of perceived harm that rules and regulations attempt to mitigate. Again, specific reference to the ethical or practical reasoning behind the implementation of weight categories is difficult to ascertain due to the lack of public disclosure. It is often just assumed there are good reasons for weight-based distinctions.

Weightlifting is perhaps the closest sport to rowing in the sense that weight categories are utilized to maintain competitive fairness. Weightlifters compete in 10 weight-categories in international competition and seven at the Olympics where both males and females perform two basic movements called the snatch and the clean and jerk (Storey & Smith, 2012; International Weightlifting Federation, 2019). Weightlifters often train at body masses that are 5-10% higher than their actual competitive weight class (Storey & Smith, 2012), which is often the case in elite lightweight rowers. Also mirroring rowers, a loss of 1-2kg the week prior to weighing in for
competition athletes will dehydrate and consume “low residue” foods to make the weight cut-off (Storey & Smith, 2012). Dehydration may come in the form of reduced liquid intake or “sweating out” by means of exercising or raising body temperature such as in a hot tub or a sauna to lose the excess weight needed to make-weight (Storey & Smith, 2012). The use of sometimes banned diuretics is also consumed (Storey & Smith, 2012) and this has also been observed in rowers as well. In the interest of disclosure and transparency of this study, I have engaged in almost every form of acute weight loss imaginable.

Rapid weight loss techniques in these two sports are highly similar although the weigh-in procedures are slightly different between each sport and individual competitions. Weigh-ins for weightlifting and rowing usually occur between one and two hours prior to competition where athletes must step on the scale and register their weight (International Weightlifting Federation, 2019; Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018). Storey & Smith (2012) contend that while detrimental effects to performance can occur to athletes who dehydrate to make weight, those effects can be abated within a short two-hour window. Proper hydration techniques must be carefully executed but not unless the initial dehydration weight loss exceeded >3-4% of the total body mass. The weigh-in process for weightlifters differs from that of rowing in that athletes above the age of 18 (as of February 2018) can weigh in without clothes which would add weight to otherwise naked body mass (International Weightlifting Federation, 2019). Furthermore, rowers are expected to be on the water for warm-up preparation well before the actual race start time, often giving them less time on land to ingest the proper amount of liquids and foods needed.

Concerns for safety in weightlifting categories might be related to issues where excessive weight or muscle gain is achieved through illegitimate means, but such a claim is speculative, and no published research exists regarding this assertion. Nevertheless, how rowing categories
compare to those in weightlifting is not within the scope of this research. If category rationales in weightlifting were made public and accessible, they might be useful, but none exist. One development not yet finalized is weightlifting at the Youth Olympics. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is reviewing weight categories for junior athletes but the reasoning and results of this consideration is not yet known (International Weightlifting Federation, 2019). The specific weigh-in procedures and social climate of weightlifting is in some ways different from rowing, but not in the sense that categories and ethical norms are social constructions (Housley & Smith, 2015; Taylor, 2004). These distinct communities likely influence moral perceptions and the implications of categorization in similar and different ways.

**U19 Lightweight Rowing**

Modern rowing is a power sport where power is “the rate at which work is performed” (Stellingwerff, Maughan & Burke, 2011, p.79) and is like swimming, track, cycling and middle-distance running. While an increase in body size and mass typically correspond to greater output of power, efficiency also plays a major factor as reduced redundant fat mass typically results in less power required to move a lighter body in the boat (Chapman, 1997). For lightweight rowers who race at the same weight, i.e., no more than 59 kg for women and 72.5 kg for men, the power and efficiency factors are all relatively similar between the athletes which often results in highly competitive races.

The goal for lightweight rowers is to reach but not exceed these upper weight limits just before competition to maximize the power-efficiency quotient. To fulfill this objective, many lightweight rowers often engage in extreme weight loss practices that result in marked decreases in athletic performance (Sundgot-Borgen & Garthe, 2011). According RCA rules, lightweight rowers are required to weigh-in one to two hours prior to national and international races.
(Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018), and they sometimes do so after completing dangerous weight-reducing activities. The negative effects of such practices on athletic performance and the health of rowers are well documented (Hill, 2013; Storey & Smith, 2012). In small scale regattas, rowers are often allowed to weigh in during a “weigh-in window” the morning of competition as a result of the “exceptions” clause in RCA rule 1.6 of racing guidebook (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018, p. 6). There is no rationale for why the 59kg for women and 72.5kg for men categories in lightweight rowing were selected and not some other weight limits. Still, one must defer to the knowledge, experience and authority of the RCA to set these guidelines, though not unquestioningly.

These weight restrictions and their corresponding races equally apply to all women and men regardless of age who wish to participate in categories for which they are eligible. This means athletes under the age of 19 are treated the same as adults during the weigh-in process and can compete in events for athletes who are much older (under 23 or senior events) if such events are available. An U19 athlete may therefore be eligible to compete in under 23 and senior category lightweight events if those events are offered to them, as is the case during several regattas during the Canadian summer season of racing. Likewise, U17 athletes may compete in U19 events as well, but obviously not the other way around. This highlights the significance of a ban on U19 lightweight rowing compared to more senior categories when no discernable differences are apparent in the weigh-in process and procedures. The only difference is simply the age of the eligible athletes. Why is it that when the procedures and rules that govern lightweight rowing are the same for all ages, athletes under the age of 19 are being considered ineligible to row in such a category?
Weight management prior to the weigh-in is typically at the discretion and guidance of coaches and other influential individuals among younger rowers, like athletes in senior categories. However, athletes under the age of majority (19) in Canada are often prevented from exercising fully a certain amount of autonomy. This research focuses primarily on those high school aged athletes who are considered U19 athletes by RCA standards, but this research does not intend to analyze the ethics of categorization as it pertains to age categories in sport. Age is an aspect of the research on U19 lightweight categories that cannot be disentangled from the main issue on weight categorization that this thesis explores. However, a significant amount of research has already been performed in the area of age discrimination specific to youth and youth sport (Bratt et al., 2018; Breen, 2006; Flacks, 2012; North & Fiske, 2012), whereas the research on weight categorization has received less attention.

As a result of this dearth in the literature, weight perhaps requires more research and understanding when compared to other categorization issues such as age and gender and thus warrants its own delimitation. Furthermore, while age may play a noteworthy role in the ethical issue surrounding the possible elimination on U19 lightweight rowing, the issue refers to lightweight rowing for U19 athletes, not U19 rowing entirely. The essential feature and possible repercussions of the potential ban is entirely on the lightweight category and only indirectly related to an age category. Again, the reason for targeting U19 categories may be significant to the issue surrounding the lightweight issue, but it is a secondary feature to that of weight categories. Thus, lightweight rowing for high school aged athletes is the central focus of this research and the main issue at hand, not the category – and the issues surrounding the category – of age-related discrimination. As will be shown, lightweight rowing has and continues to be a fringe aspect of rowing and is currently facing elimination at the Olympic and international
levels. While issues of weight categorization arguably affect all levels of rowing competition, this research will delimit its focus primarily to high school U19 athletes.

Unlike most weight-based sports mentioned earlier, rowing typically has only two weight divisions, heavyweight and lightweight. Historically, the heavyweight or “open” class has no weight maximum or minimum and rowers need not weigh-in before competitions. Lightweight rowing originated in North America, although its exact origins are unknown. The earliest documented race of a weight restricted event was at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta (RCHR) held in St. Catharines, Ontario in 1906. A 140-pound class dubbed the “Junior Four Oars” was entered with the race explicitly designated for “crews no member of which shall weigh more than 140 lbs., weight at waterside” (Lapinski, 2019, p. 42). “Junior” in this time period however did not necessarily refer to high school aged competitors, but rather to non-elite or beginner rowers. From this point on lightweight rowing began to spread throughout North America and received important legitimacy when it was officially adopted by rowing clubs in Ivy League colleges in 1917. Joseph Wright is reported to have introduced lightweight rowing at the RCHR and at the University of Pennsylvania, where the first American collegiate lightweight race occurred against Navy in 1917 (Mallory, 2011).

It took another 57 years before lightweight rowing was accepted into the World Championships after several years of debate at FISU (Meuret, 1992). The lead up to the first lightweight World Championships revolved around the popularity of the sport in North America. Rules had previously been established by FISA in 1957 for lightweight weight categories and crew averages for international events outside of the World Championships and the Olympic Games (Meuret, 1992). In 1970, Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada hosted the 66th FISA Congress where discussions occurred to add lightweight rowing to the World
Championships program (Meuret, 1992). It was finally included at the World Championships in 1974 and became an official event at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, even though the IOC petitioned FISA to include the category as early as 1978 (Mallory, 2011; Meuret, 1992). By 2012, lightweight rowing began to be scrutinized, its validity was being questioned, and today it faces possible elimination.

Currently, the lightweight rowing category for women stipulates that no rower weigh more than 59 kg, and no male rower weigh more than 72.5 kg in regular seasonal competition in Canada. These weight designations are outlined in the Canadian Rules of Racing and are applied to all regattas within Canada (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018). While RCA has outlined these weight restrictions for lightweight events, another by-law in the RCA rules of racing permits individual regatta organizers to make changes to certain rules of racing, including making changes to weigh-in times as previously mentioned. In rule 1.6 of the RCA rules of racing, exceptions may be made to the rules of racing provided they follow four sub-rule guidelines that then requires approval from RCA before they are changed for individual regattas (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018). An example of the exception’s clause is seen in the Canadian Secondary School Rowing Association (CSSRA) championship regatta, which is the final high school regatta of the season and the largest and most prestigious of its kind in Canada. At the CSSRA championship regatta, women are expected to weigh in at less than 59 kg for lightweight categories and 63 kg for midweight categories, while men must weigh in at less than 66 kg for lightweight categories and 72 kg for midweight categories.

The exceptions rule 1.6 that the organizing committee (CSSRA) utilizes results in the inclusion of a third weight-based category for men and women, commonly referred to as “midweight,” as well as a different weight designation for lightweight men (that being 66 kg
instead of 72.5 kg). No formal or ethical rationale has ever been publicly revealed for these weight limits and discrepancies between CSSRA and RCA standards. Particularly perplexing regarding the use of exceptions by the CSSRA in its high school championships is, why do U19 high school women have a lightweight class that conforms to typical RCA lightweight designations while the U19 high school men do not? The lightweight category of 66 kg for men that is designated by CSSRA is much lower than that of the lightweight category identified by RCA. The lightweight category of 66 kg more closely conforms to what is known as the “flyweight” category that is only seen at the RCHR in senior level events during the summer season. A possible explanation for this is the original lightweight event introduced into the CSSRA championship program as late as 1948 (although such a category likely existed earlier but documentation has yet to be found) and included a 145 lb (approximately 66 kg) event for men (CSSRA, 1948). While this perhaps explains the origins of the 66 kg lightweight category at the CSSRA championships, it does not resolve the numerous other weight categories introduced in later years, eventually resulting in four different weight categories of 135 lb, 145 lb, 155 lb, and open weight up until the late 1970s (CSSRA, 1977). Why some but not all weight categories remain in the present CSSRA championship regatta has not been discovered.

While specific ethical reasons for lightweight rowing categories are unknown, in 1974 when lightweight rowing was included in the World Championships, FISA commented, “These championships were intended to give positive encouragement to all those in the world under 70 kilos who had until then been frustrated by the fact that 90 kilos was the average weight needed to have any chance of winning...” (Meuret, 1992, p. 169). Despite these well-intended attempts to become more inclusive and grow the sport, on the international stage lightweight rowing has recently had the 4- (straight/coxless four) cut from the now-postponed 2020 Olympic program,
reducing the number of lightweight seats from six to two, leaving only the lightweight 2x (double scull) for men and women.

This decision to cut out the lightweight 4- from the Olympics was highlighted as being a significant indication of the IOC’s feelings towards lightweight rowing. Of the three options proposed by the IOC to changes in the Olympic rowing program, all three eliminated the possibility of having a lightweight 4- in the now-postponed 2020 Tokyo Olympics and reduced the number of lightweight events overall (Rosenbladt, 2016). The fallout of this decision by the IOC has spurred controversy and fears that lightweight rowing will be cut from the Olympic program entirely after 2020 (Moran, 2018).

Anticipating the decline in international opportunities for lightweight rowers, a working group appointed by RCA was tasked to review the status of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. This working group submitted a rule change item to “clarify that only those 19 or older can compete as LWT [lightweight]” [see Appendix A, Rule #2.10]. It is important to note that while this working group committee represented RCA, RCA does not necessarily have an established position on this topic. While CSSRA and RCA are heavily implicated in this research, RCA and CSSRA tend to only represent one instance of support and dissent towards a possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing. Individual members of each organization likely hold different views and a consensus on the issue has yet to be reached. Considering these events, never has an in-depth investigation of the moral and practical implications of the possible elimination the U19 lightweight category been undertaken. Given its long-standing history and tradition within North American rowing, its establishment as an international sport and the relatively small amount of attention it receives, why is the elimination of lightweight rowing in some circles now being considered? The answer may be related to the risks associated with lightweight rowing.
For example, high school rowing programs in the United States, in contrast to the Canadian system, recently adopting a “passport” system. This protocol requires American high school rowers who wish to compete in lightweight rowing complete several waivers and registration requirements and undergo a medical assessment by a registered physician who confirms rowers are capable of safely competing in lightweight categories (USRowing, 2019a). Anecdotally, it has been suggested such a protocol be implemented by RCA, but no plans to do so have been put into place.

One may conjecture that U19 lightweight rowing programs ensure competitive fairness and provide young rowers greater opportunities to train and compete against opponents who are similar in their level of development and maturation (Stevens, 2012). This reasoning conforms to the long-term athlete development (LTAD) program implemented by RCA in 2011 [see Appendix D] that promotes the interests and supports the development of junior rowers. These young athletes also require different approaches to training and coaching, and competitions must be suited to their level of experience in lightweight rowing (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2011). Notably absent from this development protocol (and from the RCA coaching certification reference booklet) is any guidance or instruction on how to coach or manage lightweight rowers and ethical guidelines for weight-making. While nutrition is an important aspect and consideration mentioned in RCA’s development strategies, how to deal with typical weight-making issues that lightweight rowers face in comparison to their open-weight teammates are not addressed.

**Gender and Disordered Eating/Eating Disorders**

Gender plays a significant role in the lives of athletes whereby biological and socially constructed gender differences can influence the perceptions and experiences of lightweight
female and male rowers (Hill, 2013; Chapman, 1997; Taub & Blinde, 1992; Keenan, Senefeld, & Hunter, 2018). Elite female athletes have been shown to have a higher risk for eating disorders and disordered eating than their elite male counterparts (Martinsen & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013). While male rowers may experience higher weight fluctuations throughout a training season, females are more likely to have more serious harmful eating practices (Sykora et al., 1997). Males are also at risk of developing eating disorders and engaging in risky eating behaviors as a result of athletic, social and coaching pressures, but they are not affected to the same degree as females (Sykora et al. 1997; Pustivsek et al. 2015). Despite these differences, lightweight rowing rules and protocols in Canada neither acknowledge these variations nor tailor regulations specifically for females (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018). Furthermore, weight-making and weight-making procedures are not addressed in RCA trans-gender policies for rowers who do not conform to binary gender distinctions (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2019b).

It is important to note that disordered eating is not the same as an eating disorder, although these terms are often used interchangeably. Because this research involves concern for the health and wellbeing of U19 lightweight rowers, defining terms related to health is important. Eating disorders are diagnosable mental illnesses that are identified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5 (DSM-5,) as one or a combination of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, and eating disorders otherwise not specified (American Psychological Association, 2018). These eating disorders are serious conditions that if left untreated, may result in severe illness or death (Gottlieb, 2014). Disordered eating however involves eating behaviours that do not meet all the symptoms identified by the DSM-5 but still have the potential to be harmful and lead to a diagnosable eating disorder (Gottlieb, 2014). While some research may not consider these terms mutually exclusive, this research will.
Because lightweight rowing and dieting that result from weight-making attempts may not be defined as a strict eating disorder, demarcating such behaviours as disordered eating can be useful.

“Harm” is also rarely a term explicitly defined in the literature pertaining to dieting and eating disorders but is presumed in this research to refer to acute or chronic adverse health effects. These definitions therefore infer that minor changes in eating habits such as “emotional eating” or “stress eating” can all be considered forms of disordered eating. These relatively minor disordered eating behaviours may bear a lower risk of severe harm and possibly warrant less ethical concern. However, they may still lead to more harmful disorders and illnesses if compounded with other contributing pressures and left unaddressed. Therefore, the distinction and inclusion of both types of eating habits and their relation to athlete wellbeing in the context of lightweight rowing is important in this study.

While athletes with different gender identities can be differentiated based on their susceptibility to disordered eating, Kraus and Holtmann (2018) found lightweights as well as heavyweight rowers are susceptible to disordered eating practices despite their causes being somewhat dissimilar. In fact, athletes from weight categorized sports and non-weight categorized sports both have elevated risks of developing eating disorders and engaging in risky eating behaviors (Martinsen & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013; Pustivsek et al. 2015; Taub & Blinde, 1992). While lightweight rowing may contribute to a self-objectification that results in disordered eating habits, a definitive and causal relationship has not been established as many contributing factors are often present. For instance, a study by Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater (2017) showed that a higher prevalence’s of “selfie” engagement for women on social networking platforms was related to a higher prevalence of disordered eating and body image issues. In another study by
Bould, Stavola, Lewis, & Micali (2017), girls were found to have a greater chance of developing disordered eating habits at an all girls school compared to co-educational schools. Thus, while the pressures of sport and the preoccupation with athlete bodies may be contributing factors associated with weight problems in high school aged athletes, they are certainly not the only factor. While young female and male rowers experience similar pressures, they are also influenced by different correlative factors like physiological and emotional ones.

Gender differences in U19 lightweight rowing do exist but they will not be a major focus of this study because the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing will impact adolescent females and males equally. While health risks between female and male rowers differ, such distinctions are difficult to assess and determine. The phenomenological methodology applied in this research did uncover some gender differences that pertained to the U19 lightweight rowing question. This result however was incidental and not a central priority of this research. As mentioned, if U19 lightweight rowing was banned, it would affect both female and male rowers. Those in authority in RCA who will decide the fate of U19 lightweight rowing must consider the widespread consequences of their judgment and its impact on all athletes regardless of gender.

The Coaching Factor

Coaches play a significant role in the development of pre-adolescent athletes (Stirling & Kerr, 2007). Youth sports programs try to encourage greater participation and they also raise concerns over the ethical standards of coaches. Brackenridge (2002) notes, “[T]here is no point in enticing more young people into sport if they cannot be guaranteed a safe and enjoyable experience” (p. 103). This observation applies to the LTAD model that tries to promote rowing among young athletes (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2011), and coaches are an integral part of this effort. Not only do coaches teach rowers proper rowing techniques and strategies, but they must
create a safe environment for rowers and maintain high ethical standards while coaching. If this cannot be achieved and sustained, then perhaps promoting youth sport is either an immoral initiative or ought not to be done at all. The physical and emotional harms cited throughout this chapter reveal the possible consequences of poor coaching practices in relation to lightweight rowers.

While good coaching is crucial to implement a successful U19 lightweight rowing program, coaching competency goes beyond the issue of categorization. By competency, I am referring to the ability of a coach to effectively teach rowers how to train and behave in their sport. While the literature on what constitutes a competent coach is extensive and controversial, the ability of an individual to effectively coach rowers is a separate topic from that of a possible ban on U19 lightweight rowing. According to Simon (2013), coaches are responsible for teaching moral values and other life skills as well as technical ability. Coaches influence athletes by expressing values they likely learned from their coaches and the social circles they were exposed to. As Taylor (1985) confirms, coaches are also products of their experiences in relation to others and their environments and expand the sources of issues prevalent in lightweight rowing. While competency may be implicated in the issues surrounding this topic, analyzing what competency is constitutive of and its prevalence in rowing goes beyond the capabilities of this study.

While coaching competency is not a categorization issue *per se*, the ability to manage and effectively support lightweight rowers is an essential part of the ethical debate surrounding U19 lightweight rowing. Coaches were interviewed in this study to assess their thoughts about the potential ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. Their actual coaching practices were not scrutinized. A limitation of this study then is the self-reporting of coaches and the fact that I
could not verify what they say. Despite this shortcoming, the perceptions of coaches (and administrators) still provided a relevant descriptive account of their experiences in lightweight rowing at micro and macro levels. Coaches knew about specific matters as well as “big picture” issues regarding U19 lightweight rowing and addressed several ethical issues of this category. While coaching competency must play a central role in rowing, the veracity of the perceptions of coaches does not need to be verified in terms of authenticity. Such perceptions within phenomenological methodologies – being either true or false – are still valid because they provide insight into the way individuals make sense of their world.

The State of Lightweight Rowing in Canada

The lack of discussion, research and commentary on the topic of U19 lightweight rowing is unlikely a sign of complacency and benign irrelevance toward this category of the sport. This chapter presents lightweight rowing as a historically significant and an important part of rowing and sport in Canada that impacts the lives of young athletes who inevitably possess different body morphologies and stages of development. The proposal made in 2017 by RCA to possibly eliminate U19 lightweight rowing [see Appendix A] was not an arbitrary attack on lightweight rowers who are mostly high school age athletes, but also represents a growing concern for the wellbeing of all junior rowers. A letter addressed to the CSSRA by a lightweight rower’s parent and shared with me [see Appendix E] sums up relevant concerns parents have regarding adolescent rowers. The note refers to pressures some ill-informed adolescent athletes are subjected to by their peers and a “coach blinded by competitive zeal.” If such pressures cannot be managed and risks to rowers reduced, perhaps there is justification to ban U19 lightweight rowing.
The questionable status of high school lightweight rowing in the United States has also arisen. Proposals to eliminate the lightweight rowing category at the main American scholastic national championship was made in 2019 (USRowing, 2019b). The relationship between Canadian and American high schools is very close with crews often racing against each other in championship events like the Stotesbury Cup Regatta, USRowing Scholastics and CSSRA Championships. These three regattas informally make up what is know as the “triple crown” and are highly prestigious competitions. The influence of American decisions and culture on the Canadian perspective of lightweight rowing may be difficult to assess but it is likely more than a coincidence the two countries are evaluating the future of lightweight rowing at the same time.

It is important to also note that there has been a significant number of responses to the proposal to ban U19 lightweight rowing by the RCA working group committee, USRowing, members of the rowing community and rowing bodies such as the CSSRA [see Appendix B]. A petition on Change.org for the preservation of junior lightweight rowing in the U.S. has garnered over 16,000 signatures (Change.org, 2019). While no quantifiable data is available regarding the Canadian response to the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing, it may be safe to assume some in Canada wish to see lightweight rowing continue its longstanding presence. This study maintains the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing involves a serious moral question. It seeks to uncover and examine the rationale for the prospect by analyzing the perceptions of rowing coaches and administrators who are the main policy and decision makers of this potentially far-reaching judgment.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Sport (Bio)Ethics Research

The research undertaken in this study may be generally described as bioethical. Bioethics is often associated with medical ethics or the practical application of ethics regarding the everyday embodied experiences and condition of human beings (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009). Ethics is the way we understand and assess issues of right or wrong as part of moral life. What is considered moral in this study is defined as the communal, socially constructed norms that establish a normative consensus about how to behave ethically in society (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009). This investigation may be specifically called sport bioethics because ethical reasoning will be applied to biological factors like weight and age in rowing as distinguishing characteristics that define eligibility in sport underscored by competitive fairness. Framing the research this way also draws attention to the unique moral framework of rowing where the safety, health and wellbeing of athletes are of paramount significance. This specificity within the larger umbrella term of “sport ethics” distinguishes itself from other subjects that are not necessarily biologically related and specific such as amateurism, social justice and certain kinds of cheating.

Although athletes are not strictly defined as patients like in the medical field where different professional standards apply, in the context of injury, recovery, prevention and training, medical intervention is often implicated in sport. All of the aforementioned issues pertain to this study in virtue of the importance of nutrition and healthy body weight and is therefore sufficient to deem it a bioethics inquiry. Moreover, most of the athletes under discussion in this investigation, those under 19 years of age, are below the age of majority. This status has legal
and moral relevance regarding matters like consent, as well as biological developmental issues related to athlete health and wellbeing.

In addition to ethics and the welfare of athletes, sport categorization is an overarching theme of this study that has moral implications. Not only do divisions in sport based on gender, age and/or weight for example relate to eligibility and competitive fairness, but in the context of sport, they influence the perceptions and normative practices of athletes and their biological, mental and emotional states. Categorization manifests itself in sport in terms of prioritizing goals and objectives, how people organize their lives, the levels and quality of social interaction and the development of personal and collective identity. Describing this study under the title sport bioethics is debatable, however, it adequately addresses the main research questions under examination. How is the possible elimination of under 19 (U19) lightweight rowing in Canada perceived by coaches and administrators? On what moral basis do coaches and administrators explain their positions in regarding this question? Finally, what does a possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada mean in relation to moral good? To answer these questions, the following will describe the methodology, major theorists, research design and analysis techniques utilized in this study.

**Phenomenology**

This study will collect and examine the perceptions of coaches and administrators of U19 lightweight rowing to understand how categorization is determined and ethically defensible. The first research question, “how do rowing coaches and administrators perceive U19 lightweight rowing” is dependent on the experiences such individuals have of rowing. Phenomenology is one way to learn about the perceptions people have by uncovering the subjective meaning and essence of their lived experiences in relation to discrete activities or phenomena like rowing.
(Glesne, 2016). Meaning and essence are disclosed by asking people about their experiences in descriptive terms and attempting to understand in as much detail as possible the participant’s perspective. This study will initially ask several participants to describe their perceptions of U19 lightweight rowing to comprehend the nature of the sport. These perceptions will vary but they will also form the basis to integrate and produce a coherent, comprehensive and robust narrative of U19 lightweight rowing. This all-encompassing account will also be the source to understand the ethical problems and challenges in U19 lightweight rowing (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenology is a product of the trend away from traditional philosophic grand system building when attempting to understand human experience (Salamon, 2014). Phenomenology diverges from a natural sciences paradigm that philosophers such as Aristotle and Descartes used to explain consciousness and personal understanding (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). When attempting to comprehend human experience, understanding the consciousness of the individual requires an approach that empirical natural science methodologies inherently fail to adequately capture. Categorizing, measuring and testing is a poor method in which to understand how humans perceive their lives and the relationships within it. Human consciousness is essentially consciousness of something, entailing that the subject of human experience cannot be separated from the object of its own understanding (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). This perspective of human experience as being inseparable from one’s consciousness not only rejects Cartesian dualism but also renders a natural sciences methodology incompatible to comprehend this experience.

Phenomenology attempts to discard the traditional empirical way of understanding experience by privileging intimate interactions described in a rational and reflective way (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). This different way of thinking about human experiences allows us
to appreciate “that phenomenological principle of holding in abeyance what we know about any object, situation, or person in order to see it freshly and more precisely.” (Salamon, 2014, p. 153). Sport is essentially an activity that ought to be experienced for it to be understood (Clark, Ferkins, Smythe & Jogulu, 2018). Therefore, utilizing phenomenology to understand human experience is appropriate when asking rowing coaches and administrators about U19 lightweight rowing.

The epistemological foundation of phenomenological research regards the value of personal experience just as important as abstract or theoretical analyses of a specific phenomena. (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014). Constructivism is often used interchangeably with constructionism and is also closely associated with interpretivism whereby individuals make sense of and impart meaning to their lived experiences (Jones et al. 2014). This study incorporates elements of the preceding epistemological approaches to gain knowledge and understanding of certain phenomena. In this sense, phenomenology, as an inquiry of phenomena, is committed to an idealist notion that the world cannot exist independently of the mind or ideas within one’s experiences of reality (Glesne, 2016).

The introduction of phenomenology as a philosophy is commonly attributed to Franz Brentano (1838-1917), the teacher of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who would later establish phenomenology as a formal system to perform “good science” (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). The introduction of phenomenology was an intentional departure from the typical natural sciences methodologies of understanding the world. However, the complete break from the formalized and structured scientific method did not occur until hermeneutics were introduced by Martin Heidegger. Depending on the field, the degree to which phenomenological inquiry abandoned the empirical scientific method can vary in certain branches of law, sociology,
psychology, psychiatry, linguistics, anthropology, musicology and even neuroscience to name a few (Wertz, 2015). While phenomenology is still evolving as a research methodology (Laverty, 2003), the degree and applications to which researchers use this methodology varies greatly.

Traditionally, phenomenology follows five key principles that are essential to understanding human experience: the phenomenological attitude, dualism, intentionality, noema and noesis, and the lifeworld (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). The phenomenological attitude describes the importance of suspending our everyday given assumptions to adopt a different perspective that can be more radical and comprehensive (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). This new perspective attempts to give the researcher a perspective from which to see the world anew and better understand the self and consciousness. Dualism is mentioned because phenomenology rejects it.

Dualism presents objects in the world as something that is knowable independent of the human experience. Phenomenology rejects dualism and insists “there is no thing, which in any meaningful sense, exists independently of consciousness” (Crotty, 1996, p. 46). The shift away from objectivity towards a more subjective understanding of the world is contingent on intentionality. Intentionality does not refer to purpose, but rather to the vivid understanding of reality where consciousness must be intentionally a consciousness of something (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). The “object” which is observed by the “subject” is therefore co-constituted and unified (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). In this sense, intentionality is an epistemological concept, a way of knowing, and not a psychological act (Crotty, 1996).

It is important to note phenomenology may describe common worldviews, and not necessarily reflect pure subjectivity and the rejection of shared concrete physical truths. Noema and noesis are meant to further explicate the objects and process by which consciousness and
experience are understood. **Noema** refers to the intentionality, or the ‘thing’ or ‘what’
consciousness experiences (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). **Noesis** defines the ‘how’ or process in
which we come to comprehend experience and intentionality (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017).
Fundamentally these two concepts work within the phenomenological attitude as a tool to
understand the reality people experience.

The final principle is the lifeworld or *lebenswelt*, a concept coined by Husserl. This idea
encompasses all direct experience of the everyday world, independent from any scientific
understanding (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). The experience of the lived world versus the world
science refers to are two distinct forms of life. For example, an athlete’s experience of time in
sport may be fleeting and requires one to react quickly, whereas science calibrates time into units
and measures observable events in sport based on these units that can be further manipulated
statistically. Phenomenology would reveal and describe the lifeworld of an athlete’s experience
of time and not the objective, measurable and statistically relevant factors of an athlete’s
involvement in sport. To further understand this lifeworld concept and its contribution to
phenomenology, the following section will briefly examine Husserl’s thought.

**Edmund Husserl**

Edmund Husserl was a German philosopher and is considered the father of
phenomenology (Laverty, 2003). The basis of phenomenology as a philosophic approach for
understanding lived experiences as described in the preceding section is owed in large part to his
novel theoretical contributions. Husserl (1970) is best known for his call to return to the ‘things
themselves’. Husserl recognized the inability of the natural sciences to explain the lived
experiences of human beings because we are more than just biological organisms reacting to
external stimuli. Abram (1996) explains, “Unlike the mathematics-based sciences,
Phenomenology would seek not to explain the world but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arrive in our direct, sensorial experience” (pp. 35–36).

Husserl introduced a method of inquiry that investigates the structures of consciousness of things or phenomena, real or not, as they appear to individuals without recourse to preconceived hypotheses, theories or assumptions. In this process, perception is an important facet because each person perceives the world from a unique vantage point as an embodied self. Through collective perceptions and experiences that are mediated by individuals, one makes sense of the world from a distinct and personal perspective and establishes their independent lifeworld. Not only do our perceptions give rise to meaning and understanding, but they influence our judgments and identity. Thus, our interactions in the world elicit responses in terms of how we see ‘things’ and ‘others’ – the noema – through direct experiences and how we see ‘ourselves’ from the stance of self-perceptions and the perceptions others have of us. Phenomenology then tries to describe in detail all modes and structures of consciousness, like memory, meaning and understanding, from an embodied vantage point through the variegated ways we experience and construct meaning regarding the world, ourselves and others.

As one can see, phenomenology is individualized, inter-subjective and context-dependent, and is a philosophy and methodology that rejects Cartesian dualism (Laverty, 2003). Examination of the structures of consciousness reveal that understanding often refers to what is taken for granted or pre-reflective whereby the mind or the mental is not superior to or steers embodied selves (Husserl, 1970). Phenomenological investigations also disclose interpretive processes by which people make sense of and give meaning to their everyday lives, or lebenswelt. Here, decision making and judgments can be analyzed to learn how people perceive
reality and arrive at decisions that guide their lives (Laverty, 2003). The key assumption that distinguishes Husserl’s phenomenology is that these interpretations of a conglomeration of others’ personal experiences require bracketing of one’s own assumptions of the world. By bracketing one’s preconceived assumptions and experiences of the world, one may be able to remove bias and reflect more appropriately on phenomenological data (Nesti, 2011).

This method by which one can gain understanding into the essential processes and structures of consciousness is known as *transcendental phenomenology*. ‘Transcendental’ is applied here because Husserl attempts to move past our everyday assumptions and beliefs to perceive our lives anew (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017; Hogeveen, 2011). Those experiences that were perhaps once a part of the ‘natural attitude’ that we took for granted now allow us to access a universal subjectivity and not simply apply our own subjective understanding (Hogeveen, 2011; Martinkova & Parry, 2011). By transcending and bracketing our common beliefs and understanding towards the *lebenswelt* of ourselves and others we can then describe the essence of objects in their given state (Hogeveen, 2011).

Comprehending and implementing Husserlian phenomenology as a methodological approach is extremely difficult, especially the technique of bracketing one’s assumptions, biases and perceptions to arrive at the essence of human experience and meaning (Laverty, 2003; Glesne, 2016; Jones et al. 2014). While philosophers such as Kretchmar (2014) have put Husserl’s phenomenological theories to the test in sport contexts and produced illuminating results, there are still significant limitations to such an eidetic analysis. Furthermore, Husserl did not explicitly refer to or practically apply his phenomenology toward investigations in sport in his seminal works (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017; Kretchmar, 2014). Due to these problems and other theoretical difficulties, students of Husserl modified his concept of phenomenology and its
application in the study of consciousness and human experience. One of these variations became known as hermeneutic phenomenology.

**Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

*Martin Heidegger*

In its simplest formulation, hermeneutics is defined as “the interpretation of an object for the purpose of understanding” (Jones et al. 2014, p. 88). This concept also refers to the fact people ascribe meaning to experiences through an interpretive process. Meaning in the hermeneutic sense relates to the experiential significance of a thing or phenomenon for one or several people. Rather than relying on positivist epistemologies that acknowledge certainty of knowledge can be achieved, hermeneutics uncovers the conditions of knowing and meaning making in specific contexts that are invariably incomplete (Montreuil & Carnevale, 2018). The core feature of hermeneutics then is its interpretive nature that has relevance to and is associated with modified versions of phenomenology, including existential phenomenology developed by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

Whereas phenomenological researchers examine consciousness and the lived experiences and perceptions of others, hermeneutics accounts for these investigative areas in relation to researchers and the interpretive ways they influence the construction of meaning. A student of Husserl’s, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger disagreed with his mentor on whether and how presuppositions could be bracketed. He claimed that contextual and historical assumptions of one’s life are essential to interpret how meaning is ascribed to lived experiences (Laverty, 2003). Heidegger argued that consciousness could not be separated from the world but is a formation of historical and presently lived experiences, and therefore phenomenology was not
just a way of knowing about the world as Husserl contended, but explains and interprets human existence, identity and situatedness within the world (Heidegger, 1962).

In this variant form, phenomenology emphasizes interpretive means to understand the human condition by recognizing the convergence of antecedent factors like meaning, identity and lived experiences. This novel conception of phenomenology with a hermeneutic strain resolves the problem of bracketing presuppositions and potential biases, and as a result, from an investigative perspective, includes the researcher as an integral participant in the interpretation of perceptions and meanings of others.

Heidegger appropriated aspects of Husserl’s epistemological teachings on phenomenology and retained some of his predecessor’s theories in his development of existential phenomenology. Using the concept of intentionality for example, Heidegger’s idea of ‘being in the world’ was similarly not intended to refer to the individual perspective of an experience but describes what it means to experience the fullness of human existence (Martinkova & Parry, 2011). However, Heidegger took this conception of intentionality one step further by extending existential meaning to intersubjective awareness of our inseparable association with others and the world (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). Objects perceived in the world are therefore not simply representations in consciousness but exist as inseparable objects in the real-world due to the fact we are embodied beings.

As Brymer and Schweitzer (2017) state, “The human being and the world thus co-constitute each other” (p. 20). This existential interpretation of intentionality introduced concepts like the ‘pre-reflective,’ lifeworld and lived structure within Heideggerian philosophy. Pre-reflective defines the essential existential state in which conscious is recognized as a priori and undergirds human existence and experience. The lifeworld concept is borrowed from Husserl’s
lebenswelt but focuses on existential parameters of everyday life. The lived structure is understood to be the “purpose of an empirical phenomenology, in that phenomenology attempts to reduce meaningful experience that presents itself in awareness in order to describe the underlying factors (lived structure)” (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017, p. 21).

A large part of Heidegger’s existential phenomenology discloses accounts of human existence and consciousness. The mode of being that Heidegger uses to encapsulate human existence is referred to as Dasein (Martinkova & Parry, 2018). Dasein is literally interpreted as ‘being-here’ and refers to the existential first-person perspective of human experience that necessarily rejects mind and body dualism. This ontological understanding of what it means to be human is applicable to an understanding of sport and the environment in which humans interact within it (Martinkova & Parry, 2018). For example, an oar has no meaning unless it is connected physically and conceptually to a boat or rigger by which athletes can leverage the oar and propel themselves towards the finish line. The oar, boat, racecourse, and everything involved in a rowing race is meaningful within the totality of one’s experience of it and the shared experiences of others. While sport is not something necessary to sustain human existence/Dasein, its instrumental and non-pragmatic value (regarding Dasein) is still valuable.

Heidegger’s existential phenomenology interrogates the lived and meaningful nature of sport as part of one’s experiences. As Martinkova and Parry (2018) contend, “[sport] offers a different take on our life, possibly revealing to us some aspects of existence that are otherwise difficult to access. This is important for the continuation of sport – because, since being non-pragmatic, sport cannot be taken for granted; it is not an ‘environment’ necessary for our lives but an enrichment of it.” (p. 148). Understanding the human experience as it is lived can inform meaning in contexts like sport. As such, Heidegger’s existential phenomenology is a precursor to
the hermeneutic approach to understanding athletic experiences and, for the purposes of this thesis, perceptions of U19 lightweight rowing.

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Heidegger’s existential phenomenology was advanced further by his student Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), who elucidated in detail a hermeneutics version of phenomenology as part of his study of ontology. Within this purview, understanding and meaning are not objects but part of a process of ‘being in the world’ (Laverty, 2003). Notably, Gadamer did not explicitly attempt to outline a procedure for hermeneutic phenomenology, but rather to uncover the conditions of understanding when engaged in phenomenological analyses. He states, "Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks". (Gadamer, 1998, p. 295). This quote maintains that the interpretive project creates a relationship between a person’s history and the context of one’s interests. Gadamer calls this a fusion of horizons where prejudices and biases are acknowledged and created within a dialogue between a person and a text (perhaps a transcript of a conversation, artwork, poetry, etc.). Under these circumstances meaning emerges from an interactive, interpretive process (Laverty, 2003).

Gadamer also defended the study of language, or logos, when attempting to understand subjective experience and an individual’s horizons (Regan, 2012). Communication through language was essential to denoting and associating internalized mental images with objects that result in a common acceptance of their meaning (Regan, 2012). Language is a precondition for being able to consciously live and interact in the world, and by extension it is an essential part of Dasein and human existence (Regan, 2012). In a research study, understanding the text of a
participant’s horizon as well as that of the researcher involves a mutual interchange of uncovering new perspectives and understanding and can be aided by the fusion of more than one parallel experience (Regan, 2012).

To access this fusion of horizons, a cyclical process of interpretation of phenomena occurs through questions and responses and is always evolving to arrive at emergent and tentative truths. A static and definitive interpretation of phenomena is never possible (Annells, 1996). What this means is that there is no conclusive interpretive method to reveal truth and meaning, and to presume as much is a failing of positivist philosophy in Western thought; that is, the idea that positive, definite facts about phenomena can be determined. Gadamer contends that methods and interpretations always occur during the interplay between a person and texts thereby resisting pure objectivity and creating a plurality of (mis)understandings and meanings of lived experiences and texts (Laverty, 2003).

This exchange, known as a hermeneutic circle, is therefore the most appropriate way to not only interpret a participant’s words, but to place them within a broader historical context that is constantly changing (Regan, 2012). By comparing the minute details and language of an individual’s experience to the broader contexts in which they are situated, the interpreter finds a rhythm in search of meaning (Regan, 2012). This iterative process is performed while reflecting on one’s own pre-understandings and biases until a new and deep understanding is attained (Regan, 2012). As opposed to Heidegger, Gadamer contends that the result of applying the hermeneutic circle and allowing inter-subjective perceptions that are not exclusively that of the researcher can be authentic (Regan, 2012). This is where Gadamer significantly deviates from his predecessor as he opens the researcher up to more conversation and interpretation with others.
Relevant to sport, Gadamer contributed heavily to the concept of ‘play’ which has implications for this sport centered research. The concept of play in a philosophic context extends from Gadamer’s use of the word in relation to aesthetics and a defence of hermeneutics (Lebech, 2006; Regan, 2012). Play, and by extension sport, “has a personal and scholastic resonance, opening up the possibilities to shape new understanding.” (Regan, 2012, p. 301). Play does not necessarily require a lack of instrumental purpose or seriousness to qualify as a significant human endeavor, and this includes instances of sport that can be similarly investigated (Lebech, 2006; Regina, 2017).

Participation in sport and play requires pre-understandings and often an ability to open oneself to new ideas and practices that inevitably lead to practical benefits. Play and sport are not only socializing agents, but they represent the importance of intersubjective analyses as lived experiences (Regina, 2017). The investment and participation of those in sport is essential to its very nature and contextual understanding, where play in this sense cannot exist without other players and historical factors (Kretchmar, 2014; Regina, 2017). Play is best understood using a phenomenological framework because it is inherently the study of the player and the game as an interconnected presentation of play as the subject, not the object (Regan, 2012). For U19 lightweight rowing, Gadamer would regard participating in this sport as an experience where rowers and the act of rowing are unified. Understanding what players and athletes experience when they engage in play and sport is essential to this investigation of U19 lightweight rowing. Part of the reason for this is that serious rowers devote enormous time and energy to their sport and this commitment is integral to the development of their identity. Therefore, the concept of play (and by extension sport) as expounded in Gadamer’s hermeneutic phenomenology facilitates our understanding of lived experiences in U19 lightweight rowing.
Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed further by other theorists even as its methods and applicability were criticized as being vague and imprecise. Noted Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (b. 1931) advanced the tenets of hermeneutics by applying its methods to ethics. His work in this research area will be the principal theory underlying this study. For Taylor (1985), understanding how ethical norms are established requires insight into the relationship between individuals and society. He rejects reductive and objectivist sciences that attempt to understand human experience and morality in causal terms. What is essential for Taylor is the interpretation of such experience as a dimension of human agency whereby the self is created while embedded in specific social conditions (Carnevale, 2013).

As a result, individuals engage in interpretation and meaning making somewhat independent of the strict linguistic meaning of words. While objective classifications of meaning are evident, like the dictionary definition of an oar, hermeneutic analyses uncover the historical and contextual dimensions of meaning relatively independent of such formal definitions (Carnevale, 2013). The process and framework of hermeneutics can also be applied to comprehend the moral lives of people. That is, unlike positivist methodologies that locate meaning by reducing moral language to its elemental parts, hermeneutics investigates the experiences of individuals to interpret and understand how morality is instantiated in their everyday lives.

All people exist within society and are in some way shaped by their cultural and historical experiences. As such, the moral experiences of people are implicated in this historical, social context and are influenced by what Taylor calls horizons of significance; presupposed standards of right, wrong, good, bad, necessity and excellence people inherit rather than create
anew (Taylor, 1991). Horizons of significance bestow meaning on an experience as well as value. Moral and practical values are subsumed in horizons of significance that mediate how we come to interpret and arrive at meaning as individuals as well as on a larger social scale. By acting within this framework, a moral order is produced and establishes what we mean by a moral good (Taylor, 1991).

For example, in Canadian rowing, after rowers win a race at almost any level of competition, they often tuck their medals into their ‘unisuits’ as a sign of respect for the competition. Athletes who do not tuck in their medal after receiving it (with some allowance to bask in their glory for a moment or two), could be regarded as unsportsmanlike or unaccustomed to this ‘winning tradition.’ This is not a rule or policy of rowing clubs in Canada and is not a custom among American rowing teams. The custom is rooted in tradition and unwritten moral codes that are embedded within Canadian rowing culture and passed down by coaches and rowers. The act of tucking in the medal only gains meaning and value within the historical and cultural context in which it exists for individual rowers and the sport. While it carries personal significance for rowers, it is also shared and rooted in a social imaginary (explained on p. 69) that represents what it means to be a good sport in rowing. Taylor insists moral values originate in these contextual and historical prerequisites. Within the larger rowing community, customs like the ‘medal tuck’ shape a distinct moral order that athletes adhere to as part of rowing’s ethos and ethical code.

Taylor’s horizons of significance are distinct from Gadamer’s fusion of horizons, even though both refer to a discovery of truth about the world through a hermeneutic process. The former differentiates a diversity of presupposed historical and social sources individuals appropriate, whereas the latter describes a synthesis of these sources. By emphasizing a
hierarchy of importance to horizons and moral goods, Taylor’s horizons can identify which values are more important for individuals, known as the hypergood (Montreuil & Carnevale, 2018; Taylor, 1989).

Recognizing that horizons of significance can function as a way of understanding how moral values acquire meaning can also explain how people situate themselves within a ‘moral order.’ For Taylor (2004), a modern moral order is the culmination of society’s historical social imaginaries where agent decisions lie (Hunt & Carnevale, 2011; Taylor, 2004). The moral order refers to more than just social norms that people follow but has an ‘ontic’ component (Taylor, 2004). This ontic component relates the individual to a larger interconnected existence that somewhat follows a Heideggerian school of thought on ‘being.’ Furthermore, the moral order can be characterized by three main features; the economy, the public sphere, and a self-governing people (Carnevale, 2013; Taylor, 2004).

The economy refers to the modern idea that society should be structured for the mutual benefit of individuals. Thus economics, or the ‘exchange of products and services,’ are considered desired ends and not means of an ordered society. The public sphere is essentially a reference to the modern interconnected space in which society interacts. This space does not need to be physical, and in the modern era of ‘virtual realities’ it is increasingly less so. What is important is the characterization of such spaces for people to share ideas and form common understandings about the world. A self-governing people is mostly unique to the modern conception of society as its genesis was from national revolutions spurred by paradigm shifts in cultural social imaginaries (Carnevale, 2013; Taylor, 2004). The idea of a sovereign people was not immediately entrenched in all facets of society, but eventually came to characterize the new moral order in all facets of modern life.
Essential to the evolution of the modern moral order was the shift in social imaginaries. ‘Social imaginaries’ refer to how large groups of people come to a “common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). It is clear how shared perceptions of national sovereignty and freedom advanced the revolutionary movements in the 17th and 18th centuries in North America and Europe. Without a shared sense of legitimacy, such progress toward the modern structure of society would not have occurred as it did. A social imaginary can thus perhaps be understood to be a normative way of representing intentionality. This means the perceptions of how we fit within society is interwoven with our expectations of how we relate to our experiences of ourselves, others and the world.

A social imaginary is not a theoretical term however and is intended to reflect how people imagine themselves within society (Taylor, 2004). It is a product of living in society that is applicable to everyone no matter their awareness of the normative implications of their everyday lived experiences (Taylor, 2004). This means that an understanding and familiarity with advanced philosophic theories is unnecessary for someone to behave normatively and conform to a specific moral order. This point explains a pragmatic use of hermeneutic phenomenology.

When employing a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation, participants need not have a degree in higher education or an understanding of theoretical concepts to contribute to a greater analysis of their horizons of significance and social imaginaries. As such, there are no limits to what may encompass and affect social imaginaries, as “It is in fact that largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have. It can never be adequately expressed
in the form of explicit doctrines because of its unlimited and indefinite nature.” (Taylor, 2004, p. 25). For this reason, a concrete description of a complete social imaginary is unrealistic for a researcher to comprehend and only an interpretive understanding is possible.

Taylor also argues against moral relativism; the idea there are no objective universal truths and moral values. Taylor believes such relativism has brought on a malaise of individuality in modern society (Taylor, 1991). This malaise is represented by a secular autonomy that society has advanced over the past three centuries (Taylor, 1991). The denial in modern society of cohesive moral values and structures as found in organized religious institutions has resulted in a perception that morality is relative and individualized (Taylor, 1991). While religious institutions may not be as prominent in a professed secular country such as Canada, Taylor (1991) argues that society is still influenced by moral truths even if individuals are not consciously aware of the origins of such moral values.

According to Taylor, the preceding claim grounds morality within society and counters a moral relativistic perspective. Taylor rallies against the notion that individuals are separate from their society despite the apparent malaise of individuality that modern society has descended into (Taylor, 1991). While it is possible for individuals to make decisions and moral choices somewhat independently from external factors, they cannot disentangle themselves from the social constructs that make those independent choices valuable (Carnevale, 2013). In relation to this study, the perceptions of a possible ban on U19 lightweight rowing will present differing ethical opinions that either support or reject this potential outcome. However, disagreements over ethical matters does not mean individuals have created, or been influenced by, something other than the moral order they share within a community. In this sense they do not operate on a relativistic moral basis. The specific origins of the moral order and an individual’s horizons of
significance are incredibly complex and multifaceted, and a task that even Taylor (2004) has not endeavoured to describe. However, the qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach proposed by Taylor recognizes the immeasurable factors that influence moral perceptions. The value and significance of Taylor’s method of inquiry provides an approach by which a researcher can uncover and understand the array of variables embedded within a specific social context.

To summarize, the relationships between some of the terms Taylor establishes within his hermeneutic phenomenology includes the following. People are shaped by their historical and cultural experiences and influences that give meaningful moral context to their lives in the form of horizons of significance. The moral order of a society is comprised of established, shared and prioritized values that influence the determination of right or wrong, good or bad. A society’s social imaginaries reflect how people see themselves and in relation to others within the moral order. By examining the social imaginaries – or local imaginaries as Montreuil and Carnevale (2018) propose as ways to delimit the scope and depth of one’s inquiry – we can understand the moral realms of the lived experiences of this study’s participants who are intimately associated with U19 lightweight rowing. In this investigation, the focus is on moral and socio-historical contexts, the horizons of significance, to comprehend the perceptions of participants regarding the possible elimination of U19 rowing in Canada.

**Research Design**

A significant amount of ethical research using hermeneutic phenomenology may be found in the bioethical field, especially in nursing. In this realm, studies try to better understand patient experiences and how to produce more ethically sound everyday practices (Carnevale, 2013; Benner, 1994). Despite the differences between nursing and sport, the application of a hermeneutic framework to understand the ethics of categorization in sport can be appropriately
applied. For this reason, the methods used in this study will be practically applied using examples and support from other hermeneutic studies in bioethics and sport-related research.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a difficult methodology to comprehend and apply, and the process one follows is not necessarily linear (Cohen, Kahn & Steeves, 2000). As van Manen (1990) writes, “To do hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: To construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, yet to remain aware that life is always more complex than any explication or meaning can reveal.” (p. 18). As explained, ascribing a strict method to interpreting an individual’s perceptions and experiences of a phenomenon is challenging. This is so because the interpretive aspects of phenomenology emerge from conversations between research participants and researcher. Whereas participants interpret and supply rich and thick descriptions of their experiences, a researcher tries to arrive at the essence of such experiences through an interpretive process to produce a coherent, meaningful narrative (Cohen et al., 2000). This approach follows general qualitative research methods, like ethnography and grounded theory, that are based on constructivist paradigms (Glesne, 2016; Hunt & Carnevale, 2011). Hermeneutics is a similar process whereby detailed descriptions try to disclose the meaning of experiences at their core, and how such understanding is associated to personal and broader life issues.

With this preamble, the central topic and aim of this study is the ethics of sport categorization and specifically the possible elimination of U19 rowing in Canada. To learn more about the ethics of the latter possibility it was decided to speak to rowing administrators and coaches who are in the forefront of making and responding to such decisions. Their perceptions, as well as the arguments and rationale of this potential outcome carry significant weight given their years of experience in and knowledge of rowing. The assumption is that rowing
administrators and coaches seriously reflect on such matters and work for the good of rowers and the sport.

In a similar vein, Montreuil and Carnevale (2018) have applied an ethical hermeneutic methodology to study children’s perceptions of healthcare and advocate for the inclusion of youth perceptions in phenomenological research. However, they also recognize there are ethical implications of involving children in research given matters of consent, vulnerability and autonomy. Additionally, the research Montreuil and Carnevale (2018) conducted directly involved child perceptions of healthcare and could not be supplemented with adult perspectives.

For these and other reasons previously explained, this study did not consider speaking to U19 rowers because many are not qualified to discuss and decide policy matters in rowing. While this cohort would likely oppose the possible elimination of U19 rowing, they would also have less informative thoughts related to ethical arguments for or against this issue. Moreover, many U19 rowers would have minimal experience and knowledge in the sport regarding its history, structure, rules and policies. By delimiting the study participants to rowing administrators and coaches, there is no attempt to diminish the experiences of current U19 rowers and their thoughts were this category to be eliminated. The participants in this study were selected because they have substantial experience in rowing and are most closely affiliated with the structure and policies of rowing. Because these individuals are in positions of power and their perspectives will influence whether the U19 lightweight rowing category is banned, their perspectives of the experiences of young rowers are actually more relevant than the actual perceptions of the rowers themselves on a very practical level. Their perceptions of the ethics of sport categorization and the possible elimination of U19 rowing in Canada were therefore anticipated to be most informative.
In selecting participants for this study, I followed Jones and colleagues (2014) who note that participant sampling ought to recognize three guiding principles: excellent research skills, excellent participants and data, and recognizing the limits of targeted and biased factors. Excellent research skills refer to researchers themselves because they are the principal interpreters of the data and are closely related to the subject matter. As the researcher in this study I have been a competitive rower with 12 years experience and a coach for 10 years. I was also a former high school lightweight rower. The second guiding principle refers to identifying and locating appropriate participants to answer the study’s research questions (Jones et al., 2014). It must be assumed not all participants will provide rich and excellent data due to their varied perceptions. Still, their experience and knowledge of the subject matter should inform the central questions and issues of the study. Finally, the third guiding principle refers to the weaknesses of purposeful sampling as targeted and selective rather than anonymous and random and the inherent bias in such a selection process (Jones et al., 2014).

In this investigation, participants who had expertise in the area of lightweight rowing were relatively easy to locate given my involvement in the rowing community. Establishing the sample size of the participants who were to be interviewed was less straightforward. Patton (2002) confirms that given the nature of qualitative research, there are no strict rules when deciding the sample sizes for qualitative inquiries. As a result, qualitative research should be guided by what the research intends to understand, its purposes, usefulness, credibility and time restrictions and other limiting factors (Patton, 2002).

With these considerations in mind, I applied the concept of data saturation to the iterative sampling procedure (Jones et al., 2014). This is where the data participants provide no longer contributes new themes or information for the researcher to use and thus sampling may cease. As
such, interviews in this study were performed with 10 participants from within the rowing community. Ten participants were deemed enough to garner a better understanding of the shared social imaginaries that participants in the rowing community had. In this way I was able to ascertain what meaningful personal considerations (horizons of significance) make up the larger social perceptions (social imaginaries) that explain each relationship to the moral good and potentially constitute the moral order (Carnevale, 2013). Coaches were recruited from various coaching circles and RowOntario, and administrators from the Canadian Secondary Schools Rowing Association (CSSRA) and Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA). A minimum number of participants was initially set at six, with a mix of male and female coaches and administrators. An additional four participants were invited to ensure credibility and saturation of the data.

Participants were located within south-central Ontario, including the Niagara region, the Greater Toronto Area, and London, Ontario. While this geographic sample is relatively limited given the overall size of Canada, most high school rowing clubs exist within Ontario (Row Ontario, 2019) and therefore represent a major portion of the Canadian rowing community. General invitation e-mails were sent to rowing organizations like RCA, RowOntario and CSSRA to solicit coaches and administrators for this study. However, most organizations declined to forward the letters of invitation [see Appendix F] to other administrators and coaches due to the apparent contentious nature of the subject matter. Therefore, coaches and some administrators were contacted directly by me as prescribed with purposive sampling methods (Jones et al., 2014). Reaching potential coaches and administrators was relatively easy given my familiarity with the rowing community in south-central Ontario. Once a reply of interest was received, I e-mailed prospective participants the informed consent document [see Appendix G] and Research Ethics Board Certificate (#19-031) [see Appendix H].
Of the 10 participants, five were males and five females. The ages of the participants ranged from their late 30s to early 70s. All had decades of experience in their respective coaching or administrative roles and eight out of 10 had prior high school rowing experience. Four of these participants had experience as high school lightweights themselves. Of this sample, three were members of the CSSRA, two were members of RCA, and seven were coaches. The reason behind the apparent discord in cohort numbers was the result of coaches also occupying administrative roles. Furthermore, many of these participants had administrative roles on other rowing organizations such as the Canadian Henley Rowing Corporation and RowOntario. While gender was equally split within the participants, four of the 10 participants had more than five years of administration experience with either the CSSRA or RCA. This ensured that those who are responsible for the implementation and structuring of U19 lightweight rowing were represented within the study. Six of the other 10 participants were from coaching backgrounds with no less than five years of coaching experience in lead or head coaching positions. As previously mentioned, Glesne (2016) and Jones and colleagues (2014) agreed that interviews and data collection in general should only be necessary up to a point of saturation within the data. Through the iterative and reassessing process required of phenomenological research, this researcher did indeed find data saturation after interviewing 10 participants.

The data collection process began with a pilot study with two participants to ensure the main research questions were clear and comprehensible, the developed interview guide was logical and coherent, and the answers sought were relevant [see Appendix I]. After analysis and feedback from the participants as per an adapted member checking process, slight revisions of the interview guide questions were made. During the main study, interviews were conducted with each participant in a location and setting that was private and comfortable so participants
felt at ease and could express themselves unencumbered (Jones et al., 2014; Glesne, 2016).

Audio recorded interviews lasted between 45-90 minutes and I also took notes to record aspects of the interview such as body language and facial expressions that a recording of the conversation could not capture.

When the interviews were completed transcriptions of the recordings were made verbatim and pseudonyms based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s fantasy novels *The Lord of The Rings* were used to deidentify participants. During and after the transcription phase, notes were attached to the transcribed documents to clarify points or add more descriptive richness when required. Participants were then sent the transcripts and my notes to review and edit the documents to ensure the accuracy of our conversations. This member checking process provided an additional layer of validity to the data. Once the reviewed transcripts were returned to me, they became the final version of the data. Below is a descriptive chart of the participants and their respective position on the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.

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<th>Gender</th>
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<td>Durin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Administrator (Coach)</td>
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<td>Boromir</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
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<td>Silmarien</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Celeborn</td>
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<td>Merry</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Coach (Administrator)</td>
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<td>Smaug</td>
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Analysis

A difficulty with Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology is that it does not strictly prescribe a formal method to interpret *social imaginaries* or *horizons of significance* (Carnevale, 2013). This is primarily a result of the philosophic rationalization for interpretive phenomenology in contrast to natural or quantitative sciences as explained earlier. Benner (1994) however has provided some guidelines on how to apply hermeneutic phenomenology to nursing research based primarily on Heidegger’s ontology and conforms to Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology as well (Carnevale, 2013; Hunt & Carnevale, 2019).

Benner (1994) identifies four main issues that a researcher needs to address during the data analysis process which involves; a forestructure of understanding, the relationship between understanding and interpretation, the hermeneutic circle, and modes of involvement. Many of these principles emerged from some of the tenets of phenomenology mentioned earlier in this chapter. Identifying and explaining these features of hermeneutic phenomenology are important because they situate the researcher and the participants within the study and establish how a qualitative study such as this one can be validated (Benner, 1994).

The forestructure of understanding refers to the ability to access historical and background information that makes interpretation possible. As explained earlier, bracketing and any attempt to shirk one’s pre-understandings of the world would make it ontologically and practically impossible to understand our lived experiences and those of others (Benner, 1994). Recognizing that these forestructures exist and *must* exist in order to interpret phenomena is imperative in the analysis phase of one’s research. This feature also requires the researcher to be reflexive and fully immersed in the data (Glesne, 2016; Cohen et al. 2000; Jones et al., 2014). Asking participants questions about their own historical and contextual views on the subject and
receiving deep descriptions is a way of accessing these forestructures. This information can then be linked to interpretation and understanding. These dimensions require researchers to disclose forestructures of their own backgrounds, experiences and biases and incorporate them in an all-encompassing narrative. Readers will then comprehend how interpretation and meaning are interwoven between data elicited from participants and researchers (Benner, 1994).

As just intimated, the same process of establishing forestructures of researchers also applies to participants. The rich narratives of the latter group describe and explain their own background and contexts in relation to the topic and perceptions of right and wrong (Benner, 1994). These forestructures are essential to establish interpretive understanding and strengthen the rigour and validity of the research. As well, forestructures provide access to the horizons of significance and social imaginaries that are historically and contextually based.

The hermeneutic interpretative process is fundamentally a writing and rewriting process (van Manen, 1990). It requires the researcher to understand the contextual and temporal meaning of the text while concurrently being able to step back and analyze the text from a deeper perspective using the hermeneutic circle (Benner, 1994). This interpretive process does not involve bracketing as it would in Husserlian phenomenology, but rather it involves constant reflection and understanding on an ontic level (Taylor, 2004). Interpreting the data requires reflection on more than just the words of the participants, but the contexts in which they are being used and applied. The backgrounds that give meaning to the data provided by participants ought to be included in this process to arrive at an accurate account of the perceptions of participants. This can be a daunting task for researchers and requires constant reflection on their part.
The third mode of analysis one needs to apply involves the hermeneutic circle which was first proposed as a method of understanding phenomenological experience by Heidegger and advanced by Gadamer (Benner, 1994). The hermeneutic circle was a dialectic way of uncovering meaning from ‘horizons.’ The hermeneutic circle is an analysis of the data by comparing parts of the data to the whole in a circular method until a full understanding is attained (Taylor, 1971). Smaller parts of the data are compared to the larger context and background in which they exist and within the forestructures that participants and researchers disclose (Benner, 1994; Taylor, 1971). Larger interpretations and meanings are dialectically juxtaposed to the smaller parts of the text (Taylor, 1971). The hermeneutic circle requires parts of the data or text to be considered within its broader social context because all actions and perceptions within this context give rise to meaning (i.e., horizons of significance). The application of the hermeneutic circle is an ongoing data collection and analysis process. The constant comparing of parts of the data to the whole continues until a deep understanding of the text is attained and nothing more can be learned, which is known as data saturation (Cohen et al., 2000).

The final mode of phenomenological data analysis Benner (1994) identifies refers to levels and quality of involvement. Everyday lived experiences fall within a “ready-to-hand” or an “unready-to hand” mode of involvement (Benner, 1994). The former describes normally functioning lives of individuals and their experiences, and the latter describes lives of individuals with some type of breakdown or disruption in everyday experience where conflicts may arise (Benner, 1994). These modes are important to consider because experiences that are atypical or antagonistic in some way might be misinterpreted by someone who perhaps does not understand or recognize contextual nuances.
For example, if someone who had little rowing experience conducted a study like this one, she would likely assume a “ready-to-hand” view of the topic. As such, a misrepresentation of the current state of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada might be proffered. Moreover, an analysis of the perceptions of rowing coaches and administrators might result in a misinterpretation of the ethics of sport categorization and concerns surrounding the possible elimination of U19 rowing in Canada. Again, disclosing forestructures of researchers and participants and their involvement in sport is essential to accurately interpret and understand their perceptions. The hermeneutic circle also considers the mode of involvement during its back and forth exchange when interpreting participant and researcher texts. In this study the mode of involvement is the “unready-to-hand” perspective which makes problematic the ethical and structural issues and disagreements identified in chapter one.

The function of the four modes that Benner (1994) identifies to properly situate and analyze a phenomenon served as guiding principles in the interpretive process of data analysis. The application of the hermeneutic circle and other reflexive and immersive considerations are by no means a linear process or prescriptively precise. In this study, interview transcripts with member checking procedures ensured the accuracy and clarity of participant accounts. During the analysis phase of the transcripts, the hermeneutic circle was employed whereby specific excerpts were compared between participant and researcher accounts as well as larger ethical and social contexts. The integration of social imaginaries and horizons of significance were part of this process. This rigorous, immersive, interpretive and reflexive hermeneutic phenomenological methodology ultimately produced a narrative to understand the perceptions of coaches and administrators about the ethics of sport categorization and the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.
Ethical Analysis

Once the data was analyzed and the hermeneutic phenomenological process had been completed further analysis of ethical issues as perceived by the participants was undertaken. As mentioned earlier, some argue because ethical experiences are unique to individuals and can be differentiated between cultures, no objective, universal moral values exist. This position is known as moral relativism and it also claims it is futile to engage in ethical critique and normative assessments. Taylor (1991) rejects moral relativism, and the social “malaise” resulting from it, despite the prominence of individualism within his hermeneutic phenomenological approach. As previously explained, the moral order of society precedes individuals and invariably influences their decisions of right and wrong.

Taylor (1991) contends a paradigm shift has occurred in modern society due to individual liberty, rights and autonomy, and a disapproval of religious and social moral directives. Personal and collective authenticity is more difficult to achieve in contemporary life because of the erosion of moral ideals. Today many people base their moral lives on superficial, fleeting and subjective expressions of hedonism and self-indulgence. Within such a way of life all opinions are deemed equal leading to moral equivalency, a consequence of moral relativism. Reason, rationality and critique are no longer privileged to inform ethical percepts and actions to produce a fair and just shared normative society. In this study, the shared culture of U19, predominantly high school rowing, as perceived by coaches and administrators was revealed by tapping into their social imaginaries and horizons of significance. Common recurring themes emerged from the data from the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis utilized in this investigation. These themes uncovered deeply held moral values and assessments about the ethics of sport categorization and the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.
The themes that emerged from the data also included concepts like health, equality and fairness as perceived by the participants. Participant perceptions offered different explanations and sometimes contradictory viewpoints revealing a lack of moral consensus. This of course was to be expected because of the varied backgrounds, experiences and interests of the participants. Such variation is welcomed to demonstrate that the ethics of sport categorization and the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada is a contentious subject requiring sound, rational and reasonable ethical judgments. A critique and analysis of these emerging ethical themes could then produce a coherent and sound understanding of the relationship between a ban on U19 lightweight rowing and the moral good.
Chapter 4: Results and Emergent Themes

This chapter will introduce the participants and discuss the results and emerging themes from the interview process. The narratives collected from participants will be analyzed within a hermeneutic phenomenological framework as explained in chapter three. Each participant was asked about the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and addressed the ethics of sport categorization. The data collected and reported here will reflect significant historical contexts and backgrounds as participants present their worldview (Laverty, 2003). Specific participant reflections will also delve into their relationships within society and reveal pertinent information regarding several ethical considerations regarding a possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada (Laverty, 2003; Carnevale, 2013).

Participants

The introduction of these stories will not only respect the lived experiences of each participant, but also contribute to a larger shared perception of the central research questions of this thesis. Common themes and other emerging foundations will be presented below. Reflexivity and elucidation on my part as the researcher will clarify and interpret participant data to establish coherent and meaningful narratives. The sequence in which participant perceptions are presented will be in no specific order. The findings and discussion in the remainder of this chapter are answers to the following research questions: how do rowing coaches and administrators perceive U19 lightweight rowing in Canada; what do they think about the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and the ethical implications if this were to happen; and finally, how would this possible ban relate to the moral good in rowing and the lives of those involved?
Durin

Durin was a former lightweight rower and high school rowing coach who also sat on governing boards for the Canadian Secondary School Rowing Association (CSSRA) and RowOntario. Durin therefore had extensive experience within the U19 lightweight rowing category as athlete, coach, administrator, and parent of lightweight rowers. I had some previous contact with Durin prior to the commencement of the study, but only as a rival high school rower. It was clear that Durin had a deep passion and appreciation for the sport that he was so intimately a part of. Juxtaposing his fervor for rowing, Durin described his first experiences of lightweight rowing as such:

Well it was back in the scary days and I remember my first year as a lightweight running in a bag, in garbage bags and things like that. Although I never had to do that again once I got fitter and changed my lifestyle a bit. Um, but I certainly had friends who struggled with 135, 145 kind of thing. So all the horror stories I witnessed those kinds of things. That was my experience as a, as an athlete.

Concerns over the health and wellbeing of athletes was evidently a common thread during the interview, but despite this, his appreciation for rowing seemed to be undeterred. Durin continued rowing and participated in the sport well after high school. Later in life, he drew on his experiences as an athlete to provide a safer environment for other athletes when he became a coach. Durin considered the current era in rowing “smarter” than during his career as a rower in part because of the technological developments in sports sciences. He was deeply involved with his children’s participation in the sport and his parental role greatly influenced his perceptions of lightweight rowing. As a parent, he understood childhood development, and this fostered a
unique perspective about U19 lightweight rowing including some negative factors. Durin however also reflected on positive factors of U19 lightweight rowing.

I think several of my friends would say this, but I probably, as a somewhat non-athletic person entering high school and only being in an open weight category, it would be, it would have been the same as me trying out for the football team. I probably wouldn’t have considered it or not been included in the final selection of the crew, right? So that’s how I feel about it. It’s an entry to the sport. The kids do develop… So, I see lightweight, junior lightweight as an entry into the sport. For a lot of kids.

As a former wrestler, Durin was careful not to grant unconditional support for weight categories but understood there could be benefits to lightweight rowing to benefit greater participation. While he maintained the need for oversight, accountability and responsibility by coaches, parents and administrators, there were mechanisms and situations where lightweight rowing proved to be too important to the sport and rowers to be eliminated.

During the conversation, Durin mentioned a well-known colloquial concept called the “natural lightweight” – an expression I used many times outside of the interview. He described the natural lightweight as follows:

Well for me it would be uh, within that given high school season or, you know if we’re looking at a whole training year, within that training year that person without much difficulty or with ease, can stay within the maximum weight. So that would be a natural kind of lightweight, they don’t have to cut weight, they don’t really have to change how they eat unless they’re eating crappy and they should be changing anyways. Um, they can naturally do that with very little effort or no effort at all. I think my last year rowing, I
won Henley in the old 145 category. I think I weighed 120 lbs. But five years before I was umm, when I was rowing 135 lbs I was this kid who was about 142 and told to lose 7 lbs in four weeks. Right? So I was not a natural lightweight.

The relationship between making weight with ease as a result of being a “natural lightweight” was important for Durin to reconcile the need to have a category for those who fit this description. For all others who felt pressure to diet excessively, such as he had experienced as well as some of his children, a moral issue arose. Rowers who were required to diet ought to be ineligible as a lightweight and should be resigned to row at the open weight level. In Durin’s experience, he personally saw lightweight categories as something youth could grow out of and something they could grow into if their fitness and discipline improved.

*Samwise*

Samwise was never a lightweight himself but did have an illustrious rowing career as an open weight oarsman. During his career as a rowing coach, Samwise not only coached myself, but also my father in the 1970s. His experience in U19 lightweight rowing was exclusively as a coach and mainly focused on women’s rowing. Formerly the head coach of a south-central Ontario rowing club, he was also heavily involved with lightweight rowers at the university level. In the interview, Samwise emphasized he treated athletes the same regardless of their gender:

First of all, they’re athletes. Um, no matter what gender and what weight class. That’s the first thing you have to recognize, that I recognize, they’re athletes. And they need to be treated as such.
While Samwise regarded gender as a somewhat inconsequential consideration when coaching, lightweight rowing required careful attention. Samwise recognized that to help athletes make weight safely, he had to provide athletes with tools and oversight to make them feel comfortable in an otherwise stressful situation.

So I see that we have, we have three weight categories: they have a training weight, they have a weigh-in weight, and they have their racing weight. There are three distinct categories. When they understand that. There is less stress.

Samwise used an approach to manage lightweight rowers that gave them some leeway when it came to weight management. This worked reasonably well if expectations and limitations were clearly communicated. Rowers who were excessively overweight not only cost themselves a chance to compete but their crewmates as well:

… they’re affecting not just themselves, they’re affecting eight other people in a boat. So, I’ve always said to my athletes, ‘remember this: whatever you eat, everyone on the whole team is eating. When you go out drinking, the whole team is drinking. If you don’t get enough sleep, the whole team is not sleeping.’

The inherent pressures lightweight rowers endured regarding weight making and its consequences were a challenge for Samwise. To address issues like goals, amount, duration and harm regarding weight, Samwise applied a “toolbox” comprised of his experience and knowledge. Rowers were taught how to manage stressors and given guidelines to make weight in a healthy manner. According to Samwise, issues associated with lightweight rowing have a better chance to be resolved by good coaching and education (i.e. a toolbox) and can relieve the burden on the rowers. With good coaching, lightweight rowing can provide safe practices that a
ban on the U19 category would otherwise take away. The methods in which coaches apply their experiences and knowledge are entirely self-regulated, however. Samwise pointed out that formal coaching education and guidance in relation to weight and other issues in lightweight rowing would be helpful.

Despite this recommendation, Samwise wasn’t always so tolerant toward lightweight categories and rowers.

Samwise: “I have to tell you that, I have to tell you that when I was rowing, um. Open weight men ruled. We called lightweight men, ‘half-men.’”

Researcher: “Yeah?”

Samwise: “That’s, that’s how, it’s how we categorized them. They were half our size.”

Researcher: “Was it jokingly? Or was it kind of like, you know, ‘we are better.’”

Samwise: “It was actually serious, and we were better. Right?”

Samwise confirmed the “privileged” status of open weight crewmates over lightweights not only in terms of size but also in financial support for international competitions. Since his time rowing in the 1970s, Samwise mostly believed these advantages have since been abated. While Samwise admitted this stereotype was once strongly held, his exposure to women’s lightweight rowing drastically changed his perception of this category. His conviction today is that lightweight women “pound for pound outwork any other athlete.”

Merry

I was first introduced to Merry when I was in high school and rowing as a lightweight for E.L. Crossley Secondary School. Merry was a former high school lightweight rower in the 1970s and has since spent the last four decades coaching at the high school, senior lightweight and open
weight levels. He currently occupies a seat on the CSSRA executive board and has held numerous rowing titles. Merry tended to take a very analytic and quantitative approach to problems in rowing and investigated high school lightweight protocols and weight categories on several previous occasions:

…we did a study, where we were looking at information, a lot of information, about five or six years ago, and found that through growth development charts, and they were U.S. development charts, the average grade nine, grade ten, uh, athlete, male, was approximately 136 lbs. And, and we looked at the um, the uh, sort of range of weights and um, and the women, average women averaged 116 lbs. And I’m, this is a really, you know within a plus or minus, but we said yeah so, umm, women are, women are coxies, the average grade nine grade ten.

This comment was substantiated by an informal study Merry conducted with rowers who competed at the CSSRA championships. This work showed similar trends in weight distribution and as a result, the perceived need for weight categories. The evidence Merry collected largely informed his perceptions of the lightweight category, although he recognized there are ethical decisions involved in allowing “borderline” athletes to make weight. From here we see ethical considerations were necessary to address individual athletes and their eligibility to row as lightweights. Many rowers Merry identified through his own informal data registered below the lightweight weight limit and this bolstered his support for a category to cater to smaller athletes.

… [R]owing [is] a power sport, and a power endurance sport. The bigger you are the stronger you are. The bigger the muscle the stronger the muscle, there’s no question about that. So we have lightweight rowing because, it is a power sport, and we know that
bigger people are stronger, and, umm, and we want to give the, the range of athletes, the range of participants in high school a fair playing ground.

Merry’s observations led him to the conclusion that high school students, primarily those in grades nine and ten, were generally within a lightweight weight category. Providing opportunities to compete against similar sized athletes who were within the same “development level” were entrenched in an ethic of competitive fairness. This proposition was also supported by evidence Merry encountered while working with Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) and the development of a Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model.

In any event, I think this is important; 20 years ago, the um, Rowing Canada developed a long-term athlete development model. They had um, sports physiologists, and this was going on in all sports. All sports were trying to develop a long-term athlete development model, and the physiologists identified athletes should be competing at their developmental level… [A]nd I think it’s important, Jacob, to highlight development is both physical development and physical skill. So I recognize that skill is a part of development, and umm, and, but the physical development part is the part that I like to suggest why or, I like to use in support of why we have lightweight rowing in high school events, because people should be competing at their developmental level, at their age.

As a tangent in our conversation, Merry also recognized ethical issues regarding coxswains and their weight requirements prior to races. As opposed to lightweight rowers, these individuals typically measured just under the ceiling weight prior to a weigh-in and then lost as much weight as they could prior to competition. This practice usually involved the consumption of large amounts of water prior to a weigh-in and dropping the weight rapidly by vomiting and/or
using diuretics. This extreme form of water weight or “dead-weight” loss was significant enough to concern the CSSRA.

The other issue we had, at the uh, CSSRA regatta was a, umm, and this is years ago before we lowered the weight, and this is one of the reasons we investigated it. Um, the coxie stepped on the scale in the morning, and um, and… as he was weighing in, he vomited water. Um, a number of times.

The example of coxswains making weight prompted some to consider banning weigh-ins for coxies, although not a ban on the coxswain weight category. Several other issues were identified with the current system coaches and administrators faced when managing U19 lightweight rowing. In his experience, Merry found that while problems like making weight existed, the utility and meaningfulness of the sport warranted reforms but not an outright ban on the U19 lightweight rowing category.

I love our sport, I think it is a great opportunity for young athletes to get involved in sport, in life, because of the teamwork… it’s a unique sport. And uh, and I think we should be promoting it to everyone, and based on the things I think I’ve already said; the opportunities it provides, the limitations of, that small people have and, and, I know I’m a very competitive person myself when I was competing, and I don’t think that I would have stayed in a sport, that uh, I didn’t have a chance to succeed at.

Merry’s commitment to the promotion of rowing for young lightweight rowers was largely influenced by informal empirical and anecdotal data he gathered as a coach and administrator, but also the experiences he had as a lightweight rower. Not only did it appear to direct his perceptions toward the U19 lightweight rowing category, but his experience in the
sport also encouraged his involvement as an adult. As a rower who personally benefited from Merry’s coaching, I am grateful for his continued investment and devotion to rowing.

**Boromir**

Boromir is another former lightweight rower, although his rowing experience involved almost every class and type of rowing since he began in the early 1970s. He was also a former member of RCA and a member of the working group committee that drafted the item to possibly eliminate U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. Based on his experience, Boromir recounted many instances of unhealthy weight making practices. This negatively affected his view and the need to maintain a lightweight rowing program for high school athletes.

And, so, you know so I’ve got that personal experience, and uh, you know I can say when I, when I was in high school and, and rowing ‘club’, in those light categories you know I saw, uh, a lot of questionable practices. Uh, and, um, as you know people dehydrating quite radically and you know, the 24-hour period before racing and weighing for racing. You know, going for long runs on a hot day wearing a garbage bag and sweat clothes. I also experienced you know, people would go in the sauna wearing a plastic suit, garbage bags. So, uh, rowers would uh, drive to regattas in the summer in their car wearing their sweat clothes with the heater on.

While Boromir did not engage in similar radical weight loss practices, he saw widespread use of these methods in rowing. Although rare, he also heard severe dehydration led to known fatalities which resulted in significant concern. Even if severe harm was not evident, Boromir felt rowers who did not properly manage their weight often turned in poor performances and let their crewmates down.
Over the long term I would not want to row with someone who was doing that because they’re not in the race. They’re not, they’re not going to be there especially if it’s a tough race and you’re in the last 500m. They’re, they’re not going to be there because of what they’ve done to themselves. They will not be as productive as someone that has been eating for the last three days and drinking water.

While Boromir gave considerable thought to U19 lightweight rowing, he did not believe it should be banned if mitigating factors could be implemented. For example, he acknowledged there were long- and short-term risks regarding weight making in the U19 lightweight rowing category. These risks include but are not limited to age and maturity, developmental growth problems, mental health issues and the ability of athletes to make individual informed decisions.

To reduce these risks, Boromir recommended there be required medical oversight and intervention. This was the kind of supervision that was proposed and conditionally implemented in the American high school system, where doctors must confirm the health and safety of athletes prior to competition in lightweight rowing. The medical “passport” guidelines were introduced by USRowing in 2019 and are still being configured as of 2020, which means a perfect understanding or interpretation of a lightweight passport is unavailable. A lightweight passport would require a basic physical examination and assessment by a doctor to confirm an athlete could maintain a weight below the given cut-off for a specific category that current year. The methods and tools used by a doctor to assess these traits are also not clearly established. Over several years of debating these protocols in rowing governing bodies, Boromir admitted no real progress has been made to implement such reforms.

So if, if the association doesn’t, or the membership don’t want to take reasonable steps uh, to mitigate the risk through the, what you might call the passport process to put it
more broadly, is just a monitoring process around the athletes, then the only step you can
take if you can’t have a mitigating measure, is to go to prohibition…

A host of practical complications may result from a medically supervised lightweight
passport program such as having access to doctors and the costs of implementing such
conditions, especially in an American health care system. Despite these potential qualms,
Boromir regarded the current lightweight rowing situation in Canada to be inadequate to reduce
harms in the sport. Due to this inadequacy, he believed rowing’s sport governing bodies have a
moral responsibility to protect athletes. Unless needed reforms were implemented, Boromir felt a
ban on U19 lightweight rowing was justified.

A criticism against those who support a ban on U19 lightweight rowing is that fewer
athletes will participate in the sport. Boromir understood this possible empirical consequence, as
well as the emotional ties to this rowing category, however, he believed the risks outweigh the
benefits. During his professional career, employing this “risk” calculus shaped his approach to
rowing. A “fact-based” assessment revealed to him the objective risks in the sport from the
perspective of an athlete, coach and administrator and led him to his thoughts on U19 lightweight
rowing. Still, he maintained the matter is not a black or white issue, and neither was his stance:

Sport has to be safe. And so, under the right conditions and managed in an appropriate
way, there’s nothing wrong with having a weight class in any sport, rowing or whatever
sport you want to put it in. But you know, if, if there’s a risk created by that, a risk of
harm, you know, people should not, people should be safe when they’re doing sport. So,
if there’s a risk of harm, umm, athlete harm, you need to have mitigating measures,
whether that’s the weight passport or the clearance form as a mitigating measure to
protect the athlete. So as long as you’re protecting the athlete, yeah, sure there’s nothing
wrong with that. But to let it go completely unregulated when there’s a known material risk of harm, I would call that unethical. So it’s not a binary choice, you know, weight class with no restriction, no weight class. There is a middle ground where you allow, the uh, practice to continue, but you have mitigating uh, you know measures, or, terms and conditions that serve to mitigate or protect, or mitigate the risk of harm or protect the athletes.

Silmarien

Silmarien was the first participant I interviewed that had no prior high school competitive rowing experience. She was also the first female interviewee. Silmarien was extremely athletic when she was young and was denied the opportunity to row because during her school years females were not allowed to row. Despite this barrier, she became heavily engaged in the rowing community as a result of her family’s participation in the sport and her own rise as a leader in the rowing community. Eventually, Silmarien served on local and provincial rowing organizations over the course of a few decades. As a female athlete, Silmarien faced many obstacles during her competitive years involving instances of sexism and misogyny, obstacles of which have been mostly dismantled by a more progressive society. Despite this, Silmarien understood her limits.

… I was captain of the senior basketball team, I won the SOSSA high jump, won the outstanding athlete of the high schools… and I know what its like to be a small person trying to compete in big sports. You can only go so far.

Having experienced limitations due to her size despite her athletic talent, Silmarien adopted and promoted an inclusive perspective on sport and its purpose. She related to her family’s involvement in sport to support this position.
I figure skated and I was a good athlete. So, I had an advantage when it came to making school teams. Kids don’t have that advantage today if they’re small. My kids were all small. My son was really a good athlete both in lacrosse and hockey, but, when he went into midget, he was 73 lbs, and we had to pull him out of both because there was too great a risk of injury. He went into wrestling and rowing which he excelled at and he had a full scholarship at [an American university] for rowing. My husband won many Henley medals and he always rowed [between] [1]35 and [1]45 [lbs]. My daughter the same thing. If it hadn’t been for lightweight rowing, she would not have had a high school sport. And she ended up going to [a Canadian university] and coaching and coxing and rowing for the club as well as rowing for [another Canadian university] when she finished her degree. We’ve lived that experience of small athletes that really need a sport because they’re exceptional athletes, but those sports don’t exist for them when they’re small and young. So, rowing was the ideal sport for kids, even kids that, never really participated in athletics.

This testament shows how Silmarien developed the view that rowing is an important sport that betters the lives of its participants. Having never rowed, the positive experiences of her family and others allowed her to immerse herself in rowing as an administrator that provided her with a unique “outsider” perspective. When compared to the myriad of sports she and her family were involved in, she felt rowing had the greatest impact on its participants.

I looked at the board for world rowing and literally everyone on that board came through a high school lightweight rowing program. Very light. I looked at the CSSRA board… exactly the same thing. Henley? It’s the same. They all rowed high school lightweight, and really light, and continued to row in the summer in lightweight boats. Because it has
such an impact on them, because they don’t have another sport, they just love it and stay with it.

Silmarien was not unaware of the problems surrounding U19 lightweight rowing including mental and physical health complications as a result of unhealthful dieting, even though she never personally endured these issues. Despite adamantly believing a ban on U19 lightweight rowing would “ruin the sport,” she observed that some athletes should not be eligible within the category.

I am not in favour of lightweight rowing for people that want to just make a lightweight boat and don’t have the body to be doing it. I was really opposed to people losing weight that they shouldn’t lose.

While several factors may influence a person to be a lightweight rower when they ought not to, such as peer pressure or body insecurity, Silmarien voiced her opinion about the responsibility of coaches in the matter.

But along with having good lightweight rowing is having good lightweight coaches that recognize that you shouldn’t abuse a person’s physique. And screw around with it too… Taking a bunch of girls that are tall and maybe shouldn’t be 125 or whatever it is today, but you’re going to turn them into that because you figure that’s where you’re going to win. So you’re going to get them all to sweat down and eating not as they should, and just for that win. The ‘coach’s win’ is what I call it. And that turns into abuse on the kids. They don’t know any better.

Considering these criticisms, Silmarien still favors keeping the lightweight rowing category. Her experiences have shown her the value of rowing and the need to promote the sport,
especially for young people who might be less interested and suited to participate in other popular sports. Despite potential harms, lack of education regarding safe practices and resources and support for coaches and athletes, Silmarien felt an outright ban of U19 lightweight rowing was illogical.

Yeah, but you can’t eliminate every single individual that’s going to have an issue. But you can’t get rid of something just because there’s one individual that’s at risk. Otherwise you wouldn’t let them have driver’s licenses.

Melian

Melian was a former high school rower who competed in the open weight category and later became a rowing coach. Her participation in rowing came just as females were permitted to row in Canada and she experienced the sport in a momentous period of change. While in grade 10, girls began to compete at the CSSRA championships for the first time. It was not until several years later in 1979 that women’s lightweight events were introduced to the CSSRA championship program. Although she was not a lightweight rower, Melian was very close to the lightweight male rowers. She competed alongside them and shared exceptional local and international success. After graduating high school, she rowed in the United States at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) division one university and her perceptions of lightweight rowing were formed through many different social contexts.

We in the women’s program had the best relationship with the lightweight men’s program, not the heavyweight men’s program. Some of the men in the heavyweight program were very anti-women, in their speech. And they probably didn’t really, like later, like I, like one of them I knew from Canada, but there was this like, sort of like the
football team, where they were not very nice to a lot of women. And their language was sort of, it was crossing over into the heavyweight men and not into the lightweight men. So we actually became more equal friends.

Melian’s experience of misogyny during her college rowing years made a significant impact on her positive perceptions of lightweight rowing. Despite such offensive language and attitudes toward open weight women, Melian experienced numerous benefits given the interactions between female and male rowers.

I characterize rowing as one of those few sports where men and women, boys and girls train on the same, the same space. And we compete in the same regattas. And maybe not in the US so much because it is kind of separated more, and of course that became even more separated with NCAA with women. But that’s why, there’s a good respect for the gender, I think, in, generally, in rowing. It’s a huge thing, and I tell that to parents or whatever, because they may not think of it because they may not be athletes or whatever, but it’s, it’s really, to me, one of the big positives of the sport.

Gender played a role in Melian’s perceptions of U19 lightweight rowing because of rowing’s unique structure and organization. Opportunities for female and male rowers to train in the same sessions and compete in the same regattas often encouraged a positive outlook of rowers and their shared struggles. This was especially true in the lightweight category.

While Melian believed lightweight rowing had similar effects on men and women, her coaching experience of mainly high-performance lightweight female rowers led to her suggestion to implement a weight monitoring system. Monitoring iron deficiencies and other blood test markers among female rowers that could hinder performance was something Melian
advocated for all her rowers. While all rowers should have medical assessments to ensure their health is maintained, medically assessing body composition and weight reducing practices linked to rowers’ eligibility for the lightweight category is also a necessity, similar to standards of a lightweight passport.

… [Y]ou can’t just look at someone and know exactly what their body composition is. You can make an initial judgment but it’s really not something you want to rely on 100% and say ‘you must lose 10 lbs’, or I shouldn’t say must, but you can lose 10 lbs in a healthy way and you will also perform better. Um, you would need a body composition evaluation. So, I wouldn’t think that would be a bad thing for doctors to have to do or, or see someone who’s a specialist and get that done because I think all athletes should get it done anyway. Like there should be a cost-effective way to do it…

Furthermore, such a medicalized oversight system could promote more accountability on the part of adults who coach and organize younger lightweight rowers.

[T]hey [regatta organizers/officials] won’t tolerate people sweating down in garbage bags. They won’t tolerate that stuff because that, that is a possible indication of an unhealthy behaviour and can damage the reputation of a regatta, and if something were to happen, they would have been held responsible because this is a behaviour that can be seen. So, if they see that, that person is immediately taken out of competition. Which to me is a good, it’s a good tool to use. And, and everyone can buy into that.

According to Melian, the current system in managing lightweight rowers is far from ideal. Her holistic coaching philosophy includes careful monitoring of athlete health and she
encourages her rowers to have blood tests to determine if they have any deficiencies that need correcting.

Mental health also played a significant role in Melian’s coaching philosophy. Her knowledge and awareness about eating disorders, body image and self-esteem, especially among female athletes, was taken very seriously. Her ability to oversee these mental health issues was difficult because rowers often concealed their emotions and practices. This held true for both open weight and lightweight rowers. The mental health aspects of dieting posed further difficulties in trying to distinguish between genuine eating disorders, which Melian described as “sinister” maladies, and disordered eating which generally described atypical eating habits. Given her decades of experience in rowing, Melian was cautious to attribute any casual relationship toward severe mental health issues and benign ones that could be associated with lightweight rowing. This was in part due to a lack of published and widely known anecdotal evidence of mental health issues in lightweight rowing. Such uncertainty and perceived unlikelihood influenced Melian’s perception regarding the proposal to ban U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.

Over the course of her long involvement with rowing, Melian was aware many rowers had weight and dieting challenges and concluded there was no single solution such as a ban to address these problems. Rowers from different backgrounds could be exposed to a variety of factors like poor coaching, peer pressure and negative self-image, and so blanket policies that do not address the individual needs of rowers were not perceived as helpful.

Like it’s so individual, and so, again, it, if it’s, if it’s too generalized it could really serve to, to uh, let people off the hook, like, almost right? Like let’s deal with the real issues instead of just saying banning lightweight rowing.
Melian was also cautious about pointing the finger as to the source of blame and who was responsible for the problems in U19 lightweight rowing. She recognized the risks in this rowing category like making weight and mental health issues, especially with high-performance athletes. However, she made clear that the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing would not completely resolve potential and inherent risks in rowing overall.

Celeborn

Unfortunately, like other women interviewed in this study, Celeborn grew up at a time when there were few competitive or recreational athletic opportunities offered to females even though she loved sport. She was not a rower in her youth but during her early years as an executive member on several rowing committees, she confronted an entrenched patriarchal system in the rowing community. With great determination, Celeborn served and promoted rowing at all levels as an administrator. Her goals were to implement fair and non-discriminatory reforms in the sport, and advance equality for rowers of all backgrounds and predispositions.

Celeborn did become a recreational rower as an adult and eventually occupied leadership roles within RowOntario and RCA. Her professional background was in the education sector and she applied her education experiences in the management of rowing at the executive level. Like Silmarien, Celeborn viewed rowing from a more neutral or arms-length position and without experience as a competitive rower. Still, she is a staunch advocate of the sport, recognizes the life changing benefits of rowing especially for youth, and has devoted substantial time and energy as a rowing administrator.

… [E]xposing kids to rowing at an early age will change their course. And I, there’s so many wonderful things that come out of being a part of rowing. The physical attributes
are excellent, your fitness level is awesome. But it’s the mental capacity you develop and the teamwork skills you develop. And the adaptability and the flexibility. All those important skills for life, are developed in this particular sport. I’ve played a lot of sports, but none of them demanded the, in, what I believe is the full spectrum, of, of physical, spiritual and, and mental development like rowing does.

While promoting the positive qualities of rowing, Celeborn was also interested in creating rowing opportunities for rowers of all shapes and sizes. As a high school educator for much of her life, she understood the developmental and emotional challenges secondary students (especially freshmen) faced. Smaller sized athletes confronted similar issues, and in rowing, their only competitive opportunity was provided in the lightweight category. This served to endorse the need for a space in which smaller high school rowers could participate and compete.

It’s, it’s a category but it’s a reality for introductory level of rowing. Getting kids involved in rowing, we have to recognize them as tiny people. And we can’t just call them coxies! We just recognize that they are small people when they come into this sport. And then they involve, evolve rather, into umm, weights. And they start to separate into two categories but just, but just because you become heavy or light shouldn’t stop us from encouraging you to be a rower and keep going.

As a lifelong rowing advocate, Celeborn believed the lightweight category was an excellent entry point into competitive rowing that encouraged participation and retention among rowers, especially youth. For Celeborn, a significant amount of value in rowing came from the belief that rowing was a lifelong sport. She also noted there were few recreational avenues for lightweight rowers, and this marred efforts to encourage greater and more diverse populations to join the sport. Considering the competitive realities in rowing and the dedication required,
Celeborn concluded lightweight rowing categories presented an important opportunity to develop and involve youth in a healthful lifestyle.

Beyond the physical and mental benefits of rowing, Celeborn believed rowing provided young athletes the chance to forge strong social bonds and deep expressions of the human spirit. Of these factors, she related the following.

Well I think that, that’s very personal and it’s different for different people, right? Having said that, what I, what I see happen in people spiritually is they, they start to become at one with the crew they’re with, the land that they’re on, the water they’re on, the place that they are. And they start to appreciate things in a different way. And they see it as something bigger than them. And that to me is the beginning of spiritualism. It’s not about Christianity. It’s just about that place in, in your mind and in your heart, uh, that takes you to another level. And what I’ve had the great joy of seeing close up is the crews that [my husband] has coached and the bonds that start to develop. That’s way more than just mental or physical. They’re, they’re really deep. And, and I’m seeing guys that [my husband] coached 20 years ago, and when we see them, just happenstance, they’re like, there’s this connection that sometimes brings me to tears because it’s overwhelming that… [Celeborn tears up slightly]. That such, that at such a, an experience at a time in their life when they’re pretty independent people – because it’s mostly been upper-high school and university – pretty independent people that something could gel them that tightly, that all these years later they still feel the same way when they’re connected. That to me is spiritual. That’s deep. That’s something you can’t even put a label on really well. And I think it changes a person.
In addition to praising the virtues of lightweight rowing, Celeborn also addressed the negative features of U19 lightweight rowing in relation to athletes making weight. For her, the buck stopped at coaches and the general education on overall health and weight management they provided rowers.

So, if we wipe out the lightweight category we’ll wipe out rowing in high school, is my view. But what we don’t do really well is have real expectations about how we manage weight. And uh, I think the management of weight is the most important part of any process with a lightweight program. And there will be some kids uh, male or female, that are in uh, the lightweight program that will naturally sustain an appropriate weight. There will be kids that struggle, umm, to be, not too underweight, just because they are naturally smaller. There will be those who will struggle because they’ll be just a little bit more over the, the line. But that’s where the management of weight is really important. It’s an education as well as a practice. Kids have to understand their bodies are growing, parent’s have to understand how their bodies are growing, and coaches have to understand how their bodies are growing.

For Celeborn, lightweight rowing required greater effective education and coaching competency. Monitoring and guiding rowers on how to appropriately and safely maintain weight and execute other competitive weight making actions was the task of coaches who needed to be well educated. Celeborn believed this advice was not limited to lightweight rowers but also included open weights. The more rowers know about healthy, appropriate physical practices and mental strategies, the more they will act responsibly towards others, themselves and their training habits and behave ethically. Celeborn mentioned the proposed USRowing lightweight passport system as an educational tool and approach to managing and safely assessing athletes.
She also noted some possible problems with this system such as the potential for funding and adherence to the proposed guidelines. The somewhat onerous task on behalf of those involved in implementing and supporting a system in Canada based on the USRowing program however was still thought to be justified. This was largely because a monitoring system was perceived as a better way of doing business to safely maintain the benefits of a lightweight category instead of making no reformations at all.

**Shelob**

Shelob was a former open weight high school rower and an incredibly accomplished coach in the U19 lightweight category. Having coached at nearly every level of competition in Canada, she is currently a rowing coach at a private high school in Ontario and manages a large team of girls and boys. Shelob knows the issues surrounding U19 lightweight rowing intimately and believes this category involves a “delicate balance.”

Obviously I’m very cautious and concerned around any sport that is weight limited because in my experience of coaching. It’s not, I mean right now I’m coaching women, but I have coached men and women over the years and I have seen, uh, I won’t say a lot, but pretty much every year have had concerns around athletes with disordered eating. And obviously their health and safety are what’s first and foremost. A lot of the time they have differing opinions on that and potentially their families have differing opinions on that. And so, it’s always a concern when you’re looking at putting together a lightweight crew. That any of that might be a factor in how they’re preparing for racing.

Shelob pointed to nuanced pressures of novice rowers in lightweight events that go beyond simple weight designations. As a coach and high school teacher she was acutely aware
social and personally imposed pressures have a significant effect on young adolescents. Varied levels of physical development, maturity, identity, body image, peer pressure and self-esteem were some factors young people faced, including rowers. To highlight this point, Shelob shared the following example.

So I also teach kinesiology and I have a nutrition unit, but I also have a lot of athletes in my classes. And some of the feedback I get from, particular female athletes is, you know, and part of the reason why they tend to sit together in the dining hall is because if they sit beside their friends who are having like a few cucumbers and maybe a few tomatoes for lunch, and they’re sitting down with like, two sandwiches you know, four pieces of fruit and a salad, it seems like, huge when compared to what their friends who are maybe not participating in sports, are, and it becomes uncomfortable.

This anecdotal experience related to rowing when it came to the issue of weight and the pressures placed upon rowers to compete in the lightweight category. Parents often got involved in this issue and encouraged their children to make weight, especially if a family had a history in rowing. Sometimes athletes decided these matters for themselves because they wanted to row with their friends. Shelob agreed these circumstances were not unreasonable, albeit, undesirable. Such pressures contributed to (and perhaps are conversely influenced by) an attitude that rowers would be more competitive at a lower weight category. Given this posture with its myriad of factors, Shelob believed managing the health and safety of the athletes was not an easy task.

Shelob also mentioned the mental health aspect in the U19 lightweight debate among high school rowers.
So yeah, so they’re not exactly fueling themselves. But as, and again, it’s not just sport performance but overall health and how that affects people mentally too. Like I think that’s a big part, like people aren’t eating properly, right, it’s, I mean their performance is one thing and how they’re participating, but most of the time they’re students so they’re probably going to be struggling more in school. And even in their social life, and I know, you know rowers tend to band together, so it’s kind of this, like, thing of like, you know, ‘I’m a lightweight and hanging out with the other lightweights,’ right? But I mean, I think that it can affect their, like, not just their physical health but their mental health as well.

Shelob was aware rowers with eating disorders may be statistically at greater risk in the lightweight category. Shelob had a family member who rowed and was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa. While this family member’s issues were not directly related to weight making or lightweight rowing, her use of sport to control her weight was very problematic. Through her expansive coaching experience Shelob recognized the serious health ramifications of eating disorders in rowing.

But of course in the back of my head, you see what somebody goes through and I’ve experienced that in other athletes I’ve coached as well, with disordered eating. So you never want to be in the position where, you know, and it happens that athletes are using rowing to control their weight, and it’s a health issue.

Considering all these social and individually imposed pressures, adverse health consequences, and the inability to demonstrate participation and competitive fairness have improved, Shelob supported a ban on U19 lightweight rowing. Another reason for her stance was the severe lack of education regarding nutrition for rowers, especially for lightweight rowers. Even with the exceptional resources at her institution, Shelob found it extremely difficult to
organize educational sessions on nutrition for her rowers. She was also frustrated trying to find
effective solutions that would resonate with lightweight rowers and resolve other persistent
problems in the sport.

… Yeah, I mean I guess just knowing that like, if there’s, was a way to guarantee that
they were able to be at weight in a healthy way, that would be what you would want
reassurance on. And certainly like, the nutritionist and the dietician can help with that,
umm, but there are always going be people who are going say one thing to a coach or a
dietician and then, their behaviour is something different.

For Shelob this skeptical attitude was not based on a mistrust of rowers but was rooted in
a realistic understanding of what high school athletes think and do. Furthermore, she felt that the
American lightweight passport system mentioned earlier would not be a satisfactory solution. As
a result of Shelob’s pragmatic approach, she believed the harms and risks in U19 lightweight
rowing outweighed the benefits and needed reforms would likely not be effective to alter the
behavior of rowers. For these reasons, she argued in favor of the elimination of U19 lightweight
rowing in Canada.

Smaug

Like Shelob, Smaug was also a coach for a private high school in Ontario although his
rowers were exclusively female. He rowed in lightweight categories in Northern Ontario, but
Junior and Senior designations during his career were not based on age but by a competitive
ranking system.

Junior would put you in the classification of having not won at the championship regatta
and then senior at the time I was rowing, it was back, 30 years ago. Umm, senior meant
you won a championship regatta. And then it was divided into light and open. And so I was a 16 year old lightweight still competing against guys that were older because it wasn’t by age at this point of time, but for me, not having to compete against, within the club or within that association, guys who were 200 lbs, definitely gave me somewhere where I could excel. And there was no way I was generating the same horsepower as some of the bigger guys. So, I was like, a small grade 10. Like most of us are.

Despite rowing against men who were sometimes in their twenties or thirties, Smaug found he was still competitive as a lightweight. When age was introduced as a factor in Canadian rowing, a more level playing field was created for Smaug. The introduction of age categories also provided greater access to enter the sport as a result of novice categories in certain regattas. In addition to competitive fairness, the inclusion of age in the lightweight category was therefore also perceived as a good way to encourage participation.

When asked about the potential of a ban of U19 lightweight rowing, Smaug brought up the following points and explained how athletes would feel disenfranchised.

I believe I would lose about a third – I would see an attrition rate probably, significantly quicker than the natural progress, as you and I discussed earlier, the natural progress of just life kind of taking different turns after grade 10. And I think it would, just, would be very hard for those smaller kids, to find a place, a competitive place. And, for this program there’s a lot of reasons why the kids are here. Umm, but I, I think at the end of the day after putting in a lot of time and making a lot of sacrifices to be the best athletes they can, um, not being able to compete just because they’re small is detrimental and I would lose kids because of that. They would just become discouraged… Look at, look at basketball in university. Why do so many people stop playing basketball? Interestingly
enough, I get a lot of criticism because of a number of, I’d say 70% of my rowers at the end of grade 12 do not pursue university rowing. And I believe at the end of grade 12 you’re closing up a chapter, if not a book, and you’re starting something else. And a lot of them stay and they put in a ton of time and they do go forward. Some of them know they’re just not going to be competitive enough. But with that, and I always try to contrast it with, well why aren’t we yelling at the basketball kids who didn’t pursue basketball or volleyball kids who didn’t pursue it in university? They seem, they get a, you know, yeah you did your high school season and you’re done. Rowing seems to have this other sort of ‘well you should be!’ Well why shouldn’t the basketball player? And I think a part of it is, if you aren’t the 6’ 7” kid in high school playing basketball, there probably isn’t a spot for you on a varsity basketball team. Whereas in rowing, there are spots for you. We just have more categories that have more opportunity.

As one can see from this quote, Smaug felt U19 lightweight rowing provided important opportunities for young, small statured athletes. He also noted that such opportunities for lightweight rowing competition may be another reason why rowers in this category feel pressure to continue in the sport. In other words, the rowers felt indebted for the chance to compete and this was an incentive to continue in the sport.

On the topic of weight loss and issues surrounding weight making, Smaug considered himself fortunate to have a large enough team to not require female rowers to lose weight. Many of his rowers were within and well under the lightweight weight cut-off, and so dieting and weight loss was rarely an issue with his rowers.

So when the girls come through, we don’t even tell them there are weight categories. So when they’re trying out as a novice, they’re just trying out as a novice. We’re not going
to discuss weight. I do let them know that we do weigh-ins. And at a certain point of time because they start asking ‘well hey I’m 110 lbs how do I compete against that crew?’ We do say there are weight categories. There’s under 138 there’s under 130 and there’s over, so we can find a spot for you. Umm, I do monitor weight, not as often as I probably should. And I’m not looking for where the girls are, I’m just looking for variances in weight. And one of the problems that we have, we find kids losing weight. They don’t quite understand that when we start burning 1000 calories on the rowing machines, they need to be eating enough to replace that let alone fuel their growing bodies. And so, umm, we, we just try and make the whole weigh-in process more monitoring health, which is true. Umm, and then when it comes time to boat, we look at where their weights are, we just boat them based on that. If they get heavier then they’re out of that — I have 50 kids, so I have a lot of, I can move a lot of the pieces around. I’m not, I, I never have an eight where if the eighth rower is sitting at 145 they need to get down to 130 so I can boat this lightweight eight, I don’t have that. I have 25 lightweights. I can fill boats.

Admittedly, Smaug understood his program was “in a very different situation” compared to other high school rowing programs. This was in large part because of the access to nutritional and educational resources that other high schools were typically unable to fund or provide for their rowers. In fact, his rowing program often needed more heavyweights to fill boats than lightweights which may differ significantly from other rowing programs where open weight is the norm. Although Smaug monitored weight, despite the perceived pressure to be within a weight category his rowers experienced fewer negative influences. When he noticed rapid weight loss among some of his rowers this was often due to an undiagnosed celiac disease or iron deficiencies. Smaug acknowledged there were likely rowers who may have slipped by and made
unwise dieting choices but he believed his lightweight rowing program provided positive rowing experiences. He dealt with few health problems, maintained lightweight rowing had many benefits, and therefore he could not agree that U19 lightweight rowing should be banned in Canada.

While Smaug’s rowing program may have been unique and able to monitor and mitigate potential harms, he was aware that poor coaching and extreme dieting and weight loss were serious issues in rowing. He learned this from past experiences and through his children who were beginning their journey as competitive rowers. He also acknowledged the potential for abuse.

Yeah. No, I know. And that’s where, you know I’m not going to say I don’t try to figure out how we eliminate the coaches abusing it. Because it, it happens in every sport that has weight categories. And it, and I don’t know how you’d get an answer, is, is how heavily, maybe you know, I don’t know how badly it’s being abused.

Smaug wanted no part of the coaching abuse he described. While his perceptions changed little over the years, he had developed a greater sense of responsibility toward the rowers he coached.

The ethics I’ve had towards coaching really changed. I think I was, you know, kind of advocating for the athlete and trying to protect them as a person and uh… At a young age, I remember a couple of girls not having their periods and stuff and thinking ‘wow, something’s really wrong here.’ Like how did they get themselves into that situation? And then moving forward I, I don’t want to be the guy who’s responsible for that. And it comes, it even comes down to injuries too. You know the kids show up and it’s minus two and they’re wearing shorts. 20 years from now I don’t want you coming to me saying
I caused you to have arthritis because I didn’t tell you to dress properly and all your joints are all shot from, you know, cooling down too quickly. Um, and I feel the same way about the lightweight stuff. I don’t want to see anyone harmed because of sport.

Manwe

Manwe was a former high school, university and national team rower and has been coaching for several decades. Coaching at the high school level from coast to coast, Manwe had extensive experience with U19 lightweight rowing. While she did not compete as a lightweight herself, Manwe’s brother did.

Umm, my brother was a flyweight. When they had junior, intermediate, senior. And he, although he lived in downtown Toronto he actually rowed out of Leander. And that was probably one of the most disgusting sights I’ve ever seen because he should never be flyweight [laughs]. So they had a 145 eight that won Henley as an intermediate and senior one here. And yeah that was, that was probably the first time I was really exposed to it. But umm, of course that was, that would have been in the 80’s and it, and you know, guys didn’t, girls, nobody did it properly then, right? Like, it was, you know, ‘oh I’ve got 10 lbs to lose by tomorrow, let’s go!’

Along with the apparent acute thinness of her brother, Manwe believed there were long term weight issues as a result of constant excessive swings in weight loss and weight gain. Manwe’s brother should not have been in the lightweight rowing category and she knew about many similar instances of apparent abuse in the category even at the university level.

I mean this one guy [Frodo], he was about 6’3” and he… and that was when it was a group weight, right? It wasn’t individual. Yeah, and he was getting people like [Frodo],
he couldn’t walk the week before OU’s because he had no fat on the bottom of his feet. Oh yeah, you know. And then there was… some of them were pretty good about it like [Pippin] and [Gimli], those guys were always lightweights, so they were always pretty good about it. But some of these guys were not obviously lightweight. So that got a little much.

Manwe’s university and high school experiences had a profound influence on her philosophy and approach to managing her current U19 lightweight rowers.

I decided my, my philosophy was unless they were severely, severely overweight, like so noticeable I could tell, there was, they weren’t going to change from where they weighed in in September or January. I weighed them in right after Christmas when they’re nice and fat [laughs], and that’s their weight! Like they’re not losing anything so, that’s my philosophy about it I guess. Umm, I’ve been really lucky… [pause for loud background noise] I’ve been really lucky I’ve had a good group of kids with that. Umm, we go in with somewhat low expectations because most of them it’s like the second or third sport for them and they’re doing it at the same time. Like, you know they’ll be doing track, soccer and rowing.

Manwe’s relatively passive approach to managing lightweights was revealed by her assessment of rower eligibility to compete early in the season. Despite this cut and dry approach to lightweight eligibility she was able to reduce risky weight loss practices with her rowers by having fewer rowers close to the weight cut-off. As a result of these effective practices, Manwe advocated for a lightweight rowing category and did not support a ban on U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.
But yeah, I’m, I’m kind of like a, I have no problem like I said using weight categories, I like them. But the girls always, well actually all of them kind of wonder why I’m so anal about it, and then they, almost all the time… Like the first time you go to CSSRA you see a guy running a hill with garbage bags on. And they’re like ‘Really?’ Because I tell them this and they wouldn’t believe me right? And I’m like ‘Yup!’ [Laughs]. Or they’ll spit into a cup or they’ll go into a sauna for five hours. So I tell them these things and you know, then they believe me. And I think they’re, I think everyone is just so much more relaxed if they know in January what weight category they’re going to be.

Unlike her own experience, Manwe acknowledged there were risks to rowers in the lightweight category, but when identifying the root cause of those harms Manwe said, “Honestly, I think if everybody could be honest, I think it’s the coaches.” Coaching responsibility was a significant factor in Manwe’s approach to lightweight rowing. Given her own coaching philosophy around lightweight eligibility, Manwe did not have to deal with many of the issues she experienced other than when she was younger. When she was approached by a rower who wanted to compete as a lightweight, Manwe considered the rower’s growth and development and recommended the rower get a physical examination from a doctor to assess whether lightweight rowing was a realistic option. She believed managing high school lightweight rowing required coaches receive the best available medical advice and regulate and improve their own behaviours.

Furthermore, Manwe believed education and information should also be made more readily available to rowers and coaches regarding nutrition and best practices to reduce the negative effects of making weight in U19 lightweight rowing. Given her experiences and her
coaching philosophy, she believed many harms could be mitigated in the lightweight category so the opportunities and benefits of the category could be fully appreciated.

**Emerging Themes**

Based on the data provided by the participants in this study, six main themes emerged from the analysis of the data. The main themes that were identified included; natural lightweights, opportunity and fairness, health, education, coaching abuse or neglect, and accountability. The following will present each of these themes and their importance to the topic of the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada.

*Natural Lightweights*

The concept of a natural lightweight permeated the participant narratives and related in many ways to the other key themes that emerged from the data. Every participant referred to athletes who were well under or within a lightweight weight range and those who were not. The reason for this discrepancy was to demarcate those who they considered eligible for the category and those who were not. As Durin elaborated earlier, rowers often developed into or out of a “natural” weight range to qualify for the lightweight rowing category. Less explicitly, participants who mentioned a medically supervised or “lightweight passport” system were referring to the “natural” ability of rowers who could maintain their lightweight eligibility.

But anyways the recommendation that they came out with at that time was very much like what USRowing is debating right now, in that having uh, some form of medical oversight and medical certification that a rower is sort of, you know, within the right size to row lightweight, which would involve out of season weight checking and the doctor also making an assessment of, of you know their overall fitness to do the sport. And a
part of that assessment is about okay, so this is what they look like now how much are they going to grow?

The best way to describe the rationale behind the perception of being a “natural lightweight” is to use the following conditional logic statements:

If an athlete is a natural lightweight, then the athlete will not experience additional harm as a result of being in the lightweight category

If an athlete is experiencing additional harm as a result of being in the lightweight category, then the athlete is not a natural lightweight

These statements relate to Occam’s razor, a principle that states the simplest solution to a problem should be preferred. Therefore, if one is faced with competing solutions to arrive at the same conclusion, the simplest one with the fewest assumptions is best (Baker, 2016). Hence, the good of lightweight rowing can be achieved by avoiding or by-passing harms like extreme diets and weight making practices. The simplest solution would be to identify and have only natural lightweights participate in rowing. The introduction of this measure would easily reduce the risks in the lightweight rowing category rather than the implementation of complicated and ineffective reforms. The interviewees in this study made it clear that harm was a legitimate concern and a relationship existed between harm and lightweight rowing.

While this association was recognized as a nuanced one and not as contrived as the conditional statements above suggest, the fundamental perception of risk management consistently boiled down to the truth of the first clause in the first statement. Namely, if U19 lightweight rowers were in a weight range that did not require any excessive dieting or weight loss actions, then no additional risk to their physical health would result. ‘Additional risk’ is
included in these statements because open weight categories are also not exempt from potential risks. Thus, if lightweight rowing simply existed to permit opportunities for smaller statured rowers, the justification for the lightweight category would be no different than the open weight category.

According to the interviewees, many of the problems in U19 lightweight rowing could be avoided if only natural lightweights participated. However, gaining or losing weight in serious competitive rowing while young rowers were still undergoing substantial developmental changes complicated issues of category eligibility.

And another part that’s hard with, with doing it that way – I’m sidetracking here – when you declare you’re going to be at a certain level in, in you know, January, by the time June comes around at the CSSRA, that’s six months of growth that’s happened. And it’s not predictable. The kid can be a very different size in six months. And so, uh, it makes it very complex.

How can one determine and assess the meaning of a “natural lightweight” when young rowers in this category were in a state of physical growth and maturation? Merry addressed this question and referred to ethics in his answer.

But, to me, it’s an ethical issue that you have to address. Can this athlete, umm, lose weight, um, effectively and, and, still maintain that healthy body. Um, we’ve had, I had an athlete, who, umm who, who didn’t row for me in high school, an athlete who started at 195 lbs, severely obese at the time in grade nine. And started rowing, he started rowing in the heavyweight, eh, as a heavyweight. The first two years in high school, and uh, and he came into the summer program, umm, two years later as a lightweight. And he was,
he, ahh, this athlete is about five foot nine, and uh, and what I believe as a natural lightweight. He looked, healthy, he ate normally, and could maintain a 160 lb weight limit, um, without any trouble. So that was um, that was a, in high school his coach didn’t have him row lightweight, but over time he got down. Uh, other athletes I’ve had are borderline athletes, and, and it is a real, uh question for coaches, and uh, as you said Jacob, it is an ethical issue, of can this athlete lose weight or not?

Natural weight loss was another factor Merry and others pointed out in their responses. Durin described a similar situation like Merry described in the preceding quote from his personal journey as a high school rower. Manwe also referred to this issue in support of her practice to determine weight eligibility months before competition because of difficulties that arose with developmental changes in young rowers.

The importance of recognizing “natural lightweights” as a benign perception of U19 lightweight rowing indicated there was a place for such a category and smaller statured rowers in the sport. As Durin stated,

And in my experience, the majority of kids that walked through the door at any high school are not going to have any problems making the lower, the weight divisions within high school when they’re in grade 9 and 10. Majority, right? They’re all small. Rowing’s an, a first-time sport for most of the kids that show up in a high school setting. Umm, but you have to set it up the right way and you get it right, so, that was my approach.

This quote summarizes the general view of rowing coaches and administrators questioned in this investigation and presents a clearer understanding of their perceptions regarding U19 lightweight rowing and the concept of natural lightweights.
Opportunity and Fairness

Opportunity and fairness do not mean the same thing and those interviewed in this study made this quite clear. As I worked my way through the transcripts, opportunity and fairness were two words that were frequently mentioned, but they were not always synonymous. At least two kinds of fairness were referenced. One meaning of fairness referred to the equal opportunities that should be available to people of all ages and backgrounds. The second meaning referred to justice and the rules and regulations within the sport that resulted in a fair and level playing field. Opportunity often pertained to the equal opportunity for those to participate in an otherwise hierarchical rowing structure where smaller, less proficient rowers sometimes competed against larger, stronger and more developed ones. Opportunity was essentially gaining access to rowing before competition. Fairness, however, was most often used synonymously with a “fair playing field.” That is, rowers while competing follow the same rules, and performance differences are due to their rowing prowess. With these interpretations, opportunity was the gateway to enter and participate in rowing and fairness was the standard of ethical practice based on rules and conventions in which rowers compete once eligibility was determined.

Interviewees in this study did not always use these terms in mutually exclusive ways and interchanged the terms opportunity and fairness or implied they meant the same thing. Eligibility to row in the lightweight category was often associated with fair opportunities available for smaller statured rowers to become competitive rowers. This ambiguity was more than just semantics and required I interpret the meaning of the words and expressions conveyed by the interviewees and place them in context to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions. Several quotes will illustrate the preceding points.

So, if we want to keep kids active, we have to give them the opportunities.
If he hadn’t had that lightweight experience he would have been done. And he wouldn’t have been doing any sports, anything at all.

Okay, so, having a lightweight program within a group of 50 rowers from age 14 to 18 allows us to level the playing field in terms of performance and goal setting… having the high school system divided lightweight and open weight, allows for more participation. You can get more kids out on the water, give them more opportunities to race.

… [A]nd we want to give the, the range of athletes, the range of participants in high school a fair playing ground.

Many of the regattas have included lightweight rowing in their regattas. Why? Because coaches have said, ‘look, here’s all my under 19 athletes, and they range from 190 lbs to 130 lbs.’ And this group of smaller athletes never gets the chance, never gets the opportunity to, to get to the final or compete for a medal because they just don’t have the power.

There’s not as many of those different categories… recreational, house league… so therefore we’re looking at competitive um, space. And, umm, the, I’ve just, I’ve just seen too many examples of, of lightweights that are very motivated by having a category that they can compete in and that they feel is, that they have more opportunity to show and excel, and see how they compare.

Every study participant who opposed a ban of U19 lightweight rowing, which totalled eight out of 10 participants, used the concepts of opportunity and fairness to support their positions. I was aware these themes would likely be expressed, but the nature and weight in
which these sentiments were held were somewhat unexpected. Despite the harms of U19 lightweight rowing that participants discussed, whether they agreed or disagreed with the ban, they all justified their respective position by employing a utilitarian approach where good and bad outcomes were weighed. Conversely, those who argued in favor of a U19 lightweight rowing ban often referred to elements of a deontological approach. Namely, in addition to the likely exposure of health risks toward young rowers, it was irresponsible for coaches and administrators to undermine the wellbeing and integrity of athletes as human beings.

... [A]gain my concerns are more around like, the health of trying to, and the perception of people thinking that they’ll be more competitive at a lower weight category. And then, losing weight in a, umm, not healthy way. And some, don’t get me wrong there are opportunities like for some people, you know they’re natural lightweights, they fit into it really well. Or there are some people who, you know, when they start training, you know maybe they start out at 135 and then they end up at 130, not by changing anything, but that’s just, you know, where they are. But I definitely have concerns around, especially around adolescent girls who are supposed to be growing, and umm, and I shouldn’t just say girls because I’ve coached males in the past as well who I mean, who, I mean you can actually like permanently do damage by restrictive, extremely restrictive behaviours.

The attitude of interviewees who supported a ban of U19 lightweight rowing particularly showed concern for the health of rowers. The discrepancy between supporters and opponents of the ban was mainly due to the emphasis each group placed on the value of opportunity and fairness when faced with potential and real harms in U19 lightweight rowing.
A shared perception by all interviewees regarding lightweight rowing and coaching more generally was the notion female and male rowers ought to be treated the same. Smaug adeptly summarized many of the participants shared substantive perspectives on this matter.

And I’ve seen as many emotional issues with male rowers as I have with female and as many body-image issues with males as with females so… I, I’m just going to, nope, they’re kids. We train them as kids. As young athletes. Gender not really coming into that. Umm, you know I, I think the only real difference that I, I pay attention to is, we’ve got to watch for iron levels, umm, you know there’s a few things. But again, uh, you promote eating healthy and a well-balanced diet, and, and trying to get the kids on a multivitamin with an iron supplement and that kind of levels out all that as well.

Besides obvious physiological and small nutritional differences between males and female due to maturation, interviewees always referred to rowers in non-gendered terms and called them lightweight rowers. This single category nomenclature made the application of the concept of a natural lightweight and all other lightweight related themes applicable to all U19 rowers. Thus, gender differentiation related to a possible ban on U19 lightweight rowing was not perceived as a relevant issue.

**Health and Harm Reduction**

Health was consistently cited as one of the most important aspects of the debate on whether U19 lightweight rowing should be eliminated.

Now, prohibition in the rules of racing is not absolute because the overarching principles are safety and fairness. And you know I think everyone can agree there is a safety issue here because there is a documented material risk of harm to young athletes, like that’s, I,
you know, that’s got to be the starting point of any discussion and if people can’t agree on that you’re not going to agree on anything, right?

Every study participant agreed with what Boromir just stated, namely, there are genuine risks in U19 lightweight rowing that can result in severe harm to rowers. Merry concurred with this sentiment when she stated, “Well I think it comes down to the health of the uh, of the, of the athlete.” As I discovered, whether interviewees supported or opposed the ban of U19 lightweight rowing, they all believed harms in rowing had to be reduced and the health of rowers had to be promoted. As Boromir observed.

Maybe its because of my professional life and, I deal with uh, risks all the time and you know, and the approach to risk is generally that uh, you, if it’s material, by material I mean you know it’s like, in rowing there’s lots of risks. You’re in a little boat in open water and your boat could tip over and you could drown. So I mean we have measures, we have protective measures around that like tying down the heals and quick release shoes and cold water rules, but you know it could still happen that in the middle of the summer someone could tip over and drown or they could have a heart attack and go in the water and drown. That has happened. Uh, but those are risks that are really hard to control. But umm, the risk you know, you control them by, you should have a PFD in your boat if you don’t have a coach nearby. I mean there are lots of mitigating controls and rules that we have to manage all, to manage risk in the sport. So you know it’s kind of a normal approach where uh, you identify a material risk, uh, you ask the question ‘what are the controls we can put in place that will protect the individual, the athlete?’ And if there are no practical controls or people don’t want to have the controls as has happened in 2011 when the control idea was rejected, then you go to prohibition.
Harm reduction and its corollary health promotion were a common thread among interviewees when discussing U19 lightweight rowing. Reducing the probability and potential for harm was a mandate for all participants in the study and was a shared value for those responsible for young rowers. One such story unrelated to lightweight rowing provided by Manwe explained how instances of serious potential harm resulted in significant policy changes at all levels of rowing in Canada:

Manwe: “And yes one incident is too much, but we got over the Hamilton thing where we almost lost like 60 kids, so… you know the weather, remember the weather? Oh, the oh…”

Researcher: “Like the water levels?”

Manwe: “No the boats were all out and this huge storm in the morning, a huge storm rolled in, and we, there were people, they didn’t know where half the people were.”

Researcher: “Oh I do remember, and people got caught out on the water.”

Manwe: “Yeah, yeah. And they didn’t know if people had left or come and it was horrible. That’s why they brought in… so the same thing has to happen, you have to bring in more standards. Yeah that was, we almost lost junior rowing altogether with that because people said ‘oh my god…’ Just like when [Eowyn], when was it, was it about 15 years ago out west when those two guys died. When the eight, eight capsized and the coach had already gone back to the dock?”

In the preceding quote Manwe cited two instances where potential loss of life and actual fatalities occurred in the rowing community. Episodes like these precipitated new national policies and guidelines to mitigate potential and real harms such as adverse weather or race delay
protocols and coach boat life jacket regulations. Unfortunately, Manwe was the last participant to be interviewed and no study participants were able to respond to or confirm the events described above. While it is unlikely such harrowing stories would not be known to the interviewees, their awareness of such events were not necessary to establish that harm reduction and concern for the welfare of rowers were common values rowing coaches and administrators shared.

Thus, any suggested reforms to the current U19 lightweight system were advocated by those for and against the potential ban of this category of rowing. The essential difference between the interviewees was the degree to which change should emerge and how health was being promoted. As Boromir explicated earlier in the chapter, the degree of change corresponded to a sliding scale of potential remedies to the perceived and real harms and not simply an all or nothing resolution. While agreement that change and protection regarding risks was needed, precisely what reforms were required varied because study participants did not have conclusive answers on this question. A second area of differing views pertained to other health issues like the prevalence of childhood obesity and diabetes which sometimes placed a strain on some young rowers. Still, most of the respondents linked health with opportunities and competitive fairness for smaller and lighter athletes who wanted to be serious rowers.

The earlier discussion of natural lightweight rowers explicitly related to physical health; however, mental health implications were rarely addressed by interviewees. When this aspect was raised, it was noted that mental health disorders influenced U19 lightweight and open weight rowers on a relatively equal basis. In other words, certain risks in rowing were not exclusive to the lightweight category. This point was made by Melian in the following.

You know there are these little, little changes in someone’s body weight that will happen, just from morning to night and from one week to the next and umm, but the risk to me is
low on making weight being the culprit for a health issue overall because of all the other stuff that I see which is mental health issues which has nothing to do with lightweight rowing. In my mind, there’s no correlation that lightweights have more mental health issues, and I mean that anecdotally. If I saw any research out there, I read a lot of research papers, you know that’s just what I do, and I don’t, you know I would have known that, that would have been presented to me.

Determining the prevalence of and correlation between mental health problems and lightweight rowing was beyond the purview of this study. What was clear is that interviewees identified mental health as a concern and contributing factor regarding the overall wellbeing of rowers. This issue related closely to the next two emerging themes regarding education and coaching abuse and neglect.

_Education_

Education was brought up by most respondents in this study and referred to all stakeholders involved in U19 lightweight rowing. Educational themes related to nutrition and what some have called “lightweight education.” Lightweight education often referred to weight management and a certain lifestyle lightweights ought to follow to stay healthy. As a long-time lightweight competitive rower, counting calories and adhering to a proper diet were not enough for me to maintain my lightweight status. I often considered aspects of physiology, exercise science and mental health strategies to properly take care of myself and perform to the best of my ability. These were all aspects I learned on my own because I received no formal education on these topics. I could relate to Celeborn’s description of lightweight education.
There will be those who will struggle because they’ll be just a little bit more over the line. But that’s where the management of weight is really important. It’s an education as well as a practice… It has not been acknowledged yet that we need an education program around that. If we did that, in my view, if we did that, we would start to change the way we do business. It’s not about um, body shaming or weight shaming or any of those lovely platitudes people like to go to. It’s just about being inherently aware of your body’s size at any given time.

In her interview Celeborn spoke about menstrual cycles and weight management that would be a necessary theme in an effective lightweight education. Another feature of this type of education is an awareness of daily weight fluctuations and the long and short-term implications of these changes. For serious lightweight rowers, diet and food choices together with strict training regimens, competitive readiness protocols and constant weight surveillance influence every facet of a rower’s life. The impact of lightweight education on the lives of rowers can only be fully appreciated by those who have direct experience of this lifestyle. Sharing these experiences and knowledge were therefore essential to an education system for U19 lightweight rowers.

Despite the apparent need for lightweight education for coaches and U19 rowers, such a curriculum is severely lacking. The following quotes discussed this point.

But I’m amazed often, when we’re talking about proper fueling for an athlete, and, and having them understand how we have to replace what we put out. The kids are rather clueless as to anything about eating. Like they can barely differentiate between carbs and protein. Or why white bread is not as healthy as… it’s almost like we’ve gone so far away from this in trying not to address it. And this is probably off topic, I don’t know if it
has much bearing on any of this, but I do worry about that sometimes. It seems to be just such a delicate topic that we don’t want to talk about it at all. But I don’t know as they go into adulthood, or you leave mom and dad’s house where hopefully mom and dad are cooking you nutritious complete meals, to living on your own where ‘yup, okay I’ve got my Kraft dinner and I’m good to go!’ Well, no that’s not a good meal. And I don’t know maybe it’s because we got rid of some of the cooking classes in high school, er, I’m not sure what’s going on. But I’m kind of amazed sometimes. There’s just not a general understanding of what proper nutrition means.

I’m not sure. I think it’s an education, I think part of it, yeah. I think we used to have it drilled into our heads what it meant to, to eat properly and where your calorie intake should be and where it shouldn’t be. And if you wanted to lose three pounds here’s how you could do it over two weeks. That sort of stuff I don’t think we talk about it anymore. I’m not sure, I’m just not, I, sometimes when we talk to the kids they just have really, really limited knowledge on nutrition.

I mean I think the biggest thing is really like, a couple of things. So, and not just in the lightweight category, but is with, umm, teenage girls, again like, not knowing like education around like what their nutrition requirements are. And especially if they’re, you know, training once or twice a day and comparing that with the kind of normal population, right? And they do need to be, they have different nutrition requirements. Right? So I don’t know, I think a big part of it is education, like I wish that we did more within the school. Like I, I mean like most Phys-Ed courses in high school have a nutrition component, but it’s pretty basic. And so, it’s, and then after that I mean, people aren’t required to take Phys-Ed, which is really where you would learn some of that
health type of stuff. But it’s all very general anyway, right? So, unless you’re getting some of that information whether from home and family and maybe if somebody in your family is pretty educated in that but, if you do, where if you do, right, or if you have something... I don’t know it’s hard.

According to the respondents, it was clear some of the underlying issues with lightweight rowing was the lack of education disseminated to rowers and coaches. Coaches recognized the need for such education, especially as it related to nutrition, but were reluctant to point the finger at any person or organization for this failure. Moreover, coaches were not given any formal education on lightweight management practices and instead often relied on their own experiences as a coach or former athlete. Melian mentioned how the small community of coaches supported one another by educating each other on best practices when dealing with lightweight issues.

[We] talk enough at [Melian’s] rowing club about lightweight rowing casually, so you know, because coaches like to share stories about athlete’s challenges that you have, or how individual each person is. One person could have a situation and respond so differently from another, right? Because of their background or the [athlete’s] parent’s attitude.

Sharing stories and experiences as part of one’s informal education is an expected feature of social life. In this sense, Melian and I derived much of our lightweight nutrition and management education in this way.

Related to the preceding point was the USRowing lightweight passport system that contains medical oversight and offers some educational components. In a few instances, interviewees suggested the passport option could not only oversee the health and eligibility of
rowers, but also serve to educate coaches about lightweight issues. Samwise described this recommendation as follows.

And I think the passport would be a good start. That we know that you Jacob, um, you have the capability of staying at, between 70 and 75 kgs so you should be fine to be a lightweight rower. Okay? And that would be up to, physiologist, kinesiology, whoever, to figure this out. And that may take some time. And, and part and parcel of this is let’s have the proper education for all coaches and how to deal with athletes. And they have all these levels, and not anywhere in that level is how to coach a lightweight athlete. Nowhere.

Respondents in this study often referred to a lack of formal training and education in lightweight matters and recommended a passport system be adopted. It was clear rowing coaches and administrators relied heavily on their personal experiences when dealing with problems in the U19 lightweight category and this produced some inconsistent and arbitrary views. Coaches in this study developed their own respective philosophy, practices and management system without receiving a uniform, formal education related specifically to U19 lightweight rowing. While aspects of these philosophies and practices overlapped, coaches indicated there were colleagues who did not share similar values and did not coach properly. Due to this observation, the next emerging theme will discuss coaching neglect and abuse.

Coaching Neglect and Abuse

[Y]ou know as a coach you’re in a position of huge responsibility and the health and wellbeing of your athletes are, it’s on you. And it needs to be taken seriously. You’ve got
to look beyond the results. And more so like where is this person going to be in 20 years and what role did I play in that?

Smaug poignantly hit on the importance of the role of a coach in an athlete’s life and the responsibility they bear. The importance of an adult’s influence over a high school aged student-athlete cannot be underestimated. All participants in this study shared a concern over poor coaching practices and the negative effects this has on rowers. Two main areas of concern were identified: an unwillingness to be informed about making weight and approval of potentially unsafe weight-making practices. To clarify these points, the latter referred to the intentional directives of coaches that could potentially result in jeopardizing the health and wellbeing of rowers. The former often referred to an indifference or intentional unwillingness to know what rowers were doing to make weight, and due to their ignorance coaches did not condemn and try to eradicate unsafe practices.

Based on these distinctions, it is useful to define coaching harm as abuse and harm as neglect. Abuse has many formulations, but was understood in this study to refer to the mistreatment of U19 rower in a way that was harmful or morally wrong. Of course, abuse can be defined and be constitutive of many different forms of abuse. As the World Health Organization (2010) defines it “all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.” In this study, abuse was only meant to refer to the harm caused by unhealthful weight making practices, and perhaps any mental or emotional repercussions associated with that harm. The misuse of one’s coaching position to inflict deliberate harm against others in ways identified by participants in this study therefore constituted overt abuse. Neglect, or the absence
of any care or attention to something one is responsible for is different from abuse yet may commit the same degree of harm. Thus, abuse and neglect while dissimilar, can function similarly in the context of U19 lightweight rowing as they pertain to poor coaching behavior and its resulting harm.

Regarding coaching abuse specifically, participants confirmed it was practiced but often not made explicit. In my experience abuse was often expressed in the form of subtle but intentional suggestions by coaches who conveyed certain expectations to athletes about the importance of competition and what measures might need to be taken to make the weight cut-off. Respondents in this study could not pinpoint the exact reasons for these coaching behaviors but competitiveness was cited. Some form of abuse was perceived by most of the coaches in this study as a central contributing factor to the negative health outcomes associated with U19 lightweight rowing. The following quotes from Silmarien and Merry respectively reflect this point.

And most of the time, it’s a selfish coach who does this because, for their own means. They’re not doing it for the athlete. They’re not, they don’t have the health, the athlete’s health in mind and they don’t have the athlete’s mental state in mind. Umm, not understanding that they go about it the wrong way, especially for females, it could really screw up their reproductive system for their whole life. And they don’t understand that, they don’t get it, and they don’t even know that. Right?

Well I think I think there are examples of coaches that have, umm, let’s say abused, uh, athletes by asking them to umm, lose too much weight, and um, and is putting the athlete in an unhealthy, um stage in development. And in, if in, I think it’s speculative on my part – if you can save one person from physical abuse, isn’t it worth it?
Shelob also noted that to have rowers placed in a position where there was pressure to “make-weight” indicated excessive weight-making practices were already taking place. As she stated, “I mean you would hope that a coach wouldn’t put in an athlete where all of a sudden they have to lose that amount of weight.” By these accounts, assistance of a coach to help rowers make weight when they were not a natural lightweight resulted in some forms of abuse.

How interviewees defined and applied the term “abuse” varied and was often not very clear. For this reason, interpretation based on the context in which interviewees used the term was necessary and resulted in conceptions of neglect and abuse. What was well defined however was the perception that coaches were often responsible for putting pressure on athletes to make weight. Such pressures were also perceived as not being exclusive to lightweight athletes. The following observation by Smaug made this comparison,

If we were to get rid of lightweight rowing… here would be a question for you; Would a coach who is pushing his lightweight athletes to be lightweight at all expenses also be pushing his heavyweight athletes to be as light as possible? So that the efficiency is there. Like are we really going to get rid of eating issues or body/weight issues by eliminating… it’s just that we have a sport that if you’re carrying dead weight on the water you’re not going as fast as if… So if you’re 180 and you’re sitting 21% body fat, would that boat not be quicker if you were sitting at 15% body fat? You’re still going to be an open weight athlete, but I need you to be lighter. So I don’t know. I think it all comes down to the mentality of the coach. And, the win at all expense sort of thing.

In the preceding quote, “efficiency” was identified as an inherent contributor to speed on the water. Such efficiency was linked to diet and weight as factors toward achieving rowing success. Coaches sometimes told their rowers such a relationship existed and left it up to rowers
to decide how they would attain greater efficiency. In this instance, proper diet, weight making, and competitive rowing success were implicated with little regard for safe means to achieve these goals. The complex matter of what may be encouragement to improve success in rowing and what may be damaging to a rower’s health compounded the participant’s insistence for proper education. My experience as a U19 lightweight rower supports this ambiguous message sent out by coaches which rowers interpreted on their own. What was often regarded as matters of efficiency were linked to lightweight rowing but with little clarity. The idea that efficiency plays such a crucial role in boat speed contributed to Samwise’s belief that it was in part the reason for the possible elimination of lightweight rowing from the Olympic Games.

Samwise: “Lightweight men have gotten so fast they have categorized themselves out of the Olympics. Really they have.”

Researcher: “So what does that mean?”

Samwise: “So now they’re saying, ‘why do we have to have weight categories when the speeds are almost the same?’”

Researcher: “Oh yeah!”

Samwise: “So, do you have to be, do you have to be 80 kg now to make a boat move? No! You can be this 75 kg or 80 kg to make a boat move fast. Right? You almost outrace yourself at the Olympics.”

Samwise further explained that because lightweight rowers are often so “efficient” with their low body mass compared to the power they can generate, their efficiency has allowed them to race at nearly comparable speeds to open weight athletes. He also believed talk of such efficiency was not applicable to U19 lightweight rowing because the calibre of racing in the U19
category was less than in open age/senior events. In other words, efficiency is a less significant factor in boat speed and overall rowing success in U19 or high school rowing.

The second area of poor coaching behaviour incorporated a sense of neglect where coaches feigned ignorance and did not condemn certain practices thus giving tacit approval for potentially harmful conduct by rowers. In this backhanded way, coaches would condone adverse practices rowers employed to make weight for competition. The complacency of coaches and their lack of interest in what rowers were doing was evident as Boromir described.

Now, you know, and coaches will either encourage or condone that activity and they, you know, that’s, that’s a problem. And carrying on as an umpire I see it mainly when we’re weighing the athletes and you see people coming in, you know, you see the sweat clothes on and them peeling it off and either making it or not making it, you know. They know what their kids weigh and, and they condone it.

As Smaug previously stated at the beginning of this section, most coaches must assume a deep responsibility for the wellbeing of their rowers. They must be equally accountable for their acts of commission and omission, even though such a distinction may not be easily discernable. Sometimes passive actions or non-action and their intentions are difficult to detect and assess. If the welfare of rowers is being neglected, does this count as abuse, and what sort of abuse, emotional, psychological or some other kind? Moreover, if coaches plead ignorance that results in tacit approval about harmful behaviour rowers might engage in, is this a type of physical abuse? For these reasons, condoned harmful weight making practices were included under the banner of poor coaching behaviors. Interviewees in this study however used or alluded to the term “abuse” to represent these perceptions rather than distinguish it from “neglect.”
Despite the difficulty of identifying explicit instances of coaching neglect or abuse that resulted in harm toward rowers when dealing with weight making issues, I and the respondents in this study experienced these issues. Much of the discussion of such coaching conduct was speculative and anecdotal, and none of the coaches interviewed perceived themselves engaging in such callous ways. How and why coaches might encourage or give tacit approval of harmful practices was not within the scope of this study, as mentioned previously in chapter two on coaching competency. Perhaps a lack of formal coach training and education can explain poor coaching performance, especially as it pertains to lightweight rowing. Despite the inability to elucidate the genesis of encouraged or condoned unhealthy weight making behaviour, such actions were associated with an abuse or neglect of the rowers.

The implications for poor coaching in U19 lightweight rowing and possible abuse and neglect goes beyond the acute effects on the rowers. Not only could neglectful and irresponsible coaching result in immediate physical harms, but it could also affect rowers’ behavior and attitude toward diet, nutrition, weight and mental and social health issues like body image, self-esteem and level of maturation. Unfortunately, the respondents in this study did not explicitly associate instances of coaching abuse with mental health impacts, although it was inferred. Perhaps the interviewees did not view health from a holistic perspective that would include mental and social health, or me as the interviewer ‘dropped the ball’ on this line of questioning. Nevertheless, the emergent theme of coaching abuse and neglect were broadly interpreted to include mental and social health.

While implications of coaching abuse and neglect are far reaching for U19 lightweight rowers, they are exacerbated if coaches adopt a win-at-all-costs attitude. This was expressed by Smaug who stated,
You know, if the coaches had a win at all expenses mentality, that passport isn’t going to change anything. They’re going to find a doctor who’s going to sign off on what they need to sign off on.

Coaches with a strong compulsion to win often execute harmful practices and likely subvert remedial reforms to manage U19 lightweight rowing in more responsible ways. This perspective was shared by respondents who were for and against the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing. The final theme that emerged from the data is accountability.

**Accountability**

The rowing coaches and administrators in this study recognized their responsibility and efforts to create a better environment for young smaller statured rowers. While adults are generally responsible for the wellbeing of children and youth, this level of responsibility is elevated in sports that contain greater inherent risks. This is the case in U19 lightweight rowing where coaches and administrators must be accountable for the health and safety of rowers. Yet, the responses in this chapter indicated there was sometimes a lack of oversight in this regard. Having experienced shortcomings when educating and monitoring young rowers about safe practices, I was surprised how pervasive these shortcomings were. Early in the data collection process, Durin shed light on such issues and set the stage for me to ask other participants about the role and importance of accountability. Here is what he had to say about this theme.

My personal opinion is that both coaching, coaching associations and sport governing bodies haven’t done enough to police it and hold certain individuals or organizations accountable for how they treat lightweights. Because you all, we all hear, and may have witnessed some really bad stories right? But there’s no, you know, high schools don’t
hold coaches accountable, parents don’t hold coaches accountable and it certainly plays… Things like Rowing Canada or RowOntario don’t hold coaches accountable. Certainly not the coaching association. There isn’t a structure to deal with that. And it would be difficult don’t get me wrong but, I think a ban is an easy way out, but it would affect the number of people who participate in the sport. At the youth level, it would, it would shrink it down considerably.

Durin not only referred to accountability and oversight, but also argued that a ban of U19 lightweight rowing would be misguided. Many of the emergent themes in this chapter indicate problems with U19 lightweight rowing and the larger system in which it operates. Durin’s perception of accountability is an example of implementing reforms to improve U19 lightweight rowing rather than ban this classification.

Inseparable from the topic of accountability is the social and legal status of U19 rowers. Not all interviewees made a distinction between lightweights below and above the age of 18 as well as senior lightweight categories but all referred to developmental and maturation stages of lightweights. The following shows how Boromir perceived this distinction.

Uh, central. Uh, like there’s two issues; one is that in, in those years their bodies are developing and umm, the other thing is that they’re minors and they’re subject to, more subject to peer pressure and undue influence than someone who is considered to be an adult. Like rightly or wrongly we consider people over the age of majority and it varies province to province to be capable of drinking, driving, making their own decisions, umm, voting, and that’s, you know, it’s a reasonable thing to do. But when you’re looking at younger people, I mean the view that’s traditionally taken is that, uh, because of their lack of maturity they’re less able to make good decisions for themselves.
Several respondents acknowledged the difficulty in assessing the growth and maturation of young rowers and predicting whether they were “natural lightweights.” Even though such evaluations would be inconsistent regarding high school aged rowers still going through puberty, this was not perceived as a sufficient reason to shirk accountability on the part of those responsible for the wellbeing of rowers. In fact, greater supervision is needed when young athletes are undergoing pronounced physical, cognitive and emotional changes. The same level of oversight may not be needed with older, legal adult senior lightweights whose development and level of maturation are more advanced. In this sense, the distinction between younger and older lightweight rowers must be acknowledged when addressing risk and supervision and levels of accountability assumed by rowing coaches and administrators.

Accountability was also directly related to the question about the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing. While measures have been proposed to mitigate harms in this category, more effective policies are required to initiate substantial improvements. This point was emphasized by Merry who spoke about the flexibility of the rules and regulations in Canadian rowing.

The CSSRA is a member organization of Rowing Canada. And as a member organization, we can host a regatta. Umm, twelve people on the board of directors with the sole goal of hosting the Canadian Secondary School’s Rowing Association championships, we are the Canadian Secondary Schools Rowing Association, but we do not govern high school rowing. We only run a regatta, and within that regatta we do set our own, umm, ah, rules of racing. We base it, we follow the Canadian rules of racing, but there are, and there is an opportunity in the Canadian rules of racing to have special rules of racing for your own regatta. And so we have special rules for our own regatta.
Here Merry introduced the clause within the RCA rulebook that allows regatta organizers to stipulate the degree to which they follow rules and guidelines set out by RCA. Checks and balances are in place within this clause to ensure adherence to safety protocols that might entail revoking insurance or licenses required to operate an official regatta. Exceptions to RCA rules of racing must therefore go through a bureaucratic process and be accepted by administrators. An example of the use of the “exceptions” clause involves the weight category designations seen at the CSSRA championships which differ from the standard national lightweight category applied to senior categories [Appendix C]. Because RCA’s guidelines stipulate a lightweight rower is a person under the weight of 72.5 kg, exceptions need to be requested by CSSRA to have different weight designations for their regattas (Rowing Canada Aviron, 2018). With the “exceptions” clause in the RCA rulebook, lightweight regulations can be altered if reasonable. The willingness to conform to RCA guidelines however is explicitly presented by the CSSRA response to the proposal of a ban on U19 lightweight rowing [see Appendix B]. This means that in order to enact real change, more than just a rule change such as banning U19 lightweight rowing perhaps needs to be involved in addressing the emerging themes of this study.

Provided CSSRA and other regatta organizers may request and introduce exceptions to RCA rules and regulations, the extent to which administrative bodies can do so and with impunity is convoluted at best. How these organizations and individuals are held accountable at the national and local level are evidently problematic as Merry suggested.

Umm, as a board, we do feel responsible, but we also feel that we don’t have any control over what the coaches are doing. Uh, and, and having their athletes do. So it’s hard for us.

What Merry just inferred was that even as regatta organizers may have the choice to enact and change certain rules, there is no way to enforce those rules on local coaches and high
school organizations when it comes to lightweight rowing. The inability of administrators like Merry to hold coaches accountable for their behaviors and for larger organizing bodies to conform to rules which may have already been made exceptions to RCA’s rules of racing entails a difficult process of accountability at best. An example of the need for accountability in this case came from Manwe who was aware of the degree to which harm was perceived yet was often ignored.

Umm but if, the other thing too is if maybe, and this is very hard to do, but monitor the coaches. You see someone running with a frickin’ bag over their body. You know that’s not right. You know where they’re from, you report them, and something gets done. Maybe it’s three ticks and you’re out. I don’t know. And I, you know, if they got this tip line [laughs], you know. ‘I want to complain about, this, this club. You know it’s this person I saw running.’ But uh, yeah like something like that. Because you don’t want to blab on another coach but, you know, and well I know you know, that there are certain coaches that do it every frickin’ year. You know, you look at the number of, number of crews that they scratch because half the kids don’t make weight. We don’t do that. We get mad because we have to pay a scratch fee [laughs].

The theme of accountability expressed by the interviewees encapsulated the first five emergent themes. Rowing coaches and administrators must demonstrate responsibility to identify the problems in U19 lightweight rowing and justify why its possible elimination is being considered. Those in favor of this potential ban, like Boromir, insisted that mitigating reforms must be enacted to preserve the health and safety of young rowers, even if that includes a ban. Those in favor and against the potential ban claim the current structure and regulations of U19 lightweight rowing cannot effectively monitor and supervise this category, and there is no will
among the sport’s leadership to implement serious changes. Both positions appeal to accountability because each side of the debate was still trying to do what was best for the sport and rowers. In the next chapter, the ethical implications of these emergent themes will be examined by analyzing the moral order of U19 lightweight rowing.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to reveal and understand the perceptions of rowing coaches and administrators regarding the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada, as well as the ethical implications of this potential ban. The preceding chapter presented the thoughts of the study participants and several prominent themes emerged from this data. This chapter will examine and discuss the emergent themes by utilizing Charles Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology. The goal of this analysis is to interpret the perceptions of the interviewees in relation to the sociocultural experience of U19 lightweight rowing. This interpretation will refer to the lived experiences of the respondents to uncover the ethical ramifications of a possible ban. The chapter will draw and present several pertinent conclusions, comment on the broader implications for categorization ethics in sport, make suggestions for future research and end with a personal reflection.

Ethics and the Possible Elimination of U19 Lightweight Rowing in Canada

The Rowing Community

People are a social species that identify with and belong to collectives influenced by shared values (Maslow, 1970). The first group we belong to is our immediate and extended family. We then become intricately related to and associated with other groups in our neighborhood, school and community, including those we choose to belong to like sports teams and other social organizations. These observations are supported by decades of research in Social Identity Theory, Self-Categorization Theory, and Membership Categorization Analysis to name a few (Housley & Smith, 2015). In these social circles we develop different roles and relationships that impact our personal identities and a shared moral outlook of the world. As Charles Taylor
(1991) argues in his book *The Malaise of Modernity*, it is an exaggeration to say contemporary life champions a new kind of liberal individuality that has led us to shed a communal sense of morality. While individuals may no longer be guided by universal moral orders and hierarchies like those found in religion, they still lead meaningful lives influenced by a different social logic (Taylor, 1991).

Without religious or idealistic guidance in the moral realms of modern society, it may be the case that lives today are mostly based on instrumental reason (Taylor, 1991). Instrumental reason that lacks ethical considerations may result in dire consequences like greater violence in society and warrants attention. Despite this concern, Taylor (1991) argues that moral decision-making stems from what he calls horizons of significance and are inescapable. Horizons of significance give meaning and moral value to actions and objects we perceive in our everyday lives (Taylor, 1991). These values originate from historical and contextual experiences that are understood independently but rooted in greater social meaning. What gives meaning to our everyday lives and actions may no longer be rooted in a religious moral context that united society in the past, but common ethical precepts are still shared due to the dialogical nature of our lives.

For example, the concept of “sportspersonship” evokes either a conglomerate of common values like fairness and excellence held in sport or is itself a moral virtue in the context of sport. Regardless of its makeup, sportspersonship pertains to an ethical precept that is not rooted in religious principles but in cultural practices that are shared and promoted by those who participate in sport. As a result, sportspersonship encourages individuals participating in sport to behave in accordance with a greater cultural morality that is independent of religious influence. The degree to which sportspersonship is valued and expressed is the result of the authentic
interpretation athletes make of the concept based on their own historical experiences and understanding. The personal value of sportspersonship is placed amongst a background of historical and cultural experience that gives the concept meaning. This background of experience is the horizon of significance that Taylor (1991) recognizes is the genesis for the moral meaning individuals create and possess without requiring them to have a deeper understanding of ethics or philosophy.

Horizons of significance are not entirely self-produced however, and a significant portion of our moral values are derived from the society in which we live. According to Taylor (1989), understanding the moral ontology of communities is required to completely grasp the authentic fulfilment of moral agency. While horizons of significance can orient individuals to the moral good based on their experiences, the society in which they live influences the sense of legitimacy through common moral values (Carnevale, 2013). This refers to what Taylor calls the social imaginary. Carnevale (2013) explains, “Social imaginaries are shared by a large group, referring to a group of people’s common understanding of their social surroundings, as well as the group’s common practices and shared legitimacy” (p. 89). Social imaginaries collectively shape the greater modern moral order constituted by the economy, the public sphere, and a self-governing people.

The economy expresses a modern ideal that humanity ought to function for mutual benefit and should be productive and ordered (Carnevale, 2013). The public sphere refers to the unique ways in which communication and shared spaces connect individuals with common interests and form a communal mindset. This sphere is secular and based on reason rather than the rule of God or traditional authorities. A self-governing people refers to the modern social imaginary that has transformed traditionally hierarchically structured societies into self-
governing communities, thus altering shared conceptions of moral legitimacy. The social imaginary that promotes this notion of popular sovereignty also results in a shift in perceived individualism, therefore influencing our ties to society (Carnevale, 2013).

Thus, society and individuals who constitute the collective are embedded in a moral order. The moral order is influenced by social imaginaries and the perceptions of individuals that reciprocally influence one another. This interconnectedness of the individual to the whole of society reflects what Taylor (1989) calls the “ontic” component that defines our existence and reflects the hermeneutic circle, discussed in chapter three, to interpret and understand the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals. With Taylor’s formulation of our moral experience, authentic individual experiences are possible but are also inseparable from the communities in which we live.

Moreover, the social groups we are associated with influence our perceptions and morals and shape our individual identities. Such groups and identities like those within sports teams often define who we are through relationships we forge and categories we perceive ourselves to be in. Carnevale (2013) explains, “Intersubjective meanings form the basis of our self understandings as well as our shared values and understandings, while they are also constitutive of a common world among some groups, such as communities” (p. 87). One such community that fits this description is the U19 lightweight rowing community. While interviewing participants in this study, I reflected on the context of this specific community that influenced personal and social identities. I also had to recognize and recreate the social imaginaries of the participants to understand the community they identified with.

It was clear the rowing community more broadly influenced the moral reasoning of the interviewees as it would in other specific sports communities where shared interests and values
exist. The use of inclusive pronouns such as “we” and “us” when referring to the impact of a possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing confirmed this observation. The rowing community, which I also identify with, is a distinct sub-culture with defined roles, identities and relationships framed by a certain hierarchy. It also contains self-governing organizational and economic structures, specific infrastructure for training and competition, and private and public spheres. All these factors characterize and produce what Taylor (2004) calls a moral order.

This was the social context in which I examined and discussed the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. Investigating the moral order of the rowing community, I uncovered horizons of significance and social imaginaries in the perceptions of respondents, as well as the malaise of modernity described earlier. Applying Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology to the lived experiences of study participants not only provided an approach to interpret the meaning of their reflections regarding their rowing careers and involvement, but also their thoughts on the ethics of the possible ban of U19 rowing in Canada and the issue of the ethics of categorization in sport.

Examining the rowing community raised an important question related to the scope in which values and identities might form and be interpreted. To what extent does the rowing community influence perceptions and relationships of its members regarding larger or smaller social institutions such as Canadian society or the high school system where most U19 rowers reside? As mentioned in chapter three, a Canadian tradition or value in rowing is tucking in one’s medal under one’s “singlet” or “unisuit” after winning or placing high in competition. Furthermore, high schools may also have their own unique practices such as the allocation of the club’s best equipment. At my high school the crew with the best weekly time trial percentages earned the use of the best equipment. Other rowing programs create different incentives to
enhance performance. Such varied inducements are sometimes limited for practical reasons due to scarce resources, however, they all convey explicit and implicit values and specific priorities. In these contexts, with their historical, political and environmental influences difficult to pinpoint, it is sometimes hard to identify precisely these values, priorities and what they mean (Taylor, 2004).

Thus, rather than specify horizons of significance and their influence within larger collective social imaginaries, for the remainder of this chapter the focus will be on the local imaginary (Montreuil & Carnevale, 2018). This expression delimits the scope of inquiry to a distinct sub-culture like the U19 lightweight rowing community and its unique moral order. Local imaginaries are shaped by broad social imaginaries and horizons of significance but pertain more so to the ways people perceive their social existence and experiences in a smaller, defined setting (Montreuil & Carnevale, 2018). I mention this circumscribed context to make the interpretive process of Taylor’s hermeneutic phenomenology and the conclusions drawn from the analysis more specific and robust. Following this approach will contribute to a better understanding of the moral order and social imaginaries related to U19 lightweight rowing, but not necessarily describe the genesis of all horizons of significance within a larger social context.

In what follows are the prevalent themes that emerged from the analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter.

**Equality**

Having described the U19 lightweight rowing community as a sub-culture, it is important to note the hierarchical nature in rowing. Study participants almost always referred to the U19 lightweight category within the larger sport of rowing. Mentioning the possible elimination of the category demonstrated this point. Respondents often spoke about lightweight and open
weight/heavyweight rowing in comparative terms and the former was perceived to have lower status and prestige in relation to open weight rowing. Open weight rowing was considered the standard and desirable representation of rowing whereas the lightweight category was a specialized second-class offshoot. This was the overarching theme that reflected the hierarchy in rowing as conveyed by the interviewees.

The hierarchy in rowing and the relegated status of the U19 lightweight category can perhaps be explained by Taylor’s (2004) conception of the economy as a central aspect of the moral order in society. While aspects of the moral order, like its descriptive elements, are not necessarily required to reflect the ethics of a specific community or situation, the concept of the economy in this case serves as an apt background against which the interviewees’ moral values can be interpreted. In contemporary life, economic success is often sought as an end in itself rather than a means toward a moral good like happiness, excellence and knowledge. A society whose economy functions efficiently and is fixated on mutual benefit and the accumulation of wealth and financial prosperity without a greater social or higher purpose is a potentially destructive trait of the modern moral order (Taylor, 2004). Despite this, aspects of the economy in rowing can still reflect other entrenched moral values that were reflected in the participants’ responses in this study.

The kind of economy in rowing is not a financial goods and services exchange and profit-seeking one but refers to human physical, emotional and cognitive factors to realize the benefits of participating in the sport; what some call social capital. These benefits may include personal growth and development, identity-formation, camaraderie, self-knowledge, achievement and success. This sense of economy in sport is tenable because sport is a voluntary pursuit and practice, unlike the structures and conditions of society’s economy that are predicated on
necessity. The degree to which sport participation is a necessary feature of the wellbeing of society is debateable and will not be discussed here. Furthermore, study participants spoke about affiliation and belonging as important elements in being part of a sub-culture, and in this case, the U19 lightweight rowing community.

When interviewees described and used the term “natural lightweight” it most often related to specific rowers who could find no other home in rowing other than in the lightweight category. This was a place, an environment where like members of a crew trained and competed together and forged strong emotional bonds between themselves. Intersubjective relationships as lightweights influenced individual identities, interactive encounters, and dealing with and overcoming personal and collective challenges. In other words, the U19 lightweight rowing community contained a distinct moral order with a transcendent, higher purpose than just performing to win, pleasing parents and/or a coach, ranking nationally or setting a record. This higher purpose often reflected one’s transformation to becoming a better and good human being. Taylor’s idea of the economy as I have applied to U19 lightweight rowing reveals moral and ethical qualities in this category and speaks to nobler purposes often neglected.

Other features of Taylor’s (2004) conception of the economy and how it influences the moral order in society are related to the notions of equality and meritocracy that often oppose strict hierarchical social structures. The former idea is associated with non-discriminatory values, practices and opportunities, and the latter related to those who deserve to be rewarded for their talents and skills. Modern revolutions like the American and French revolutions in the late 18th century were rebellions against government tyranny, rigid class structures and the suppression of liberty and equal rights. They also led to the formation of representative democratic governments and liberal, capitalist economies in Western countries. While various hierarchies still exist in
democratic, capitalistic societies, in terms of class, gender, race, religion and sexuality, their appearance is within the framework of equality, freedom and rights, at least in principle.

Equality and meritocracy are constitutive elements of sport, and by extension, U19 lightweight rowing. Equality is linked to fair opportunities to access and participate in sport, and, the impartial and fair application of sports rules once competition is underway. Additionally, athletes and teams that display superior performance are deserving of recognition and rewards for their achievements. These components of sport were included in the perceptions of the study participants who supported the retention of U19 lightweight rowing. Collectively, by expressing terms like opportunities and fairness in their account of the category they formed and shared what was previously called a local imaginary.

The perception of open weight categories and their privileged status and prestige in rowing flies in the face of giving smaller statured rowers greater opportunities in the sport. Why does this hierarchical prejudice still exist in rowing? Perhaps inequalities in society contribute to such attitudes, or the pyramid structure in sport that recognizes and values elite athletes and teams over sport for all and school sport? It could also be that anytime there is differentiation, like the mind and body dichotomy, one component will be viewed dominant and the other subordinate. Finally, if equality only refers to opportunities it may not focus on inherent structural inequalities and the creation of an unjustified hierarchy within a specific practice (MacKinnon, 2016).

In this study, a potential ban on U19 lightweight rowing was often perceived as an attack on opportunities for smaller, novice high school aged rowers, and the promotion of a biased hierarchy when compared to the open weight category. Some study participants also mentioned physical differentiation often resulted in belittling smaller sized female and male rowers. It could
be interpreted that supporters of the U19 lightweight rowing category were conforming to a moral order and biased hierarchy that promoted the appearance of equality in the interest of mutual benefit for the entire rowing community. In this sense mutual benefit regarding the increase in opportunities for physical, mental and spiritual enrichment that smaller statured rowers would otherwise not be able to experience. Moreover, the inclusion of U19 lightweight rowers increases overall rowing participation and contributes to its fiscal growth, athletic competitiveness and prestige. For this reason, it can be affirmed that in the interest of a semblance of equality, U19 lightweight rowing was ethically justified within rowing’s moral order as perceived by most respondents.

The interviewees who favored a ban of U19 lightweight rowing did not necessarily oppose equality and suggest there was a prejudiced hierarchy in rowing. They perceived mutual benefits in rowing not in terms of increasing opportunities for a specific class of young rowers but as a utilitarian matter whereby the good of rowing would be better off without U19 lightweights. Under this perceived moral order, a utilitarian conception of the good means more benefits than harm, like reducing risky behavior, would result if U19 lightweight rowing were eliminated. This is contrary to most study participants who said the overall good of increasing participation outweighed the harms associated with U19 lightweight rowing. In these contrasting views there is a difference in priorities between providing equal opportunities to sustain the U19 rowing sub-culture and ending unique problems by eliminating this rowing category. These different utilitarian considerations provide a segue to analyze the issue of harm and toleration in the next section.

**Harm and Toleration**
Participants in this study agreed that the health and safety of rowers were of central importance. Because of these values, principles of harm and nonmaleficence were guiding ethical considerations in rowing. Avoiding harm by instituting mitigating measures were explicit expressions of nonmaleficence by interviewees. The expressions of concern for these values originated from their awareness of the potential risk factors U19 lightweight rowers often encounter. Rowing coaches and administrators in this study therefore unanimously believed it was their moral responsibility to mitigate and prevent harm whenever possible.

The concept of harm has several formulations and is still debated in the philosophical literature today (Cohen, 2018). What may be least controversial regarding the definition of harm is that harm is not a value per se, but a devaluing of the autonomy and respect individuals deserve and have moral rights to. Harm can therefore be said to be something that thwarts someone’s legitimate interests or otherwise treats someone unjustly (Cohen, 2018). Joel Feinberg (1987) conceives harm as a wrongful setback of interests. What determines an interest and its legitimacy may be subjective, but still requires normative reasoning (Cohen, 2018). In this sense, the subjective experiences of participants in this study utilized ethical reasoning and perceptions of harm that were not necessarily taken at face value. This study will assume the conceptions of harm reported by interviewees are valid and will not attempt to debate their validity a priori. What is of greater interest, is how and to what extent harm was described by the respondents.

British philosopher and statesman John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who rejected paternalism in relation to competent adults, associated harm with personal autonomy and liberty. He argued that adults should determine and consent to the amount of harm they wished to be exposed to (Cohen, 2018). For example, he would disagree with mandatory motorcycle helmet laws. He also maintained people ought to live their lives as they see fit if they do not threaten or
actually harm others (Cohen, 2018). This is known as Mill’s harm principle and relates to the perceived harms in U19 lightweight rowing. That is, if a legitimate interest is violated, like those facing potential and actual harms in U19 lightweight rowing, then this has a bearing on those who support or reject the possible ban of this rowing category.

In this study, respondents viewed harm among U19 lightweight rowers in paternalistic ways as mental, physical and emotional harms. Rowers had a legitimate interest not to be harmed and that was required for the U19 lightweight category to prosper. This position was held by supporters and opponents of the potential ban. Supporters felt harms would diminish with the elimination of U19 lightweight rowing and benefit the rowing community overall. Opponents of the ban believed education and regulatory reforms would lessen harms and provide greater opportunities for smaller statured young rowers. As one can tell, legitimate interests and perceived harms were marshalled by advocates and opponents of U19 lightweight rowing to achieve broader goals in the rowing community.

Reasons for these disparate positions may be attributed to the fact what constitutes harm for one person may not be the same for another (Cohen, 2018). For example, in rowing this relativism is extremely evident if one has experienced a 2000-meter rowing race. The standard distance of 2000 meters takes approximately six to seven minutes to complete, wherein rowers will endure extreme pain. This is the result of the unique balance required to switch back and forth between anaerobic and aerobic systems that increase lactic acid build up for almost the entire race. The experience of pain in such situations is unlike anything I have ever experienced and is incredibly difficult to overcome from psychological and physical perspectives.

Due to the subjective nature of pain, it is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition that constitutes harm (Cohen, 2018). People have different pain thresholds and tolerances especially
in sports that are voluntary pursuits. This is unlike rowing in the ancient world that was sometimes a form of punishment whereby slaves rowed in the galleys of large ships and were forced to endure enormous pain (Mallory, 2011). It is understood that pain is a constitutive feature of serious competitive rowing, but it may not be harmful as such. Harm usually refers to unwanted or unexpected pain, or pain deliberately forced upon oneself and/or others. The relationship between pain and harm in sport is unlike that in other social contexts. Pain resulting from surgery is usually an inevitable consequence, and every effort is often used to minimize pain and harm following surgery. In contrast, pain in sport is also not unexpected, but given the nature of some sports seriously pursued, it cannot be minimized, and in most cases, it indicates the level of perseverance and courage expressed by athletes. In this sense, sport offers a unique context in which pain and harms are understood from a moral perspective.

Following Mill’s theses on liberty, paternalism and the harm principle, athletes under the age of consent may require greater protections because they lack the knowledge to give informed consent about the inherent harms in some sports. Many U19 lightweight rowers are in this category and have a reasonable expectation and right not to be placed in serious harmful situations by adult decision-makers. In this case, paternalistic oversight is warranted, provided education and proper training are also included. Thus, any harms in lightweight rowing must be carefully managed to ensure protective safeguards are in place for young rowers. As a result of the ephemeral and subjective nature of what constitutes harm, hereafter harm will be aligned to the perceptions of participants as legitimized by the local imaginary. In relation to Mill’s precepts, harms often violate the legitimate interests and rights of others and deny them their liberty, which are often justifiable in the case of youth.
As one can see, problems arise when considering harm and U19 lightweight rowing due to perceived degrees and variations of harm, and whether the voluntary nature of rowing resolves these problems. Therefore, the issue of harm, protections and voluntariness falls under toleration, which Cohen (2018) describes as the extent to which harm is morally permissible and whether it undermines legitimate interests and rights. The determination of legitimate, expected harm and toleration is a difficult task, however, the application of Mill’s harm principle and Cohen’s description of toleration may provide a reasonable response to this issue. It may also shed light regarding the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and the ethics of categorization in sport. As such, two main themes must be addressed: 1) the legitimacy and expectation of certain harms, and 2) the toleration of expected harms.

The first feature identifies the perceived severity and quality of harm that is associated with the practice of the U19 lightweight category and whether it is great enough to warrant moral concern or action. This assertion addresses the legitimacy of the perceived harm and the thwarting of a valid interest. While some may not perceive harm the way others do, the local imaginary established by participants in this study provided evidence of whether undue harm was in fact legitimately experienced in U19 lightweight rowing. The degree of severity and quality of harm was also necessary to establish whether minor, temporary harms like limited pain and making weight are justified and do not violate the liberty and legitimate interests of lightweight rowers. The second feature involves the voluntary nature of sport, how much harm can be tolerated, and the nature of consent to potential and real harm in sport (Cohen, 2018). In U19 lightweight rowing, freedom, autonomy and consent must be preserved when weighed against harm. The following will analyze the themes of legitimate harms and interest and the toleration of harms.
Legitimate Harms and Interests

Based on several research studies, there is a heightened potential of risk and harm as a result of participating in sport (Kraus et al. 2018; Karlson et al., 2001; Martinsen & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013; Pustivsek, Hadzik & Dervisevic, 2014; Sykora et al., 1993; Taub & Blinde, 1992). Unfortunately, this literature is not directly linked to U19 lightweight rowing and actual perceptions of harm which gives way to a debate about the potential for and actual harm within this category in rowing. This facet of the dispute was reflected in the different opinions of the interviewees in this study, and the subjective nature of harm as opposed to objective measures.

Due to the fact, and in some respects, harm in sport is difficult to identify and quantify, perceptions of harm will vary. Subjective experiences of the respondents combined with normative reasoning may better account for the myriad of factors that quantitative research may be unable to establish due to the considerations of physical and mental harm that participants referred to in their interviews. Again, perceptions are important here because harm may not always be associated with and experienced as unwanted or unexpected pain. The question now remains, to what extent does U19 lightweight rowing seriously present a risk of harm as perceived by the rowing community?

Based on the findings of this research, the local imaginary shared by those who did not support a potential ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada believed that the relative risk of harm in a U19 lightweight category was low. This was not rooted so much in an indifference towards the seriousness of certain harms and practices like extreme diets, rapid weight loss, poor body image and emotional distress. Rather, it was based on an overall harm that might result in the rowing community by such a ban. Namely, the possible elimination of the U19 lightweight category would disenfranchise a significant cohort of rowers. Harm in this sense is not a physical
manifestation but is rooted in the idea of equality and creating opportunities for smaller statured rowers. By excluding the latter group, the rowing community would uproot a population of rowers who have participated in the sport for decades and reduce diversity in rowing. Rather than attending to the needs of this segment of rowers who face unique harms and risks, the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing would result in too dramatic a change in the fabric of rowing and come at a high and unreasonable cost. As the proverbial saying goes, a ban would “throw the baby out with the bathwater.” Instead, ban opponents preferred reforms like better regulations, protocols, oversight, and education and training in U19 lightweight rowing to deal with specific harms and risks.

Respondents in this study who supported a possible ban of the U19 lightweight category believed individual risks and harms to rowers were unnecessarily high, inconsistently monitored and not seriously addressed. Their concern was toward the wellbeing of individual U19 lightweight rowers and this held greater moral weight than the constitution and image of the sport. Also, those in favor of a potential ban were willing to forego attending to the distinct problems in U19 lightweight rowing because rowing’s leadership lacked the will to seriously address these issues. They were also less interested in allegiance to the history of U19 lightweight rowing, the disenfranchisement of U19 lightweight rowers, and the matter of diversity. The possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing would encourage the end of the hypocrisy among those who claim there are problems in the category yet do virtually nothing to alleviate risk concerns. Proponents of the ban insist rowing would be better served by ridding the U19 lightweight category thereby erasing unique harms U19 lightweight rowers may encounter. Such a move would offer greater protection regarding the welfare of such rowers and a reconceptualization of the sport may indeed be an improvement.
Perhaps reasons for the discord in perceived risks and the value of U19 lightweight rowing among interviewees may be gleaned from individual horizons of significance. For example, a ban supporter had a close family member suffer from a serious eating disorder, and this led to a heightened awareness of the potential risks involved in U19 lightweight rowing. Opponents of the ban shared similar experiences with negative health consequences yet still promoted the category. Their horizons of significance emphasized and valued the benefits of participation in U19 lightweight rowing and the creation of greater opportunities and diversity in rowing over the perceived risks of adverse health outcomes.

While interviewees in this study discussed education in relation to a potential ban of U19 lightweight rowing, not all provided details of such training. Overall, education in the category referred to information regarding nutrition and physical and mental health. Little elaboration was provided on how such topics would be disseminated to and implemented by coaches, athletes, parents and administrators. The importance of a fully informed public regarding U19 lightweight rowing management was also highlighted by respondents and was associated with education to deal with risks and harms. In addition to transparency, some respondents mentioned better communication with rowing stakeholders was needed to include a broader constituency of informed individuals regarding the issues surrounding the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing. These measures would perhaps yield a deeper understanding of the conflict like that expressed by participants in this study.

While reasonable disagreement may be expected when confronted with a controversial issue like the one in this study, pointing out that an improved education and communication system in rowing is needed is too facile and lacks substance. Based on the local imaginaries of U19 lightweight rowing supporters, this weight category was perceived to be necessary if certain
protocols and systems were put in place to protect the rowers. Advocates and opponents of the U19 lightweight rowing ban agreed the current system in rowing has inadequate policies and safeguards to protect rowers from undue risks. Whereas proper education, communication and management may reduce the severity and potential harm to U19 lightweight rowers, the overall perception of interviewees is that such risks are significant, and this has moral import. In the next section, the voluntary nature of U19 lightweight rowing will be discussed in relation to perceived harms and the concept of toleration.

_Toleration_

According to Warnock (1987), “Mill’s contention is that the only limit to toleration, the only valid reason for not tolerating a kind of behavior, is that this behavior causes harm to people other than those who practise it” (p. 123). Toleration in sport however is somewhat unique because sport offers novel situations where harm may be expected and is unavoidable. While it is customary for rowers to undergo experiences of pain it does not mean these experiences are justified or expected elsewhere in society. For instance, rowing in a head race style format where crews are launched from a starting line in a single file “time trial” may often result in crews colliding when a faster crew overtakes a slower one. While mitigating measures and rules are in place to reduce these risks, it is a hazard that crews are aware of and can sometimes expect depending on the race. Everyday boaters however would never deliberately agree or expect to collide with another boat that could cause bodily harm or damage to their equipment. The consequences of such instances vary due to the different contexts in which these collisions occur. The voluntary nature of sport therefore normally requires participants to accept psychological and physical risks inherent in competitive sport.
Toleration may also involve considerations that are not just immediate consequences of sport participation but may also include considerations of long-term repercussions. In mixed martial arts (MMA) for example, athletes are aware that short and long-term negative consequences may occur as a result of their participation in a sport where head trauma is evident. These results may be severe, but such serious risks of harm are considered ethically acceptable generally due to toleration in the MMA community and in society (Kent, 2013). In U19 lightweight rowing, the immediate and the long-term repercussions were included in the interviewees considerations of harm experienced as a result of a potential ban of this rowing category.

The context in which these risks of harm are experienced is an important consideration regarding toleration. Toleration may be applied subjectively by individuals, but the local imaginaries that members of a community share about toleration are legitimized within their imaginaries and moral order. This means toleration is not necessarily morally relative because the communities and contexts in which toleration is applied creates a justifiable standard or norm. This follow Taylor’s ethical interpretation of hermeneutic phenomenology and his rejection of moral relativism.

An additional consideration when discussing toleration in U19 lightweight rowing is that these rowers are typically below the age of consent. The ability for minors to consent to harm is thus an important ethical factor when addressing the issue of toleration. Another factor is the voluntary nature of sport, whereby individuals agree to the inherent risks of sport even where rules try to mitigate harms. Given the cohort of U19 lightweight rowers, many cannot consent to some of the serious risks and harms in the sport because their knowledge, level of maturity and
autonomy is somewhat limited (Breen, 2006). Parents, rowing coaches and administrators therefore intervene in paternalistic ways to ensure the safety and health of young rowers.

Through their collective local imaginaries, participants in this study agreed that U19 lightweight rowers should bear some responsibility when managing their wellbeing in the sport. Even though many of these rowers are not considered adults, they are still expected to maintain a reasonable amount of self-care that would be expected of any serious competitive athlete. This was explicitly expressed in the interviewees’ incredulity when discussing the lack of knowledge many rowers had regarding proper nutrition. While formal education was mentioned regarding this issue, education was not entirely to blame for this gap in knowledge. Respondents believed coaches were responsible for technical feedback, training plans and encouragement, and it was reasonable for them to expect rowers to follow their instructions. They also felt rowers needed to make personal investments like managing their time and learning about how to achieve success in rowing if they wanted to be serious competitors. Additionally, even when instruction is relatively poor, U19 lightweight rowers should assume a degree of responsibility as they mature and enter adulthood.

If, for example, nutritional information is difficult to access, abstaining from any effort to educate oneself and remaining ignorant about eating well are not indicative of a committed athlete. This is analogous to serious boxers or MMA fighters who must acquire knowledge about and attend to their diet to achieve success. Success in such cases are applicable to both the weigh-in and the fight. Not attending to these crucial aspects of the sport not only decreases performance but also increases the potential for serious negative health outcomes before and after stepping on the scale. Reasonable expectations of self-preservation and care among young athletes are warranted, especially since health is a paramount value in sport. Interviewees in this
study believed U19 lightweight rowers should exercise moral agency in their pursuit of rowing success by becoming informed about risks and harms and doing what is in their best interest. In this sense, paternalistic intervention should be tempered by making room for personal decision making.

While parents and guardians often make decisions on behalf of their children, when they reach adolescence young people take on more responsibility for their actions and behaviors. Such accountability is enhanced when participating in sport because children are given the opportunity to explore and exercise their autonomy somewhat independently from parental authority. The degree to which parents play a role in the competitive lives of rowers, particularly in high school, is therefore limited. It is unlikely many parents would be aware of the issues identified by the interviewees in this study because specific information about the problems in U19 lightweight rowing is not widely known. Parents or guardians who were once lightweight rowers would have greater knowledge about the experiences of their children in this category of rowing. However, the influence of this understanding and the reactions it elicits toward their children are not uniform.

Parents do their best to look out for their children’s welfare, but as they get older, parents expect and want children to make more independent choices. Parental consent regarding harm and toleration of risks in U19 lightweight rowing is quite limited. This is due to the fact most parents are unaware of the sub-culture of rowing, the experiences of daily practice, the difficulties of making weight, the pressures of meeting peer and coaching expectations, and the physical and mental exertion required during competition. Moreover, many parents are not seriously invested in rowing as members or volunteers in rowing organizations. Yes, they pay for their children’s uniforms, equipment and club memberships, drive them to practice, attend
and cover the expenses of their regattas, but they are unaware of the lived experiences within the culture of rowing. Even though parents are foremost concerned with the safety and well-being of their children, they are not in a primary position to reflect on and decide the level of toleration regarding harms in U19 lightweight rowing. Rowing coaches and administrators are better arbiters of such matters because of their expansive experience and intimate involvement in this category of rowing.

While the leadership in rowing is responsible for the regulations and policies of the sport, they are not capable of single-handedly determining the toleration of harm on behalf of rowers. Toleration of risks and harms must be based on the experiences of rowers, what coaches and administrators are aware of and input from other rowing stakeholders like parents. As previously stated, U19 lightweight rowers are also responsible in part for their behaviors by recognizing and avoiding potential and real harmful practices. An example of where coaches and administrators share responsibility in this matter and were perceived to have failed is the lack of safe dieting information in trying to make weight.

In my experience of U19 lightweight rowing, I knew that to be competitive and achieve success I had to do my own research and invest my own time and effort to learn about proper dieting. I did my best to gain such knowledge and did what was within my control and responsibility. I also made mistakes and learned about safe practices through trial and error as I progressed in the sport. Upon reflection, I argue U19 lightweight rowers should bear most of the responsibility for achieving competitive success by educating themselves about things like dieting and making weight safely. Notwithstanding some paternalistic oversight, this view was expressed by the study participants through their local imaginaries. Thus, toleration of harm in U19 lightweight rowing should consider the autonomy and actions of rowers in this category.
Although interviews with U19 lightweight rowers were not conducted to learn about their perspectives regarding harm, it was sufficient to gain this knowledge from coaches and administrators who have extensive background and experience in rowing. This is so because all serious rowers tolerate pain while training and competing. This is the nature of the sport while admitting there can be and are other harmful aspects of rowing outside of these moments. Rowers of course are aware of the risks in the sport and may choose to row in an open weight category or leave the sport entirely. Also, current U19 lightweight rowers are required to sign waivers to participate in high school competition and this informs them they are engaged in a sport that carries some risks. While there may be exceptional cases of rowers being coerced into participating in U19 lightweight rowing, this is extremely rare and has little bearing on the ethics of in the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing. This research is predicated on expected, potential and real harms and risks in U19 lightweight rowing. While serious harm in this rowing category can and does occur, coaches and administrators did not indicate its frequency and severity is so prevalent as to not be tolerated at all.

The last aspect to consider when it comes to toleration is that of group toleration. Cohen (2018) argues that toleration ought to be extended to group interests as well as that of the individual. Recognizing the legitimate interests of a group has already been established through the collective local imaginaries and the values the rowing community shares. For this reason, little more needs to be said to understand the positions and interests of groups who do or do not support a ban on the U19 lightweight rowing category. Acknowledging toleration applies to groups is important because harm can be experienced on a larger scale and reflects a group’s legitimate interests. That is to say that even though there might be harmful aspects in rowing, the risks can be tolerated because the benefits and goods of the sport outweigh such negative factors.
For respondents in this study who support a ban of U19 lightweight rowing, their
toleration of harm was based on extraneous risks and not the inherent pain rowers endure while
rowing in training sessions and competitions. These external risks refer to extreme diets, making
weight, poor body image, and dealing with anxiety. Rather than reform rowing to deal with such
harms, which in the past has been ineffective, ban advocates prefer not to tolerate these negative
features at all. They also take seriously the voluntary nature of sport and the dedication rowers
must display by having rowers make their own decisions to remain in the sport if a ban is
imposed, without worrying about the requirements of competing in a specially assigned weight
category. This libertarian position expects U19 lightweight rowers exercise greater autonomy
and assume more responsibility for their welfare regardless of competing in a lightweight
category. As for potential economic repercussions and disenfranchisement of many lightweight
high school rowers, those in favor of a ban were willing to forego this cohort to endorse the
overall good of the sport. They also believed paternalistic interventions to mitigate the toleration
of harm in rowing were mostly disingenuous.

Ban opponents of U19 lightweight rowing, by contrast, would prefer to take proactive
steps to correct harms in rowing and make the toleration of harm in this category more
acceptable. They expressed concern about equitable opportunities for smaller statured rowers,
the lack of training and knowledge regarding harms in rowing, and the likely decline in
participation and diversity in this rowing category. Reformers believed the implementation of
new regulations, protocols and policies to reduce risks would improve not only lightweight
rowing practices but improve the overall wellbeing of rowing. Positive changes would enlist the
assistance of many in the rowing community, improve communication and foster greater
transparency in decision making. While some toleration of harm is inevitable in rowing,
opponents of the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing stressed the need for positive changes and to manage such toleration practically and ethically. In the following section, I will address the various proposals interviewees suggested to resolve the major problems in U19 lightweight rowing.

**Resolutions**

Supporters of the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in this study were unmoved by the consequences of such a ban on smaller statured young rowers. These interviewees expressed concern for the wellbeing of all rowers but did not believe the specific risks of U19 lightweight rowing warranted a distinct rowing category. They also felt the retention of the U19 lightweight rowing category, and its perceived and real harms negatively impacted the overall sport of rowing. Those who objected to the potential ban held that the elimination of the U19 lightweight category would disenfranchise many rowers, reduce opportunities for rowers to take up the sport and diminish diversity among rowers. They too considered the issue of harm U19 lightweight rowers face but were willing to mitigate and tolerate a certain level of harm. Both sides of the argument perceived harm differently and how it might be manifested if a ban of U19 lightweight rowing were to occur. Both factions also had good intentions and kept in mind the interests of rowers and the sport of rowing.

The main point of contrast between these groups is the uneven moral weight each attributed to values like equality and conditions of harm regarding rowers. Sources of difference resided in how reforms ought to be implemented. One group preferred the elimination of the category while the other suggested better education and monitoring of lightweight practices were needed. These were important factors that resulted in disagreement between those who supported or opposed the possible ban of U19 lightweight rowing.
To expand on these points, equal opportunities and fairness would provide smaller statured young rowers access to rowing, who would otherwise be disenfranchised by the hierarchical nature of rowing. Such opportunities promote diversity, freedom and autonomy which were perceived as desired ends of the rowing community and U19 lightweight rowers. The legitimate harm of restricting potential participants from accessing these ends was therefore perceived as a serious ethical violation. As well, the limited harms that rowers may experience were harms that could be tolerated by rowers and the larger rowing community. For example, withstanding a few days or hours of discomfort due to a poor diet will ultimately benefit the individual and their teammates by making them eligible for the lightweight category and reaping the rewards that such participation bestows. This utilitarian calculus would be supplemented with proper training regarding dieting, making weight as well as greater oversight related to healthy practices. Likewise, if the rowing community were to support the U19 lightweight category, the good of equality that was perceived to benefit the greater rowing community and be an end ought to outweigh the perceived negative costs. While the value of these goods justified toleration of certain minor harms which were the result of a potentially poorly managed category, it did not entail such harms were ignored completely. Participants in the study who supported the U19 lightweight category were indeed aware of systemic problems in the category that required addressing and advocated for reform.

Application of Mill’s harm principle and Cohen’s description of toleration provides justification for the preservation of U19 lightweight rowing. This is because harm may be experienced differently by individuals, and to ban an entire category for the sake of harms which many or most members consent to and may never experience is misguided. As well, encouraging rowers to quit the sport or category if such harmful situations arise is not incongruent with the
values of those who support the U19 lightweight category. In fact, many respondents in this study discussed the beneficial aspects of having different sports and categories for rowers to grow into or out of depending on their needs, interests or stages of growth and development.

There is no reason to assume that rowers are incapable of leaving the sport or category if they are legitimately harmed and that the category itself is the cause of these harms. The causality of harm is an epistemological roadblock, but study participants did manage to identify important features of U19 lightweight rowing that required reform as seen in the results chapter. These aspects identified by interviewees are therefore newly revealed features of the U19 lightweight category that point to causal reasons for harm rather than the category itself. This ought to serve as a starting point to implement much needed reforms in high school rowing where most U19 lightweight rowers reside. The issues identified in this study did not conclusively show U19 lightweight rowing in Canada was inherently unethical and a wholesale ban is justified. Participants often referred to accountability and coaching abuse, aspects often implicated to demonstrate unnecessary harms in the category but not due to the category itself. While fundamental constitutive elements of potential harm do exist in U19 lightweight rowing, these themes, like dieting and making weight, serve to explicate problems in the category but not to the point of foregoing the achievement of its perceived goods.

In contrast, those who supported a ban on U19 lightweight rowing felt this category infringed upon a legitimate interest not to see young rowers be harmed and as a result harm the greater rowing community. It was noted earlier however that individual rowers and their communities are entirely capable of consenting to a certain degree of tolerable harm and acting to mitigate these harms. Yet, paternalistic interventions to mitigate harms and achieve a reasonable level of toleration toward harm perhaps reaches too far for opponents of U19
lightweight rowing. It is not difficult to sincerely sympathize with rowers who must endure some temporary pain and hardship while training and competing in U19 lightweight rowing. This is the nature of all serious competitive rowing. However, excessive and extreme forms of harm linked to dieting and making weight unique to the lightweight category should not be tolerated. Ban advocates wish to see moral agents not be put in a position to tolerate excessive and needless harm so legitimate interests in rowing be pursued.

If a ban of U19 lightweight rowing were in place, rowers entering the sport would not have the opportunity to experience undue harms of the category and develop their identity as a distinct weight-restricted rowers. Currently, novice lightweights are thrust into the vagaries of the category and must deal with the unique issues delineated in this study. Those who remain in the category and are heavily impacted physically and emotionally still must contend with being stigmatized in comparison to open weight rowers. This second-class status is a kind of disenfranchisement and some lightweights feel disillusioned by their place in the rowing hierarchy. The U19 lightweight rowing category also tempers the importance of winning. Victors are sometimes perceived as not the very best rowers, but rowers who can only win in their specialized class. Although winning is significant it may not always be the primary goal of rowing, yet it is still a motivational factor for many rowers that cannot be dismissed. Supporters of the U19 lightweight rowing ban believe the above points that current lightweights experience are detrimental, and these elements would be removed if the category were eliminated. A critique of this argument is warranted.

While newcomers to rowing may not necessarily experience distinct harms if the U19 lightweight category, young rowers can still be harmed if this category were eliminated. The harm of being given no choice denies people essential freedoms to pursue what interests them.
One does not have a right to participate in sport generally and lightweight rowing specifically because these are voluntary pursuits. Still, the elimination of U19 lightweight rowing would undermine and discourage a segment of rowers from taking up and remaining in the sport. The denial of such an option diminishes the autonomy of young rowers to train with and compete against comparable peers and opponents. A possible ban also denies lightweights with unique experiences where certain positive identities and relationships are forged. The physical and emotional developmental challenges would still exist and be exemplified if there were no U19 lightweight category. Relative size, strength, speed and endurance between all rowers would be amplified and create wide differentiation and unreasonable expectations between rowers. Thus, contrary to U19 lightweight rowing ban advocates, elimination of the lightweight category option would be harmful to young, smaller statured rowers and detrimental to the overall good of rowing by avoiding internal strife.

The preceding conclusion is drawn recognizing that high school lightweight rowing is not a right but a privilege. However, this privilege should not be reserved just for the largest and strongest rowers and disregard the diversity of many other young, aspiring rowers. If meritocracy is an inherent part of sport, where athletes are given fair and equitable opportunities to excel, then the merits of rowers of different shapes and sizes should be recognized. The U19 lightweight rowing category ensures that similar statured rowers can train with and compete against each other on a level playing field to elicit the very best rowing performances. To compare rowing achievements amongst a wide range of rowers from the lightest to the heaviest would invariably favor the latter group and belittle the performance of the former. Opponents of the U19 lightweight rowing ban in this study believed that providing and encouraging equitable
opportunities in sport should be sought to promote values like autonomy, equality and respect among rowers, as well as encourage their talent, skill and hard work.

Applying Mill’s harm principle to the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing would diminish legitimate interests in preserving the equality, autonomy and freedom of a certain class of rowers. According to Mill, one may pursue one’s interests unimpeded provided one’s actions do not harm others. In this case, an U19 lightweight rowing ban would harm others in their pursuit of rowing where training and competitive performance can be justifiably compared. This type of harm is unlike those experienced due to the inherent demands of rowing like pain, anxiety and perseverance that require a certain level of toleration. None of the participants in this study referred to the harm that would ensue due to the loss of autonomy, equality and freedom of rowers if U19 lightweight were not banned. Instead, they discussed physical, mental and emotional harms due to excessive and unsafe lightweight rowing practices, and yet reached different conclusions regarding the possible elimination of this rowing category.

Proponents of the U19 lightweight rowing ban were willing to tolerate little in the way of harms, while opponents of the ban tolerated unique harms within the category together with needed reforms. If those in the rowing community sincerely wish to advocate on behalf of young, smaller statured rowers, then this concern should not make a difference whether a ban is in place or not. This cohort would still face developmental, physical and emotional challenges in each situation. However, were the U19 lightweight rowing category be maintained it would preserve and elevate the legitimate interests of rowers to exercise their autonomy, equality and freedom. Doing so would enhance the dignity of and respect due to this unique group of rowers, something all in the rowing community should endorse.
Based on these considerations of harm and toleration I argue U19 lightweight rowing in Canada is ethically warranted despite the potential and real harms that exist in this category. Improvements and reforms are necessary to mitigate the experiences of excessive and serious harms; promote individual autonomy, freedom and consent; ensure comparisons in rowing performances are fair; encourage equitable opportunities and diversity in rowing; and improve health education and monitoring in the category. Eliminating this category would not be justifiable when held up against overall harms that are experienced in rowing and what the rowing community can tolerate. The possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada is therefore not morally justified based on the results and conclusions of this study. In the final section, I will consider more broadly the ethics of categorization in sport from what was learned in this thesis.

**The Ethics of Categorization in Sport**

The following is a brief commentary based on this chapter’s analysis regarding the ethics of categorization in sport and contains mostly my own thoughts on this topic. Authenticity most commonly refers to expressions of our true selves and the “relation of being” that defines our existence (Varga & Guignon, 2020). How we see ourselves in relation to our environment and the moral principles in which we choose to abide by is characteristic of our modern moral order and an ethic of authenticity (Taylor, 1991). Defining oneself by the sport one plays or the specific category one participates in is also a natural way to find meaning and identity in life as the interviewees in this study alluded to. Authenticity and hermeneutics are philosophical precepts that reinforce the need to see ourselves in relation to others whether in a competitive or everyday context. Kretchmar (2014) confirms that relationships between teammates, opponents, coaches, administrators and other stakeholders are foundational factors for meaningful
experiences in sport. According to Monroe (2001), identity and the groups we belong to are indispensable aspects of our human nature and part of the moral system we live by. In the case of sport, our interactions and affiliations in specialized social groups form different categories between and within different sports. Thus, one may categorize sport by the constitutive features of each sport (what defines each sport that separates it from other sports), age, gender, ethnicity, weight, height and other factors that demarcate divisions and classifications.

The development of personal identity arises in part from our shared social imaginary in the collective associations we belong to. In this study, participants came to their own authentic conclusions regarding the ethics of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada, but these perceptions were rooted in shared local imaginaries in and out of the rowing community. These local imaginaries were important aspects of the interviewees’ belief system and moral convictions that imparted a sense of identity, even though these participants were not at the time of this study competitive rowers.

People have an existential drive to see themselves in relation to others and draw normative meaning from various contexts and categories by which our lives are organized. This observation is supported by Monroe (2001) and Colby and Damon (1993) who recognize categorization and identity formation through intersubjective relationships play a significant role in the formation and limitations of our normative actions. Categories therefore provide us with a source of meaning in the way we see ourselves in relation to others and determine which moral actions are approved and rejected by our group affiliations. Based on the hermeneutic works of Taylor and his phenomenological predecessors, the existential need to understand ourselves and others can be attained at least in part through our reflexive awareness of how we perceive our relationships and where we fit into society. This is the essence of Taylor’s social imaginary and
something I interpret as support for the utility and importance of categorization in sport and our daily lives. Sport categorization provides an opportunity to reflect on our identity personally and in comparison to others, and this development contains moral significance.

Categorization itself is not a moral value. As presented in chapter two, Jayyusi (1984) recognizes contexts in which categorization or categories may only have moral meaning in certain situations. For example, the U19 lightweight rowing category was perceived by interviewees in this study to have moral importance to the broader rowing community, even by those who were not lightweight rowers themselves. These perceptions were understood against horizons of significance that explained why this category was infused with specific meaning. The category would likely be insignificant to anyone else who had no relationship or connection to high school rowing in Canada. It may even be that such moral evaluation of U19 lightweight rowing is specific to Canada or the region where respondents reside. Categories in sport, whether in rowing or more generally, must therefore be evaluated on a case by case basis and on their own merits.

However society chooses to view and behave towards categories in sport is independent of the moral value of a category itself. Categories are neither inherently problematic nor beneficial (Jayyusi, 1984) they are simply a pragmatic tool to ensure equal and fair competitive treatment for groupings of teams and athletes. However, within categories, identities and associations are created for authentic expressions of meaning. If categories such as age or gender were to disappear for example, the result may not necessarily be problematic if such designations were irrelevant to the sport. In combat sports like MMA the repercussions for banning gender or age categories would have serious consequences like unfair one-sided competition and the infliction of unjustifiable harm. The same situation could be applied to rowing albeit the
consequences would be much different. Mixed gender races for example have been recently introduced into coastal rowing categories at the World Championship level and there is no evidence of any negative consequences as a result. Weight however has a significant correlation to size and strength which contributes to boat speed\(^1\), and this is a relevant consideration when it comes to competitive fairness in rowing. This fact was well supported and understood by those interviewed in this study and has been empirically researched and tested.

Monroe (2001) notes that placing people into unequal categories diminishes the perception of moral worth and sets the stage for people to mistreat others. In this study, the U19 lightweight rowing category attends to the wellbeing of rowers in many respects but it also harbors harms in some instances due to excessive and unsafe practices. A benefit of this weight category are the opportunities it provides young, smaller statured rowers athletes who can train and compete with a like cohort of rowers. In this context, healthy identities and meaningful experiences can be acquired. On the other hand, abuses and unsafe practices do occur in U19 lightweight rowing due to poor coaching, mismanagement, unhealthy habits and demanding expectations. These negative features not only influence this weight category but damages the reputation of rowing.

There is no question problems in U19 lightweight rowing must be resolved thoughtfully, and a significant idea to perhaps improve the category is known as substantive equality. This

\(^1\) According to famous rowing coach Mike Spracklin, there are three contributing factors to boat speed in rowing. These factors are controlled by rowers and those with larger, longer and stronger bodies have distinct advantages. The first is length, wherein a greater arc and distance travelled by the oars will result in a greater distance travelled per stroke. The longer the effective reach and leg drive, the longer the stroke. The second feature is power. With greater effort more power can be generated, thus sending the boat farther per stroke. The last feature is stroke rate. Stroke rate is the number of times per minute a stroke is executed and can be increased with a shorter/quicker drive and recovery phase.
conception of equality is substantive because it explicitly addresses social contexts that are organized into hierarchies where inherent disadvantages can be redressed (MacKinnon, 2016). Substantive equality can be understood in contrast to the classical Aristotelian version of formal equality where a simplistic equation may suffice to distribute a proportional amount of equal good. If two people \((P_1, P_2)\) were to be given or own things with differing value \((X_1, Y_1)\), \(P_1\) would be owed a certain amount of good as \(G_1\) to reconcile this difference in the name of equal treatment and/or \(P_2\) would be owed \(G_2\). This should result in \(P_1\) and \(P_2\) now having a total of goods with the same value \((X_1+G_1=Y_1+G_2)\), thereby achieving equality. Of course, this calculus does not account for the substantive historical and contextual factors that contribute to systemic inequality and is insufficient to resolve many of the actual problems that promote inequality in the first place. A more “substantive” version of equality is therefore needed.

Substantive equality which recognizes hierarchies as the focal point of inequality is therefore required to understand what equality means and what is being valued. Without the application of hierarchy, inequality in the form of gay marriage rights, for example, may often neglect to account for the sociohistorical disadvantages due to a hierarchical heterosexual system (MacKinnon, 2016). The application of the strict definition of “spouse” without a substantive and hierarchical understanding has, and did, result in apathy for gay marriage rights because same-sex couples were not considered formally “disadvantaged” simply because they did not meet the traditional criteria as being a spouse. The substantive conception of equality must therefore account for all the factors that contribute to inequality for a just society to prevail.

As described by the respondents in this study, rowing has a hierarchical structure whereby U19 lightweight rowing has a second-class status relative to the open weight category. Rather than ban U19 lightweight rowing, needed reforms to address problems in this category
based on equality could lead to improved, substantive changes and experiences. Recognizing that the harms associated with U19 lightweight rowing may be the result of a lack of understanding of certain hierarchies which beget inequality in this category may prove useful. Examples of such substantive alterations include competitive fairness, balanced and safer practices, better education and monitoring, and greater respect for autonomy and integrity.

While categorization in sport discriminates based on factors like gender, age, weight, (dis)ability, ethnicity and nationality, these are justifiable forms of segregation in most instances. When defensible in terms of equality and equitable opportunities they uphold values essential to a moral and just society as demonstrated in this study. Were the U19 lightweight rowing category in Canada be eliminated, many young, smaller statured rowers would be disenfranchised and harmed by such a decision. Distinct identities, belonging, relationships and meaningful experiences in this category would never occur, and this would be a tremendous loss for the rowing community.

Ability and talent are indispensable features of sport that are expressed and celebrated in training and competition within a hierarchical system. Categories are part of this system and provide an opportunity to distinguish and compare excellent performances in a fair and impartial manner. If the goal of sport is simply to be the very best athlete or team, categories would be irrelevant, and many people would not be given the opportunity to participate and achieve success in sport. For example, if sport were completely sex-blind (no separate male and female sport categories), the opportunities for females to participate in serious competitive sport would likely diminish substantially in most popular sports. This outcome would be unjust and create greater inequalities in sport. Gender segregated sport is not completely free of problems but is a defensible form of inequality from the perspective of respecting the integrity and value of those
who have an interest and wish to participate in sport. In this sense, sport categories foster
diversity and highlight many degrees of talent and skill that can and should be appreciated. This
reflects many social justice movements that seek substantive equality in society not at the cost of
a loss of identity but rather as an approach to celebrate diversity.

The idea of diversity and categories in sport is in some ways a reflection of diversity in
contemporary society. Group affiliation, identity and rights have become important and serious
social issues. People are grouped (categorized) according to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age,
nationality, and mental and physical abilities. Some groups in society are disadvantaged and
have been and are discriminated historically, socially, economically and politically, like
indigenous people in Canada. This means others possess advantages by virtue of their group
association. Disadvantaged groups seek equal treatment and opportunities, accommodations,
compensation and corrections for past wrongs. Some people have multiple group identities and
affiliations, and this often adds to and confounds societal problems. One of the main difficulties
of diversity (categories) in society is finding fair and justifiable solutions to these issues.
Ignoring group affiliations and categories would undeniably hinder resolutions to these issues
and only serve to ignore systemic inequalities in society.

While categories in sport may offer different athletes and teams equitable opportunities to
showcase their talents and skills, categorizations obviously still contain problems. For example,
even though gender-segregated sport is ethically justifiable, for some people, female sport is still
considered inferior and this view stigmatizes all female sports. Some other pertinent issues
confounding sport categorization includes trans categorization and para sport. For trans
individuals, entering into female categories can often be perceived as disadvantaging cis-
gendered females as opposed to the opposite issue of trans men possibly being disadvantaged in
cis-gendered male sport which is often perceived as being less ethically charged compared to the former (Hargie, Mitchell & Somerville, 2015; Bianchi, 2019). The exclusionary issue in virtue of a trans identity or categorization is problematic in this context of sport and has resulted in calls to reject gender categorization (Bianchi, 2019). In a similar fashion, para athletes such as Oscar Pistorius have been scrutinized for their inherent differences that may confer certain advantages (or disadvantages) that could make them ineligible to belong to a certain category of athlete or sport (de Léséleuc & Issanchou, 2016). While these present challenges to the hierarchical nature that categories often imply, these issues may be more aligned with social values and not categorization itself.

Overcoming these issues are no simple matter because it involves social conditioning and deep-seated prejudices. On the other hand, categories can and do provide athletes opportunities to engage with and learn about others with diverse backgrounds, like students in the education system. A corollary of categorization in sport is the ethic of inclusion that is respectful of the differences in talents and abilities of diverse populations. While categories may fairly and rightly discriminate due to factors like age, gender, weight, cognitive and physical ability, within a single category is the inclusion of many talented and skilled athletes. Thus, there are parallels between categorization, diversity and inclusion in sport and that found in modern society.

As this study has demonstrated, categories can serve a relevant purpose in the structure of a sport community like rowing and impact the lives of individuals in profound ways. Identities and moral outlooks are shaped by categories in the way they circumscribe specific contexts, bring together individuals with common interests, foster deep relationships, and convey and prioritize values. This study revealed that the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in
Canada is not only a contentious subject based on pragmatic factors, but also because it raises important moral questions about the lives of young rowers.

Lightweight rowing has been practiced for well over 100 years, is an entrenched part of rowing and is home to a specific cohort of rowers whose identity is bound up with being a lightweight. As described above, categorization in sport is often perceived to promote other desirable moral ends like equality, autonomy, respect and integrity. In this study, the ethical value of categorization in U19 lightweight rowing is derived from its historical and contextual characteristics as perceived in the local imaginaries of coaches and administrators. More broadly, designating categories in sport imparts moral significance because it respects and promotes identity and diversity which in turn, if properly implemented, encourages substantive equality and the acquisition of other moral goods.

The ethics of categorization in sport is largely context dependent, but there may be inherent ethical value in categorization in sport itself. This is perhaps due in part to our modern moral order and the need to find happiness, purpose and identity in a secular and individualistic world. Categories in sport may serve as a counterweight to the fractured segments of society that have abandoned the values and security of traditional and religious hierarchies. Sport categories are morally relevant if they promulgate values of equality, justice, fairness and opportunities while displaying athletic talent and skill. The need for sport categories may therefore be important the more secular and independent our society becomes. Self-regulated sport communities provide common spaces, economies and specific moral orders that have become refuges for some as the moral fabric of society seemingly deteriorates.

Banning things that have been historically acceptable, like alcohol during Prohibition, appears to be a drastic way to deal with social and moral problems. The same may be said about
the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing that is a misguided reaction to the risks and harms in this category. This is so because such a ban would negatively impact the moral lives of young, smaller stunted rowers. It would deny them the opportunity to learn about themselves, know how they measure up against comparable rowers, and develop as athletes and human beings. The people interviewed in this study recognized how important it is for young rowers to feel they are treated equally and with respect, and how U19 lightweight rowing provides them with a sense of belonging in unique ways. Equality is not something that inherently rejects categorization, but rather seeks to redress unjust hierarchies where persistent, extreme and unnecessary risks and harms may exist (MacKinnon, 2016). U19 lightweight rowing provides young, smaller stunted rowers opportunities to develop skills, engage in meaningful competition, and find a sense of purpose in a challenging and rewarding sport. A ban on this category would deny such opportunities to realize distinct moral values that arise in this specific context.

Categories therefore may have significant value in the context of sport. Banning them requires an incredible amount of consideration and thought regarding their practical and ethical implications. The International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) move to possibly eliminate the lightweight category at the Olympics would have a profound impact on lightweight rowing globally. While a category itself may or may not be inherently valuable, it depends on how closely one’s identity is bound to the values in a category, as sport categories bear substantial moral significance to its participants and other stakeholders. A loss of a category in sport means more than just a redistribution and potential disenfranchisement of athletes, it also entails the potential loss of distinct identities, diversity and equality for athletes impacted by these decisions. Thus, eliminating sport categories warrants serious ethical consideration.
This section admittedly defined the moral value of categories in sport loosely. I do not mean to imply that introducing a sport category is always a morally sanctioned thing to do because categories may or may not possess inherent value. This is evident in trans and para athlete inclusion issues (Bianchi, 2019; de Léséleuc, Issanchou, 2016; Hargie et al. 2016). However, an established, long-standing category like U19 lightweight rowing does more than just demarcate like rowers because it is founded on and promotes other moral goods like equality, autonomy, fairness and opportunities. What I mean is that categories impart significant moral importance to individuals and the community in which they belong. Significant moral importance is conferred when people find diverse representative spaces in which they can identify and appropriates moral goods. Such conditions must in part be a prerequisite for the introduction of a new category in sport if it is to be ethically viable. There may indeed by scenarios where a category in sport has no justification and banning it has no serious repercussions or unjust motives as it may ultimately promote a greater good. This has been argued by Bianchi (2019) in the case of gender categories given the issues surrounding trans inclusion in sport. In the case of U19 lightweight rowing, however, this is certainly not the case and its possible elimination would be unethical.

This study searched for answers about how coaches perceived the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada, the main ethical issues if such a ban occurred, and the ethical implications of sport categorization in general. In the results chapter, the perceptions of lightweight rowing coaches and administrators regarding these questions were presented, and this chapter several conclusions were drawn based on these findings. The main conclusions are: 1) the elimination of U19 lightweight rowing would be ethically unjustifiable, 2) potential and real risks and harms in the category should be mitigated through better education, safe practices
and greater oversight, 3) if the ban were imposed it would deny opportunities for many young, smaller statured rowers to experience rowing; diminish diversity in rowing; and disenfranchise lightweight rowers from acquiring unique identities, developing meaningful relationships and appropriating relevant values, and 4) categorization in sport generally is founded on a moral order comprised of values like equality, fairness, autonomy and respect for the integrity of athletes.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, several suggestions may be made for future research and policy changes for the governing bodies of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. As indicated above a revised and improved education system for rowers, coaches, parents and administrators is needed. A nation-wide study is needed to determine the structure, content and delivery of rowing training and education to identify existing problems. Surveys are needed to receive input from all stakeholders regarding topics, safe practices, assessments, qualifications, implementation and regulating educational programs. In my experience, the lack of education in managing my weight was a significant challenge I had to overcome. Information existed on proper weight management techniques, but these were not being shared. Interviewees in this study described similar educational issues regarding nutrition and dieting in rowing. Further research needs to be conducted on specific educational themes related to U19 lightweight rowing to reduce risks and harms, ensure healthy practices and assume greater responsibility for welfare of rowers.

Another suggestion for further research is to interview athletes and parents to learn about their perceptions of the risks and harms in U19 lightweight rowing. Perhaps such information would provide greater understanding of the lived experiences of young, smaller statured rowers,
the types of practices they deem harmful and those they tolerate, and the degree of autonomy rowers possess. A deeper comprehension of identity formation and how relationships with peers, opponents, coaches and officials develop could be uncovered. By speaking to parents, research may reveal the various degrees of involvement they have with their children who take up rowing, what they know about the risks and harms in U19 lightweight rowing, and whether they view rowing in moral terms or as just an extracurricular diversion. Although athletes and parents do not participate in setting policies and regulations, perhaps research would find they would like to serve on decision making committees in rowing’s organizing bodies.

A third recommendation for future research is a longitudinal study of the long-term effects diet and making weight have on the mental health of U19 lightweight rowers. A significant limitation of this study was the inability to investigate extensively the mental health status of U19 lightweight rowers. Such research would disclose knowledge about nutrition, dieting practices and psychological health in this specific rowing cohort. It would also likely discover ethical implications regarding the association of these factors. Findings in this area could also make important contributions to rowing education, the identification of safe practices and improving the overall welfare of U19 lightweight rowers.

A delimitation of this study was the fact that rowing coaches and administrators who were interviewed were from one region, south-central Ontario. This is an important segment of the rowing community in Canada, but it represents a relatively small geographic area. Further research could investigate other areas in Canada to learn if there are any regional differences about the possible elimination of U19 lightweight rowing. Perhaps there are significant differences in local imaginaries due to environmental and economic conditions, resources, volunteers, equipment, clubs, qualified coaches and competitive regattas. A national study of
coaches and administrators regarding the topic of this study might also discover there is more or less agreement about a potential ban and assist with making a final decision one way or the other.

**Reflections**

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology utilized in this study requires reflexivity and making explicit the researcher’s interpretation of the data (Glesne, 2016). Throughout this thesis I shared my personal thoughts on the topic when necessary to help clarify the data and better understand it. I learned to appreciate and accept the insightful thoughts of the interviewees and I believe they welcomed my rowing experiences that I shared with them. I found that articulating accurately the meaning of what others say in writing is extremely difficult at times. I inserted my thoughts and feelings sparingly and mostly to clarify and expand the points the respondents made if they were unclear. It was helpful to keep a personal journal during the interview phase of the study to jot down important observations and note my assessment of them.

By studying a topic I was immersed in for many formative years provided me an opportunity to “open up,” reflect on my inner self as a lightweight rower, and learn things about myself I had not realized before. I was also concerned about my relationship with the lightweight rowing community because of the critical nature of my research. Asking rowing coaches and administrators, those in authority who wield power and are responsible for the institution of rowing, questions about risks, harms, ethics, unsafe practices, unreasonable expectations, education, training and athlete vulnerability, may have been threatening and exposed them to risks. Friends who were aware of my research reminded me that my findings might undermine the reputation of lightweight rowing and rowing’s leaders if I found it and them to be unethical. These factors led to my experiencing some anxiety and conflict as I interpreted the data, revealed
several emergent themes and made critical decisions in presenting the findings and conclusions accurately and honestly.

The purpose of this reflexive section is to inform the reader of the challenges I faced and the fallibility of my character and ability to write a credible and valid thesis. I have learned that transparency in research is essential, there are no shortcuts and seeking truth means little if not supported by evidence and sustained, coherent arguments. Like most young, smaller statured rowers, my career as a U19 lightweight rower was not a seamless, uncontroversial experience, but it had its ups and downs, thrills and low points. My entry into lightweight rowing also came at a time, during high school, when I and most others were experiencing dramatic physical, social and emotional changes, and this compounded the challenges in rowing.

A major motivation for undertaking this study was and is to make rowing better for everyone who tries it. I wanted to probe and understand the ethics and moral order specifically in U19 lightweight rowing because I know how much I sacrificed and the time and energy I invested in the sport I came to love, and sometimes hate. I assumed a lightweight rowing identity, forged lifelong relationships with fellow rowers and coaches, plumbed the depths of the sport, endured its pains and hardships, and relished its rewards. Like all worthwhile pursuits, they come with a price, some tolerable and others excessive. As much as I experienced and knew the world of lightweight rowing, I entered this study with eyes wide open and few preconceived expectations. I was not surprised contrasting views and reasons were given by study participants on whether the U19 lightweight rowing category ought to be abolished. However, I was struck by the fact different moral positions on this question were advanced to improve rowing overall. In other words, just as I undertook this research to better the moral climate in rowing in a modest way, interviewees wanted to likewise improve rowing. Throughout the course of my research I
tried to maintain a balance between remaining somewhat objective and sharing my thoughts and biases to interpret the data and answer the questions I posed at the outset of this thesis. I hope I succeeded in fulfilling my motivation to understand and advance U19 lightweight rowing.

To conclude, I challenge readers to reflect on their own athletic careers in terms of their identity, relationships and experiences in relation to categorizations in sport. Every sport is categorized in some ways and in serious competitive sport the significance of categories is more pronounced. How has sport involvement influenced who you are and the values you uphold? Were you given every opportunity to excel in sport or did rules and regulations deny or hamper your chances to participate and succeed? What primary values do you associate with sport and have you personally experienced any breaches or violations of them in yourself or others? Answers to these and many more important questions inform us not only about the moral order in sport, but also the moral order in society. The relevance of this study may be summed up by a famous thought by Kierkegaard stated earlier that life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards (Moran & Embree, 2004).
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# RCA Rules of Racing Review Consultation Process

## Schedule A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule#</th>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Definition of Competitor</td>
<td>Inclusion of transgender athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Proof of Identity</td>
<td>Clarify ID requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Coxswain Weights</td>
<td>We need input on the options provided in the recommendation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>LWT Categories</td>
<td>Clarify that only those 19 or older can compete as LWT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10.1</td>
<td>Weigh-in</td>
<td>Weight-in is required for all regattas having LWT events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Para Competitors</td>
<td>Recognize Para category and classification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Boat Class</td>
<td>New table to show boat classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Boat Weighing</td>
<td>New rule to permit boat weighing at NRC or HP regattas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Quick Release Foot Stretcher</td>
<td>Rule updated and revised. 7 cm clearance is retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.1</td>
<td>Para Equipment</td>
<td>Updated to reflect current FISA requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Regatta Chair</td>
<td>Requirement to include CU in planning of regatta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Rule simplified to remove restrictions on advertising on equipment and clothing, except for tobacco and alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Rower's Clothing</td>
<td>Clarified to permit non-uniform hats and uniform extensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Tobacco and Alcohol</td>
<td>These products may not be advertised or used at a regatta, in the case of alcohol an exception may be requested as part of the sanction process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Entries</td>
<td>RCA online system is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6 to 7.8</td>
<td>Crew Changes</td>
<td>Crew change rules updated and clarified. A new rule is drafted to allow for non-medical extraordinary substitutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>CU is given final say on on-water safety issues at a regatta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Safety Advisor</td>
<td>Role of Safety Advisor is clarified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Damage in Start Zone</td>
<td>100m broken equipment rule is deleted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>Interference</td>
<td>Rule clarified to align for FISA rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.12 – 10.13</td>
<td>Finish of Race</td>
<td>Rule clarified to make it clear that the red flag is always raised if there is an objection and to clarify the process for dealing with an objection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Deposit amount raised to $300 for Protest and to $1000 for an appeal to RCA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>10.17 Penalties</td>
<td>Exclusion replaced by “Red Card”.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.18.6 Zonal Umpiring</td>
<td>Permitted for RCA HP regattas.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appendix 4 Starter Script</td>
<td>Revised and updated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4A Aligner Script</td>
<td>New</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5 Masters Handicap Options</td>
<td>Provide Henley and the Garret tables as options for regatta organizers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7 Fairness Committee</td>
<td>Clarify that the CU makes the final decisions on fairness issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8 Time Trial Rules</td>
<td>New</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9 How to Conduct a Draw</td>
<td>New</td>
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</table>
Appendix B

NOTICE

CANADIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS ROWING ASSOCIATION

November 21, 2017

Re: Rowing Canada Aviron Rules of Racing Review - 2017

It has come to our attention that the Rowing Canada Aviron, (hereinafter also referred to as “RCA”), Rules of Racing Working Group has completed its four year review of the RCA Rules of Racing. This group has proposed certain amendments to these rules to be considered for approval by the members of RCA at the next Semi-Annual Meeting of the Members of RCA to be held in January 2018. These amended rules of racing were circulated to the Members and others in October 2017 for their input and comments. The Canadian Secondary Schools Rowing Association, (hereinafter also referred to as “CSSRA”), has sent its concerns to RCA regarding certain of the proposed rule changes. However, because one proposed rule amendment will seriously alter the nature and character of Canadian high school rowing, which may, in turn, have disastrous consequences for all levels of Canadian rowing, we have decided to send this Notice to all of our stakeholders in Canada so that you can be fully informed and will take a strong position against this proposed rule change.

Proposed Rule 2.10 Lightweight Competitors

This working group has proposed that “any rower who has reached the age of 19 in the current calendar year shall be eligible to row as a light weight ...”. No lightweight rowing in Canada for persons under the age of 19 years. The rational behind this proposed rule change is “to minimize risks of minors engaging in high risk weight loss” and because “in September 2017 the FISA Extraordinary Congress arrived at a similar conclusion”. This proposed rule change would preclude high school students in Canada for rowing for their school or their rowing club in lightweight events while they were under the age of 19 years.

We are completely against the elimination of lightweight categories for athletes under 19 years of age in Canada. The lightweight categories have always been an entry point for athletes to our sport, especially at the high school level, and have encouraged persons of smaller weight and height, both men and women, to enter and continue with rowing. This is one of very few sports open to high school students that provide a fair and equitable playing field for all those competitors of small stature. Many high school students are natural lightweights and do not engage in high risk weight loss. CSSRA has gathered statistics to support this conclusion for high school competitors. We suggest that if a high school athlete decides to lose weight, this should be a discussion and a decision that should be taken between the student and his or her parent, based upon professional medical advice.
For your information, 16 of the 36 rowing events at the CSSRA Championships are for lightweight athletes and compose a substantial segment of this Championship regatta. Other high school regattas in Canada also include racing for lightweight athletes. An elimination of lightweight rowing at the high school level would seriously reduce the numbers and opportunity for high school students to participate in rowing in Canada. This rule change will reduce the numbers of participants in rowing in Canada at both the club and university levels having many unforeseen negative repercussions.

Many of the administrators of clubs started as teenage lightweight oars people and continue to have a positive impact upon our sport today. They may never have tried rowing or stayed with the sport if they did not have weight specific events to compete in.

Further, we are advised that this proposed rule change is being considered because of a statement from FISA, the international rowing governing body. RCA is a Canadian rowing organization and is charged with promoting and developing rowing in Canada. The RCA rules of racing should be made for rowing in Canada, which has always included a high school light weight component, and must contribute to the promotion and development of Canadian rowing programs only.

In addition, it has also been brought to our attention that exceptions to certain rules may not be granted during the sanctioning process, which further makes adoption of the change to rule 2.10 unacceptable.

Notwithstanding the above specific arguments made in support of the continuation of lightweight high school rowing, we submit that this proposed rule change goes to the very nature and makeup of Canadian rowing at the Rowing Club level, the University level and the high school level. Such a change will alter the composition of rowing in Canada and will have many wide unforeseen results including funding of our sport at the government level. Many of the small rowing clubs and high schools in Canada have mostly lightweight rowing. These Rowing Clubs recruit their summer members from their high school programs. These high school athletes will not be available to build Rowing Club programs and most likely will either never enter the sport or will leave the sport at this time never to return.

Finally, we found it to strange that this proposed amendment, which may have the affect of changing Canadian rowing at every level, was included as part of a 184 page document. If it is the intention of RCA to continue to propose this substantial change to Canadian rowing, then it must be done in a manner that permits all members of RCA to have the necessary time to consider this substantial change, to review all evidence that may be provided in support of this proposal, to research and provide additional evidence, and to vote on this proposal as a stand alone matter. It is far too important an issue for the continued success of Canadian rowing to be presented in this manner.

We ask that your organization join CSSRA in rejecting this proposed change to the Canadian rules of racing and make your decision known to your Provincial Rowing Association and to RCA.
We also suggest that you read the entire rules of racing working paper document outlining all of the proposed amendments to the rules of racing and be prepared to discuss your concerns.

If you have any questions or comments concerning our concerns, we would be pleased to speak with you. Please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

**Canadian Secondary Schools Rowing Association**

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President  

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Appendix C

**Typical Rowing Categories in Canada**

**Rowing Boat Categories**
- Sculling (1x, 2x, 4x, 4x+)
- Sweeping (2-, 4-, 4+, 8+)

**Legend**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>Sweep with Coxswain</td>
<td>x Sculling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sweep without Coxswain</td>
<td>U Under the age of…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>All ages eligible</td>
<td>Masters Exclusive category only if 21 or older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (U21, U23, Open, Masters)</td>
<td>- Flyweight (Men &lt; 64kg, Women &lt; 52kg)</td>
<td>- Lightweight (Men &lt; 72.5kg, Women &lt; 59kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior (U17-U19)</td>
<td>- Lightweight (Men &lt; 66kg, Women &lt; 59kg)</td>
<td>- Midweight (Men &lt; 72kg, Women &lt; 63kg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Training of Athletic Abilities and Participants’ Age: General Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Abilities</th>
<th>Developmental Age (in years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobic Power (intense, short efforts of 4-8 min, or systematic interval training)</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobic Stamina (endurance)</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed-Endurance</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength-Endurance</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Strength</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed-Strength (Power)</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance (efforts of 8 seconds or less)</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed (fast cadence of movement, short efforts)</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination / Agility / Balance</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Techniques</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Advanced Techniques</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ☼ should be avoided
- ☼ optimal window of development
- ☐ not a priority
- □ progressive introduction

as needed by the sport
Appendix E

Context: The following are solely my personal views as a rowing parent.

Several years ago as a parent of a CSSRA, Canamex, etc lightweight junior women's medalist, I had the experience of dealing with a daughter who was behaving unwisely in response to coach and crew pressure and a coach that was blinded by competitive zeal.

As a result of that experience, my daughter and I invested some effort in an attempt to further understand the real risks and appropriate opportunities for responsible approaches to lightweight sport.

That investigation yielded a relationship with the physician leadership of the Eating Disorders Clinic at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and a first draft of an approach that might become a working guide for lightweight coaches. The draft has no official status. It is not an Ottawa Rowing Club policy. It's an assembly of ideas generated by a concerned parent and an impacted athlete at the time.

You'll see from the draft that it attempts to remove any race-day pressures from the lightweight discussion. It incorporates a trended monitoring process that emphasizes athlete well-being.

I share these thoughts with these concerns.....

1. Our daughter was at risk. Our children are not sufficiently armed to deal with the competitive, social and coaching pressures to "make weight". As a result, in my mind the "make weight" discussion cannot be managed, it must be removed entirely from the crew selection and race day qualification discussion. If we cannot effectively do that, then elimination of lightweight categories for those who are not yet adults is the only responsible alternative.

2. Coach values and behaviours cannot be assumed. My daughter's experience was indefensible. Oversight and evidence-based checks and balances are necessary.

3. The outside expertise to which we had access is likely not available in every
community, so in the event that we and RowOntario can find common ground in support of continued lightweight rowing categories for youth, the safeguards put in place will have to be workable in all communities.

4 The current state requires repair.

Rowing and the people involved in the sport have been a positive influence for my children, so I will continue to recommend the sport to others. Parent advocacy, wellness-focussed training diversity (yoga, Weight training, etc) and individualized nutrition education were an important part of our journey.

A RowOntario initiative to support coaches through training and certification may provide an ideal opportunity to address a legitimate concern, improve the safety of our sport and support continued engagement of junior rowers of all sizes and potentials. I think the discussion is worthwhile.

Rower Parent
Appendix F

Letter of Invitation

August 6, 2019

Title of Study:
The Ethics of Categorization in Sport: An Analysis of the Possible Elimination of Under 19 Lightweight Rowing in Canada

Principal Investigator:
Danny Rosenberg, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

Student Principal Investigator:
Jacob Giesbrecht, Faculty of Applied Health Studies, Brock University

I, Danny Rosenberg, associate professor from the Department of Kinesiology at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled “The Ethics of Categorization in Sport: An Analysis of the Possible Elimination of Under 19 Lightweight Rowing in Canada.”

The purpose of this research project is to learn about your perceptions of under 19 (U19) lightweight rowing in Canada, the possibility of a ban of U19 lightweight rowing in Canada, and any moral issues regarding this potential ban. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to partake in an interview about this research topic as well as help edit the interview transcript and notes with the researcher.

The expected duration of the interview is 45-60 minutes and approximately 30 minutes for a follow up meeting to edit the transcript and interview notes should you be available to attend this second meeting. The transcript and interview notes can also be sent to you via email for you to make any revisions at your convenience.

This research should benefit the greater rowing community by furthering a more evidence-based and ethical approach to future policy decisions regarding U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. Furthermore, by contributing to the small body of literature on categorization in sport you may also contribute to a greater understanding of the ethics of categorization that apply to all sports. This knowledge can promote safer and morally aligned policies for young athletes.

This is a single site project and does not declare any funding from external organizations.
This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board file #19-031.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550, x 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

____________________________________
Principal Investigator (PI): Danny Rosenberg
Department of Kinesiology
Brock University
905 688 5550 x4289; drosenberg@brocku.ca

Student Investigator (SPI): Jacob Giesbrecht
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences
Brock University
jg18iw@brocku.ca
Appendix G

INFORMED CONSENT

Date: January 17, 2020

Project Title: The Ethics of Categorization in Sport: An Analysis of the Possible Elimination of Under 19 Lightweight Rowing in Canada

Principal Investigator (PI): Danny Rosenberg  
Department of Kinesiology  
Brock University  
905 688 5550 x4289; drosenberg@brocku.ca

Student Investigator (SPI): Jacob Giesbrecht  
Faculty of Applied Health Studies  
Brock University  
jg18iw@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to learn about your perceptions of under 19 (U19) lightweight rowing in Canada, the possibility of a ban on U19 lightweight rowing in Canada and any moral issues regarding this potential ban. Requirements to participate include either being an executive member of the Canadian Secondary School Rowing Association or Rowing Canada Aviron with at least five years of experience on a rowing executive board, or a head coach of a Canadian high school rowing program for at least five years.

WHAT’S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to meet with me, Jacob Giesbrecht, the student investigator of this study, at a location most convenient and comfortable for you to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The meeting will be face-to-face and require detailed note taking and audio recording of the interview by me. Consent for participation and use of the recording methods of the interview will be requested for the interview to proceed. You will be asked some exploratory questions about your involvement in rowing and connections to and perceptions of U19 lightweight rowing. Participation in the interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time.

Within two weeks of the interview, I will contact you by e-mail to arrange a second meeting where you will have an opportunity to revise the transcript of our conversation and my notes of the interview. This process is to ensure the accuracy of your statements and my interpretation of your opinions. If you are unavailable to attend this second meeting, I can e-mail you a copy of the transcript and my notes to check and edit any details at your convenience. If you do not wish
to participate in this editing process, the original transcript and my notes will be used for data analysis. Further details of this process are stated below in reference to confidentiality.

A sample of a question you will be asked in the interview process is as follows:

Given your experiences with U19 lightweight rowing, why might a ban on such a category be ethical or unethical?

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

A possible benefit of participation in this research includes acquiring a more evidence-based and ethical approach to future policy decisions regarding U19 lightweight rowing in Canada. Furthermore, by contributing to the small body of literature on categorization in sport you may contribute to a greater understanding of categorization ethics that apply to all sports. This knowledge can promote safer and morally aligned policies for young athletes. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. Efforts to maintain confidentiality (as outlined in the next section) will be implemented.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis, report or publication resulting from this study. A master list will be created to link participant identifiers with pseudonyms so your name and other identification data will remain confidential in transcripts, in the final thesis and any publications or presentations. Because of the possibility people may identify you based on location, title and affiliation, potential revealing information along these lines will be referred to in general, generic terms with no direct association. Thus, pseudonyms and de-identifiable data will be used in this research.

As the student investigator I will be implementing member checking in this study. Within two weeks after the interview has been completed, I would like to have a second meeting with you to review and edit your transcript and my research notes. This process will be undertaken to achieve accuracy and ensure no breach of confidentiality exists. If you are unavailable to attend this second meeting, I will send you a copy of the transcript and my notes via e-mail to give you an opportunity to make any necessary revisions. You will then have two weeks from the date you receive the transcript to send it back to me via e-mail. If your revised transcript is not returned within three weeks’ time, I will assume the transcript and notes reflect your perceptions and opinions accurately. In this way, participation in member checking is optional.

Data collected during this study will be securely stored in an encrypted file on an external hard drive and USB drive and placed in a locked cabinet. Hand written interview notes will be transcribed as an electronic encrypted file and securely stored in the same way in separate files.
Audio recordings will be saved as an encrypted electronic file stored on a separate USB drive and placed in a locked cabinet. Data will be kept for twelve (12) months after which time all hard copy and electronic data will be destroyed or deleted.

Access to this data will be restricted to student principle investigator (Jacob Giesbrecht) and the principal investigator (Danny Rosenberg).

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Should you choose to withdraw from this study, any data and information collected from you pertaining to this study will be shredded or deleted from all records.

**PUBLICATION OF RESULTS**

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Delivery of a short (no more than one page) summary of any publication or presentation will be e-mailed to participants detailing the outcomes of the study. Should participants request a copy of the final thesis to learn the full results of the study, it will be made available to them electronically and sent via e-mail. Feedback of the research will be available roughly twelve months after completing your interview.

**CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE**

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Jacob Giesbrecht or Danny Rosenberg using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board (File #19-031). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

**CONSENT FORM**

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in this Consent Form. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.
Name: _______________________________________________________________

Signature: _____________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________________________
Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 9/17/2019

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: ROSENBERG, Dany - Kinesiology

FILE: 19-031 - ROSENBERG

TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project

STUDENT: Jacob Giesbrecht

SUPERVISOR: 

TITLE: The Ethics of Categorization in Sport: An Analysis of the Possible Elimination of Under 19 Lightweight Rowing In Canada

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 9/1/2020

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 9/17/2019 to 9/1/2020.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 9/1/2020. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Office of Research Ethics web page at http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research. Approved:

Note:

Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.
Appendix I

Interview Guide

“First, I’d like to thank you for meeting me today and taking time out of your busy schedule to assist me with my research. Before we get started, I’d like to give you a brief summary of the study I’m conducting. At this point you should have read, understood, and signed the informed consent form, and if there are any clarifications or concerns you need addressed feel free to bring them up anytime before we begin. You can expect this interview to last approximately 45-60 minutes. After we conclude the interview and I transcribe our conversation I will send you a copy of the transcript for you to look over as well as set up another meeting to go over the transcript and my notes to ensure all of my interpretations and understanding of the conversation are accurate and clear. You will have the opportunity to edit this secondary process on your own with my notes e-mailed to you if you wish, or not at all. In this case your original or electronically edited data will be used.”

“The main purpose of this study is to learn about your perception of under 19 (U19) lightweight rowing in Canada and the possibility of a ban on this category. In particular, I am looking to understand the moral grounds that inform your perspectives about this category. This isn’t to say however, that to participate in this study, you need to have an in depth understanding of ethics or philosophy, but rather just a general sense of why you think things are right or wrong, good or bad. Keep in mind during this interview that the purpose of my research is to understand your perspective of your own experiences and no one else’s, so please try to avoid generalizations of what has happened to others unless it informs your own understanding. Do not worry about saying the right things or telling me what I’d like to hear, as I am thoroughly interested in examining your perception of your own experiences. Also, please be aware that if at any time you feel uncomfortable about a question asked, simply say pass and we will move on to something else.”

1. Please tell me about your involvement with U19 lightweight rowing. Were you or someone close to you a U19 lightweight?
   a. What was that experience like?
   b. What does this category mean to you?
2. In your experience, what does this category mean for the sport of rowing?
   a. What place does it have in the sport?
   b. What is its function?
3. What kind of effect does this category have on coaches/administrators? (i.e. you!)
4. What do you think of a ban on U19 lightweight rowing in Canada?
   a. Why do you think/feel this way?
   b. What could have influenced your beliefs? (Possible examples?)
5. Do you think there are any good/bad aspects of the issue of lightweight rowing? (Apply the opposite of whatever the predominant perspective seems to be)
6. Has your perspective changed at all at any point during your involvement in rowing?