

An Exploratory Study of the Design of Major Junior Hockey Regional Leagues, from the
Perspective of Member Team Employees

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Dedication

*To my family and friends,
for continually supporting me
and for always encouraging me to
seize every opportunity.*

*“There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune”
Julius Caesar (4.3.218-219)*

Abstract

Major Junior Hockey (MJH) is a unique part of the Canadian hockey system. Beginning in the 1960s, regional leagues began to form across Canada, culminating with the creation of the Canadian Hockey League (CHL) in 1974. The CHL is currently the governing body of MJH in Canada which is the most elite level of junior hockey in Canada. MJH regional leagues have been regarded as the best possible route to the National Hockey League (NHL) for junior-aged male hockey players, despite alternative paths existing in the United States and Europe.

While much of the hockey literature in the past decade includes a broad scope of scholarly research, Canadian MJH remains a sub-context of that conversation. To date, the operations of MJH regional leagues have yet to be explored. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study is to examine how Canadian MJH regional league offices are currently designed. Drawing upon organizational design literature both in and out of sport contexts, the research seeks to understand the design of the MJH regional leagues through specific principles.

To explore this study, nine semi-structured interviews with Canadian MJH regional league member team employees were conducted. The findings indicated there exists a hybrid of two interconnected focuses within the MJH regional leagues' organizational design: player development and revenue generation. The member team employee perceptions of the MJH regional leagues' design are further discussed relating to previous organizational design literature, and historical developments of Canadian MJH. Several contributions to research and practice, and opportunities for future research are outlined to continue exploring the MJH system in Canada.

Keywords: Major Junior Hockey, Organizational Design, Hybrid Design, Revenue Generation, Player Development

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List of Abbreviations

Major Junior Hockey	MJH
Canadian Hockey League	CHL
Western Hockey League	WHL
Ontario Hockey League	OHL
Quebec Major Junior Hockey League	QMJHL
National Sport Organizations	NSO
Canadian Amateur Hockey Association	CAHA
Hockey Canada	HC
National Hockey League	NHL
Canadian Hockey Association	CHA
International Ice Hockey Federation	IIHF
American Hockey Association	AHA
Professional-Amateur Agreement	Pro-Am Agreement
Canadian Major Junior Hockey League	CMJHL
Western Canadian Hockey League	WCHL
Quebec Ice Hockey Federation	QIHF
Ontario Major Junior Hockey League	OMJHL
Ontario Hockey Association	OHA
American Hockey League	AHL
National Collegiate Athletic Association	NCAA
Canadian Junior Hockey League	CJHL
United States Hockey League	USHL

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Chapter I: Introduction

Major junior hockey (MJH) is the highest level of junior hockey in North America (Canadian Hockey League, n.d.¹; Hockey Canada, n.d.a, p. 12). In Canada, the governing body for MJH is the Canadian Hockey League (CHL). It is the world's largest developmental hockey league, intended to prepare male players between the ages of 16 and 20 for a career in professional hockey, including in the National Hockey League (NHL) (Canadian Hockey League, n.d.; Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). A total of 1,428 hockey players were registered to play in the CHL during the 2019-20 season (Hockey Canada, 2020).

The CHL is made up of three regionally divided leagues: the Western Hockey League (WHL), the Ontario Hockey League (OHL), and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) (Canadian Hockey League, n.d.). Understanding the organizational design of each regional league – including the values, structure, and system that are in place – will provide greater insight into the unique level of Canadian hockey that is MJH, which in turn can help improve its sustainability and longevity within this country's hockey system in the face of growing competition from development leagues in the United States and Europe.

¹ Note: Despite efforts to determine when articles or webpages were published, exact dates are not always available. In these cases, "n.d." has been used to follow proper APA 7th ed. citation guidelines

1.1 Challenges Facing Major Junior Hockey in Canada

The CHL develops many of the elite athletes that go on to star in the NHL, with more of its players drafted into the NHL each year than any other development league (Steadman, 2015). Nearly half of all the players who have ever been drafted into the NHL came from the CHL. However, what was once a monopoly for the CHL has loosened in recent years, with more and more players emerging from other development leagues around the world.

Vincent and Eastman (2009) found that the development league an athlete plays in before making the NHL does not significantly affect his NHL career, although pay could be. For example, while Connor McDavid played in the CHL, Auston Matthews did not – but both are considered superstars in the NHL. So even though the CHL is still the main supplier of talent to the NHL, the league faces two significant challenges to attract elite junior-aged athletes pursuing a career in the NHL: alternative development leagues for North American players looking to maintain their eligibility to play in the U.S.-based National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the declining number of CHL players getting drafted into the NHL.

1.1.1. The NCAA Development Path

Just as the CHL is the primary development path for elite Canadian hockey players, the NCAA is the primary development path for elite American hockey players (Madsen, Smith, Edwards, Gentile, & Wayne, 2020). While the CHL remains the premier path to get to the NHL (Chard, 2013), the number of NCAA athletes being drafted to the NHL has risen in recent years – and more and more Canadians are beginning to choose

the NCAA as a viable option in their hockey development pathway (College Hockey Inc, n.d.).

Yet because athletes are forced to decide how they would like to develop their hockey skills at a young age, their development path options can become limited quite quickly (Madsen et al., 2020). A player who opts to play in the NCAA is still eligible to play in the CHL should he change his mind, but CHL players who have signed a standard player agreement are no longer able to play in the NCAA (College Hockey Inc, n.d.; Gruneau & Whitson, 2012) because the NCAA deems the CHL to be a professional hockey league (Madsen et al., 2020).

In North America, there are two elite hockey levels in which players can maintain their NCAA eligibility: Canadian Junior A (Jr. A) and the United States Hockey League (USHL). The governing body for Jr. A hockey is the Canadian Junior Hockey League (CJHL), which is made up of 10 regionally divided leagues across the country. It seeks to develop hockey players for professional, collegiate, and MJH opportunities in North America (CJHL, n.d.). The USHL is the top tier of junior hockey in the United States, comprising 14 teams across the country (Eliteprospects, n.d.). Like the CJHL, the USHL provides an opportunity for male hockey players to prepare for either collegiate or professional hockey (Stuart & Smith, 1995, p. 458). The USHL claims to be the “world’s foremost producer of junior hockey talent” with more than 800 of its alumni playing in the 2019-20 NCAA season (USHL, n.d.).

The main benefit of elite junior-aged North American hockey players opting to play in Canadian Jr. A or the USHL is access to the NCAA’s post-secondary athletics system, which allows them to pursue academic studies while continuing their athletic

development (NCAA, n.d.). Athletes who sign commitment agreements with the NCAA typically make the transition to college hockey when they are 18 years old (Edwards & Washington, 2012). In comparison, players are drafted by CHL teams between 14-16 years of age (depending on the regional league) and begin their playing career as early as 16 years (Edwards, 2012). That means Canadian athletes who choose the NCAA route will typically play two or three additional years of minor hockey, followed by a year or two of Jr. A before joining a college hockey team in the United States (Edwards, 2012). The CHL and NCAA are both viable development paths for elite junior-aged athletes in North America and the decision between the two routes is based on personal preference (Chard, 2013). The NCAA will remain a challenge to the CHL recruitment because of the difference of programs offered through either option.

1.1.2. The Declining Numbers of CHL Players Drafted Into the NHL

The second competitive challenge facing the CHL is the steady decline of its athletes getting drafted into the NHL. In 2010, the CHL saw 107 players selected in the NHL Draft, accounting for 51% of all players picked (Canadian Hockey League, 2010). A year later, six fewer players were selected by NHL teams, for a total of 101 – representing 48% of all players selected (Canadian Hockey League, 2011). As shown in Table 1, that trend has continued throughout the past decade, falling to a low of 71 – representing 32% players drafted in 2019 (Canadian Hockey League, 2019a; HockeyDB, n.d.a).

While the number of CHL players drafted into the NHL each year has dropped, the number of NCAA athletes drafted into the NHL over the past decade has remained largely the same – and the number of players drafted from European leagues has grown.

Table 1: Players Drafted Into the NHL by League

NHL Draft Year	Players Selected from CHL	Players Selected from NCAA	Players Selected from European Leagues	Players Selected from Other Leagues
2010	107	61	39	3
2011	101	55	47	8
2012	99	66	42	4
2013	101	63	45	2
2014	95	62	51	2
2015	95	56	55	5
2016	96	61	54	0
2017	89	60	59	9
2018	78	67	70	2
2019	71	71	71	4
2020	78	65	72	2

Note: Data was compiled from HockeyDB's NHL Entry Draft database titled "NHL & WHA Draft History. The "Players Selected from Other Leagues" column includes those who play Canadian Jr. A but were not committed to an NCAA school, players who were drafted from American high school programs who were not committed to an NCAA school, and those who played in a league outside of Europe.

The European leagues are based primarily in Sweden, Finland, Czech Republic, Russia, Switzerland, and Slovakia, but some players from Norway, Denmark, and Germany were also drafted (Kahane, Longley & Simmons, 2013). Many European countries have developed their own development programs. Bezuglov, Shvets, Lyubushkina et al. (2020) specifically referenced the Russian junior league that is affiliated with the the Kontinental Hockey League, the Russian Junior Hockey League. Other hockey federations have created national junior development programs, such as those in the Czech Republic (Glos & Stehlik, 2021) and Sweden (Sapurji, 2017).

The European leagues do not pose a significant talent draining threat of North American junior players leaving to play in Europe for two reasons (Whyno, 2015). These reasons being that European leagues limit the number of North American players on each team and any athlete who has signed a CHL player agreement loses eligibility to play in

Europe (Whyno, 2015). Similarly, the CHL also limits the number of elite European players choosing to play in the regional leagues. In the CHL, teams can have a maximum of two European players on their roster (Canadian Hockey League, 2020a). This rule, combined with the recent emergence of European development leagues, means the CHL does not always attract the best European players available (Sapurji, 2018). In countries with a well-developed pathway for professional hockey, such as Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, and Russia, the best players typically remain in their home country. However, in countries with up-and-coming development leagues, like Denmark, Czech Republic, or Slovakia, the CHL remains elite players' best option to pursue a professional career (Sapurji, 2017).

There exists limited literature that explores the probabilities of being drafted into the NHL, but a player's birth date is a factor to be considered. Nolan and Howell (2010) explored a "relative age effect" (RAE) experienced by hockey players, finding that those who were born in the first quarter of their birth year were more likely to have successful NHL careers. This may be because children born in January, February, and March are more likely to begin playing youth hockey earlier than those born later in the year. Since the hockey season starts in the fall, the RAE suggests those born earlier in the year benefit from a combination of physical, cognitive, emotional, and motivational maturity than those born later in the year (Musch & Grondin, 2001). Possibly related to the RAE is the fact that the NHL has imposed an annual deadline that affects players' NHL Draft eligibility. To be eligible for a given year's draft, a player must have turned 18 years old by September 15 of that year. If they have not, they will not be eligible until the following year's draft (National Hockey League, 2013).

When MJH was initiated into the Canadian junior hockey system in 1966 (Drinnan, n.d.), alternatives for high-level junior hockey were not as prevalent. Now there are several different options in North America and around the world for developing elite junior-aged hockey players – and as these alternatives become even stronger, the Canadian MJH system will be put under strain to compete. If the CHL is to continue to compete with other development leagues, such as the USHL, Jr. A, NCAA, and European leagues, long-term strategies must be developed. Creating such strategies will require knowledge of the MJH system at its foundation, with one way to better understand MJH fundamentally being through organizational design.

1.2 Purpose

Understanding the regional leagues' design will provide insight into the unique level of Canadian hockey that is MJH. Consequently, the purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the design of MJH regional leagues in Canada. In order to examine the organizational design of MJH regional leagues, the following research questions were asked:

- 1) What are the organizational values, structure, and system of major junior hockey regional leagues?
- 2) What type of design is reflected in major junior hockey regional leagues?

1.3 Importance of Study

Major junior hockey is the highest level of developmental hockey globally, and it faces competitive challenges that will need to be addressed for the CHL to remain a vital step in an athlete's path to playing professional hockey. In order to better understand how the CHL regional leagues can resolve these competitive challenges, there is a significant

need to explore their design. Understanding the design of the regional leagues can help promote MJH to improve its long term sustainability in the Canadian hockey system.

Currently, there are gaps in the hockey and organizational design literature. Some of the empirical hockey literature concerns itself with the commercialization of hockey (Ammirante, 2009; Kidd, 2013; Moore, 2002), the professionalized leagues (Robidoux, 2001) and strength of professional players (Tyler, Nicholas, Campbell & McHugh, 2001), the culture surrounding sport (Birrell, 1981; Donnelly & Young, 1988) and hockey (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012; MacDonald, 2016), and the violent nature of hockey (Faulkner, 1974; Gee & Leith, 2007; Weinstein, Smith & Wiesenthal, 1995; Young, 2013).

Literature pertaining specifically to MJH is more broad, in that it ranges from contexts specific to the on-ice play of athletes, the culture of MJH, and the impact of MJH in communities. There exists literature across different ways of exploring aspects of MJH, but few have been studied extensively. Literature on culture (Allain, 2008; 2014; Gruneau & Whitson, 2012; MacDonald, 2012) is also present in MJH literature. There exists literature on developing MJH players (Soberlak & Cote, 2003) and understanding how developing motor skills impacts on-ice play (Sherar, Bruner, Monroe-Chandler & Baxter-Jones, 2007). Other MJH studies focus on whether injuries can be predicted based on pre-season functional movement screening (Dossa, Cashman, Howitt, West & Murray, 2014) and investigate the cognitive, social, and emotional development of MJH athletes (Bruner, 2002). Similarly, Dube, Schinke, Hancock and Dubuc (2007) looked at the social support experiences of MJH players living in removed regions of Canada. Other studies have examined attendance, such as Paul and Weinbach's (2011) study on the

impact of high-scoring games, and the relationship between winning and fighting on QMJHL attendance in the 2009-2010 season, and Mason, Duquette and Scherer's (2013) study examining the role of nostalgia on why fans attend MJH games. Mason, Buist, Edwards and Duquette (2007) investigated the arenas MJH teams play in and their impact on their cities. Similar to Mason et al. (2007), Morrison, Misener, and Mock (2020) studied the impact corporate social responsibility and fan identification have on spectator behaviour in MJH.

Theoretically, there exists rich organizational design literature focusing on National Sport Organizations (NSOs) (Amis & Slack, 1996; Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004a; 2004b; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995b; Kikulis, 2000), amateur sport organizations (Kikulis, Slack, Hinings & Zimmerman, 1989). Literature focusing on national hockey federations' design (Fahlen, 2006; Stevens, 2006) and international sport federations (Casini, 2009) also exists, although it is limited. While studies focusing on amateur sport organizations' design exist, there remains much to be discovered about professionalized sport leagues. However, there is organizational design literature on semi-professional baseball franchises (Cousens, 1997). Many of these studies have utilized the same organizational design principles as introduced by Kikulis et al. (1992) and utilized in the amateur sport sector.

Kikulis et al. (1992), among others, focused their research on principles that determine an organization's design. Three principles of organizational design that have been used extensively in the literature are values, structure and system (Kikulis et al., 1992). Within the principles, there are elements to examine further how the principles are understood. The following elements, as developed by Greenwood and Hinings (1988),

were selected to guide this study because they had previously been used in organizational design studies about sport organizations by Kikulis et al (1992) and Cousens (1997) The elements of values are domain, criteria of effectiveness, principles of organizing, and orientation. The elements of structure are specialization, standardization, and centralization. Moreover, the element of system is decision making. These principles and design elements identify what an organization's goals are, how they are accomplished, what an organization's structure is and what roles and responsibilities are achieved, and who makes decisions that will impact the organization's success.

This study helps to address the design literature as a whole and, specifically, sport-focused design research. The lack of literature did raise some questions. "*Why is there so little design literature focused on sport organizations in North America?*", and, "*Why does the sport-focused design literature predominantly focus on national sport organizations/federations?*". Perhaps these questions can be answered by considering the practical implications that a study on MJH or professional hockey organizations could have. Practically, there is an uncertain understanding of MJH, and this is because very little research has been done to explain MJH organizations. So, those who are outside of the MJH regional leagues do not have much knowledge about their operations. This study is an addition to the limited MJH literature because the research provides an alternative way of studying MJH. This study also researches MJH in a new way, connecting it to the existing organizational design literature.

This study has the opportunity to offer a detailed understanding of MJH regional league values, structure and system, in a way that no other study has before. It will help guide those passionate about hockey with strategies for the most common approaches to

understanding the CHL and the MJH system. This study also offers the opportunity to understand organizational design as it pertains to MJH. A more robust understanding of the regional leagues will enhance the existing hockey research and contributions to design literature.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Before the current design of the Canadian MJH regional leagues is described, the history of MJH should be explored. This chapter begins with a summary of MJH's history in Canada. This review includes insight for socio-historical influences on MJH, since it became a part of the broad Canadian junior hockey system. Understanding how MJH has evolved is essential to exploring its design because such research offers explanation about the developments the system has undergone. The subsequent sections of this chapter focus on organizational design and the principles that guided this study.

2.1. History of Major Junior Hockey in Canada

Male hockey players aged 16-20 years can play in either of the five levels within the Canadian junior hockey system: Major Junior, Junior A, Junior B, Junior C, or Junior D (Hockey Canada, n.d.a). In Canada, MJH is the most elite level of junior hockey (Hockey Canada, n.d.a). The CHL is the governing MJH league in Canada and is comprised of three regional leagues which experienced similar historical origins. The WHL, OHL, and QMJHL are comprised of 60 teams in total (Hockey Canada, n.d.a). Junior hockey has existed in Canada for over a half-century (Kidd & MacFarlane, 1972), but the MJH system's addition to Canadian junior hockey has been more recent.

2.1.1. *Historical Chronology of MJH in Canada*

In 1890, the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) was formed to govern over hockey in Eastern Ontario (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). Initially, the OHA oversaw all senior hockey in Ontario, but in 1893 junior was established as a level of hockey in the province through its organization of amateur hockey to age groups and talent levels such as senior, intermediate and junior (Hardy & Holman, 2018). The OHA was meant to

strictly govern amateur hockey, banning any player who played professionally (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). The OHA was considered the “most powerful hockey body and the model for other amateur associations in Canada” (Hardy & Holman, p. 167).

In 1914, hockey’s governing body in Canada, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA), was formed (Scherer, 2020). The CAHA was responsible for all amateur hockey in Canada, focusing on community-based hockey programs, including junior-aged hockey (Stevens, 2006). The CAHA sets the rules and regulations for all participating hockey teams, including those in all levels of junior hockey, in the association. In theory, a distinction between amateur and professional hockey was made with the creation of the CAHA (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). In 1969, the Canadian government created Hockey Canada (HC), a governing body for Canada’s national men’s hockey program and its corporate relationship with the National Hockey League (NHL) (Stevens, 2006). In 1994, the CAHA and HC merged to bring together each organization’s different focuses to create the Canadian Hockey Association (CHA) (Stevens, 2006). In 1998, the CHA changed its name to Hockey Canada, as it exists today (Stevens, 2006).

As early as the late 1920s, junior and senior hockey teams affiliated with the CAHA established close, but unofficial, relationships with NHL teams, referred to as “farm systems”, creating a sort of player development system, that continued into the 1930s (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). The unofficial relationships put pressure on the CAHA, which was strictly against its teams paying players (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). In 1936, the CAHA and the NHL created an agreement that restricted the recruitment of amateur players in the NHL (Hardy & Holman, 2018). In exchange, no player registered

with a CAHA junior team could be recruited into the NHL without permission from their team (Hardy & Holman, 2018). The partnership allowed NHL teams to release a list of players they intended to recruit the August before a season was to start, and the player would need to be signed to a contract by the following November (Hardy & Holman, 2018). This partnership gave the NHL teams significant control in developing future players (Wong, 2005).

In June 1946, a special by-law was formed between the NHL and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), the CAHA and the American Hockey Association (AHA) in North America, called the Professional-Amateur Agreement (Pro-Am Agreement) (Ross, 2015). Through the Pro-Am Agreement, the NHL teams could sponsor amateur teams who, in turn, developed junior-aged (16-20 years old) amateur hockey players on behalf of the NHL teams (Ross, 2008). NHL teams could sponsor no more than two junior-aged amateur hockey teams across North America, and the NHL team assumed ownership for all players' rights on its sponsored teams (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). In return, the NHL team would cover most of, if not all, expenses of its amateur teams (Ross, 2015). In addition to the NHL team sponsoring two junior hockey teams, the junior teams could use the money from the NHL team to sponsor their own teams (Hardy & Holman, 2018). Hardy and Holman (2018) note that it was not uncommon for an NHL sponsored Junior A team to then sponsor its own Junior B team, which allowed the Junior B team to sponsor midget teams. The extensive system allowed an NHL team to extend its player development into the amateur hockey circuits (Hardy & Holman, 2018).

Through the sponsorship of amateur junior teams, the NHL team would sign the players of the sponsored amateur teams to contracts that legally bound the player to

the them, so long as the player represented the team sponsored by the NHL team (Hardy & Holman, 2018). NHL teams had the option of signing the junior aged amateur players to an “A” form, “B” form, or “C” form contract. The “A” form “try out” agreement allowed an NHL team to pay the expenses of a junior amateur player to attend training camp, without committing either party to a contract, or threatening the players amateur status (Ross, 2015). The “B” form “option” agreement gave the NHL team the exclusive right to sign a junior aged amateur hockey player (Ross, 2015). The “C” form “option” agreement was a contract that an NHL team used sparingly, ensuring that only junior amateur players who had a legitimate chance at professional NHL careers would be signed to the agreement (Ross, 2015). When a player was signed to the “C” form agreement, he would automatically be placed on a reserve list, making him a prospect of that NHL team exclusively (Ross, 2015). Since there was not yet an NHL draft, players’ NHL rights were owned by the sponsoring NHL team (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012).

The NHL began phasing out the sponsorship agreement in 1963 (Longley, 2003). As the NHL expanded, the professional league transitioned toward a drafting system that would replace the sponsorship agreement system (Hardy & Holman, 2018). The NHL hosted the first Amateur Draft in Montreal, Quebec, in 1963 (Tingling, Masri & Martel, 2011). However, only players who were not signed to an NHL team through the sponsorship agreement were eligible to be drafted (Longley, 2003). Players who were signed to an NHL team through the sponsorship agreement were “grandfathered” into the system until 1969 (Longley, 2003). The 1969 draft is considered the first true NHL draft, because it was the first time all draft-eligible amateur players could be selected (Longley,

2003). In 1979, the NHL renamed the Amateur Draft the NHL Entry Draft (Tingling et al., 2011).

Western Hockey League

The MJH system originated in Western Canada due to changes within the NHL and its developmental system. Junior A hockey was the most elite hockey level that amateur 16-20-year-old male hockey players could play in Canada before MJH was created (Ross, 2008). Junior A amateur hockey teams were initially considered the most elite teams in Canada because NHL teams had sponsored them until the 1958 modifications to the Pro-Am Agreement (Ross, 2008). Despite Junior A being considered the best level of junior hockey, with the end of amateur junior hockey sponsorship by NHL franchises, there was discussion in the NHL about needing a new elite level of hockey² (Ross, 2008). Bill Hunter, a hockey team owner in Western Canada, saw Canada's need for a higher hockey level, thus creating the Canadian Major Junior Hockey League (Hardy & Holman, 2018).

Regional pride and money-making were factors that motivated Hunter to create the CMJHL as the West had not performed well in recent national championships. Initially, the CMJHL was deemed an outlaw league by the CAHA, and banned the renegade league from participating in national championships (Hardy & Holman, 2018). However, the CAHA overturned its decision when the CMJHL continued to persevere (Hardy & Holman). The idea of Canadian super leagues was first considered at parliamentary levels as a way of building pride and support for hockey, as the NHL

² Letter from Campbell to Juckes, 11 May 1966 LAC, CAHA fonds, vol. 54, file 6; letter from Campbell to Juckes, 18 May 1966, LAC, CAHA fonds, vol. 54, file 11.

continued to expand into the United States (Ross, 2008). The super leagues were to entrench hockey as an extension of the Canadian national identity (Ross, 2008).

Junior A hockey has since become the second most elite level of amateur junior hockey (Drinnan, n.d.). In 1966, Bill Hunter, who owned the Junior A Edmonton Oil Kings, created the original CMJHL (Hardy & Holman, 2018). The CMJHL was the first MJH league in Canada and consisted of seven-teams in cities and towns across Alberta and Saskatchewan (Drinnan, n.d.; Hardy & Holman, 2018). The league included the following teams: the Edmonton Oil Kings, Estevan Bruins, Regina Pats, Moose Jaw Canucks, Saskatoon Blades, Weyburn Red Wings, and Calgary Buffaloes (Drinnan, n.d.). At the time, the age limit of play in the CMJHL was 21 years (Hardy & Holman, 2018).

In 1967, the CMJHL was renamed the Western Canadian Hockey League (WCHL) (Hardy & Holman, 2018), to indicate the geographic location of the teams (Drinnan, n.d.). In 1973, Ed Chynoweth became the first Commissioner of the WCHL (Drinnan, n.d.). Chynoweth was a Past-President of the Saskatoon Minor Hockey Association and former assistant general manager of the WCHL's Saskatoon Blades before being named the WCHL's first Commissioner (Legends of Hockey, n.d). In the same year, the WCHL opened its first league office in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Drinnan, n.d.).

When the WCHL was created, it was operated by the teams' general managers, who doubled as the teams' owners (Drinnan, n.d.). The composition of the WCHL reflected a group of "hockey men" who loved hockey and wanted to grow the game. At this time, MJH was not intended to be fiscally successful but to grow the sport and

establish a consistently elite level of play for junior-aged players (Drinnan, n.d.). The managers used household finances to keep the teams in operation, however, when the WCHL opened its first head office in Saskatoon in 1973, the league office became more business-minded; the league office started to become more concerned with operating as a profitable enterprise (Drinnan, n.d.). The WCHL was renamed the Western Hockey League in 1978 (Drinnan, n.d.). The league name change from WCHL to WHL was more inclusive of the expansion of teams in the Pacific Northwestern states in the U.S. (Drinnan, n.d.).

Dev Dley, a lawyer and former general counsel to the WHL, who later became a Supreme Court Justice, was named Chynoweth's successor in 1998 (Cameron, 1995). Dley held the position of the WHL until 2000 when his contract expired (CBC Sports, 2000a). Ron Robison, a former owner of a sports marketing firm and executive with the CHA, was named Dley's replacement in 2000 and currently serves as WHL Commissioner and CHL Vice-President (CBC Sports, 2000b; "WHL Staff & Contact Information", 2018). The WHL consists of 22 teams distributed across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, in Canada, and Washington, and Oregon in the United States ("WHL Teams & Directory", n.d.).

Quebec Major Junior Hockey League

The Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) was founded in 1969, three years after the first MJH league was created in Western Canada (Hardy & Holman, 2018). Robert LeBel was the founding Commissioner ("Discover our history", 2017). Before founding the QMJHL, LeBel served as the President of the CAHA and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) (IIHF, n.d.a). The IIHF is "the governing

body of international ice hockey and inline hockey” (IIHF, n.d.b). The QMJHL was initially comprised of 11 teams from the Quebec Provincial Junior A Hockey League and the Metropolitan Montreal Junior Hockey League. The Quebec Provincial Junior A Hockey League was a Quebec-based junior hockey league established in 1948 (“Discover our history”, 2017). The Metropolitan Montreal Junior Hockey League was a Montreal-based Junior A hockey league established in 1954 (“Discover our history”, 2017).

The QMJHL first consisted of the following teams: Drummondville Rangers, Quebec Remparts, Shawinigan Bruins, Sorel Black Hawks, Trois-Rivieres Ducs, Cornwall Royals, Laval Saints, Rosemont National, Sherbrooke Castors, St-Jerome Alouettes, and Verdun Maple Leafs (“Discover our history”, 2017). Lebel left his role of Commissioner in 1977 and was replaced by Marcel Robert (“Mr. Marcel Robert”, 2005). In 1981, Robert left his position as QMJHL Commissioner, and Jean Rougeau succeeded him. Commissioner Rougeau, who had previously worked with a team in the QMJHL, the Laval National, unfortunately passed away in 1983 (“Discover our history”, 2017). Dr. Guy Morissette, a former President of the Quebec Ice Hockey Federation (QIHF), was named Rougeau’s successor. The QIHF was the provincial governing body for hockey in Quebec, under the CAHA (Hockey Quebec, 2018). QIHF is now known as Hockey Quebec and continues to govern hockey in Quebec, provincially under Hockey Canada (Hockey Quebec, 2018). Morissette held the position of Commissioner of the QMJHL from 1984 until 1986 (The Q News, 2013). Gilles Courteau became the QMJHL Commissioner in February 1986 (“Gilles Courteau celebrates 20 years”, 2006; Zurkowsky, 1993). Before being named Commissioner, Courteau held many

administrative positions with the QMJHL. He continues to hold the position today (“Commissioner’s Office”, n.d.).

Before 1994, players from the Maritimes could choose to play in any of the three CHL regional leagues. This was due to a lack of teams in the Maritimes (Canadian Press, 1994). Before the QMJHL expanded to Halifax, elite-level junior hockey players from the Maritimes frequently chose to pursue a MJH career in the OHL because English was the commonly spoken language (Canadian Press, 1994). However, that changed when a team in Halifax joined the QMJHL because, with this expansion, Maritime players now had a primarily English-speaking city to play in. Then, the QMJHL added another expansion team in the Maritimes – in Moncton. The expansion to Moncton gave Maritime-based players a second QMJHL option (Canadian Press, 1994). The QMJHL currently consists of 18 teams in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island (“Teams”, n.d.).

Ontario Hockey League

The Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) Tier I was created in 1970 (Hardy & Holman, 2018), 4 years after the formation of the WCHL in 1966, in order to bring the elite level of junior hockey to cities in Ontario. Tier I was founded to be a major junior league under the OHA, a provincial governing body of hockey in Ontario under the CAHA (Hardy & Holman, 2018), with ten teams; the Montreal Junior Canadiens, Toronto Marlboros, Ottawa 67’s, Peterborough Petes, Oshawa Generals, London Knights, Kitchener Rangers, St. Catharines Black Hawks, Niagara Falls Flyers, and Hamilton Red Wings (“OHL Arena Guide”, n.d.a). Also in 1970, the CAHA declared a new level of junior hockey in Canada, major junior (Hardy & Holman, 2018). This was

meant to be a partnership among all MJH leagues in Canada – the WCHL, QMJHL and the newly created Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) Tier I (Hardy & Holman, 2018). This was the beginning of formalizing an association on a national scale (Hardy & Holman, 2018).

In 1974, the MJH separated from the OHA, with the former OHA Tier I league becoming the Ontario Major Junior Hockey League (OMJHL) (“OHL Arena Guide”, n.d.a). Clarence Schmalz was named the OMJHL’s first Commissioner (Canadian Press, 1974). Schmalz was a Director and Past-President of the OHA before being named the first OMJHL Commissioner (Jackson, 2005). Schmalz remained Commissioner of the OMJHL until 1978 (Jackson, 2005).

Bill Beagan was named Schmalz’s replacement as Commissioner in 1978 (Canadian Press, 1978). Beagan was a former NHL referee, Commissioner of the International Hockey League (IHL), and Director of the Amateur Hockey Association of the United States before being named to the position (“Bobby Orr Hall of Fame”, 2017). The IHL was a predominantly American minor professional hockey league, founded in 1945, as a development league for NHL prospects who were too old to play junior hockey (International Hockey League, n.d.). The IHL disbanded in 2001 (International Hockey League, n.d.). Beagan was Commissioner of the OMJHL for only one season before surprisingly resigning from his position and being replaced by current Commissioner David Branch (Casey, 1999; York, 1979). In 1980, the Ontario MJH league was shortened to the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) (Hardy & Holman, 2018). The OHL currently has 20 teams across Ontario, Michigan and Pennsylvania (“OHL Arena Guide”, n.d.b).

By the end of the 1970s, the three MJH regional leagues existed across Canada, with a few teams in the Northern United States. Despite the QMJHL and OHL being created shortly after the WHL in Western Canada, the three regional leagues were governed under the CAHA. It was not until later in the 1970s that the Commissioners of the WHL, OHL, and QMJHL agreed to add an overarching governing body for MJH of their own.

Canadian Hockey League

The CMJHL became a legal entity in 1974 (Keller, 1974). Joe Kryczka, who served as CAHA President from 1971 – 1973, became the first Commissioner of the CMJHL (“Briefly”, 1973; Keller, 1974). The Commissioners of the WCHL, OMJHL and QMJHL trusted Kryczka to represent the leagues’ best interests in meetings and negotiations with the CAHA and the NHL (Keller, 1974). Kryczka, WCHL President Ed Chynoweth, QMJHL Executive John Horman, and lawyer/coach Joe Kane, who represented the OHL, created a CMJHL constitution in 1974 (Keller, 1974). In 1975, one year later, the CMJHL became the official governing body over the three MJH regional leagues. An article in the constitution stated each player in the CMJHL must sign a Standard Player Agreement with a team in the OMJHL, WCHL or QMJHL. This statement stipulated that a player could sign a professional contract with any professional hockey league before his MJH contract expired. However, the professional team would need to compensate the CMJHL team financially. The constitution also included a stipulation outlining the age limit of an MJH player was 20 years of age (Ramsay, 1975).

Despite having carried the same title as the former CMJHL (turned WCHL), the new CMJHL was not a regeneration of the former CMJHL that originated in Western

Canada. Instead, the new CMJHL was created to become the governing body of all three MJH regional leagues that existed in Canada (Canadian Press, 1975). The CMJHL did not have teams playing directly in the league. Instead, it outlined the rules and regulations, and policies the WCHL, OMJHL, and QMJHL must follow. The CMJHL was a governing body that oversaw the operations of the WCHL, OMJHL and QMJHL.

Before the beginning of the 1975-1976 season, the CMJHL established an office headquartered in Calgary (Vanstone, 2017). Ed Chynoweth, WCHL President at the time, was named President of the CMJHL ("Legends of hockey", 2017). The CMJHL was renamed the Canadian Hockey League (CHL) in 1980 (Hardy & Holman, 2018). The renaming of the CHL signalled a changing of the times for MJH, as the WHL, OHL, and the QMJHL separated from the CAHA (Kalchman, 1982). The WHL, OHL, and QMJHL were to be governed solely under the CHL.

It was not until 1985 that the CAHA entrusted the CHL with the Memorial Cup ("History - Overview, n.d.). The Memorial Cup was donated to the OHA during the First World War to commemorate players who had died in battle (Lapp & Macaulay, 1997). In 1919, the Memorial Cup tournament was hosted in Toronto at the Toronto Arena Gardens (Lapp & Macaulay, 1997). It was a two-game tournament between the best Western Canadian Jr. A team and the best Eastern Canadian Junior A team (Lapp & Macaulay, 1997). It has since been re-dedicated as a memory for all fallen Canadian military personnel ("History – Overview", n.d.; Lapp & Macaulay, 1997). Although the OHA had responsibility for the Memorial Cup, it was awarded by the CAHA to Canada's national junior hockey champions ("History – Overview", n.d.). Upon taking responsibility for the Memorial Cup and tournament, the CHL established a tournament. It was determined a

host team and the OHL, QMJHL and WHL champions would compete to decide the CHL champions ("History – Overview", n.d.; Lapp & Macaulay, 1997). In 1986, QMJHL Commissioner Gilles Courteau was named CHL Vice-President ("Gilles Courteau celebrates 20 years", 2006; Zurkowsky, 1993).

In the 1982 season, the NHL wanted to amend its agreement with the CHL (Houston, 1982). The NHL wanted to give NHL franchises the option of sending its prospects to a minor-professional league, the American Hockey League (AHL), for further development (Houston, 1982). The CHL opposed the NHL's proposition because it would impact the quality of its players' development and could have negative impacts on the CHL's revenue generation (Houston, 1982). As a result, the CHL and NHL created a new agreement regarding the compensation the CHL would receive from NHL teams in exchange for developing its prospects (Canadian Press, 1986). In addition, the NHL would not be able to have MJH-eligible players playing in minor-professional leagues. In 1996, OHL Commissioner David Branch was named the CHL's President (Hockey Canada, n.d.b)

Currently, CHL regulations allow member teams to draft players from across North America and a limited number of players from outside of North America ("CHL Territorial Rights", 2011). As demonstrated in Table 1 (see the following page), the teams in the WHL can draft hockey players living in Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest of the United States (Prospects Central FAQs, n.d). Teams in the OHL can draft hockey players living in Ontario, the Midwestern United States, and the states along the Atlantic Southeast of the United States ("CHL Territorial Rights", 2011). The teams in the QMJHL can draft hockey players living in Quebec and Atlantic Canada and the

Table 2: CHL Draft Eligibility Regions

Canadian Hockey League Leagues	Regions Eligible for Draft		
	Canadian Provinces	Canadian Territories	American States
Western Hockey League (WHL)	Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon	Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, Wyoming.
Ontario Hockey League (OHL)	Ontario		Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin
Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL)	Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador		New England (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island)

New England states in the United States (“CHL Territorial Rights”, 2011).

In April 2019, David Branch stepped down from his position as President of the CHL, to focus solely on his role as the OHL’s Commissioner (Canadian Hockey League, 2019b). In July 2019, Dan McKenzie was hired by the CHL Executive Council to be Branch’s successor as CHL President (Canadian Hockey League, 2019b). The CHL Executive Council consists of each regional league’s Commissioners, and each of which also serve as CHL Vice Presidents (Canadian Hockey League, 2019b). Each Commissioner sitting on the CHL Executive Council shares the council’s information with his respective regional league Board of Governors (Canadian Hockey League, 2020b). Following discussion with each regional league’s Board of Governors, the Executive Council and President will ultimately make final decisions for the entirety of the CHL (Canadian Hockey League, 2020b).

In addition to the Commissioner, each MJH regional league is represented by a Board of Governors. Every member team has one individual who sits on their respective regional leagues board to make decisions in the best of interest of the team they are representing. The representative is typically either a team owner/shareholder, executive, or an individual outside of the team elected to sit as the team’s representative on the board. The MJH regional leagues’ Board of Governors composition closely resembles that of the NHL. The NHL’s Board of Governors is composed of team owners and/or shareholders (National Hockey League Records, n.d.). The goal of MJH regional leagues is to develop athletes to become professional hockey players, and has created a governance structure that resembles that of the NHL’s in its effort to achieve this goal.

Understanding how the MJH system came to exist within the Canadian hockey system and each regional league's creation is essential when exploring the organizational design of the MJH regional leagues. The CHL was created to govern the MJH regional leagues. The regional leagues had previously existed under the governance of the CAHA for almost 10 years before the CHL was formed. As is the case with many industries, the environments in which the regional leagues exist can impact how they develop.

2.1.2. Socio-Historical Development of MJH in Canada

The historical chronology of the CHL and the regional leagues focuses on how the MJH system came to be. However, other significant influences on the Canadian MJH system occurred during these times. Although the MJH regional leagues were created at different moments during a four year period, the organizations were impacted by the same socio-historical influences. Based on the chronology, the socio-historical influences are summarized according to three periods across the past 60 years, as they became apparent across Canada as a whole.

The first period, which spanned the 1960s and 1970s, reflected a time when MJH represented a strong sense of nationalism as the WHL, QMJHL, OHL, and CHL were initially developed. From the 1980s until the 1990s, the second period, MJH experienced instability as the notions of nationalism were not strong enough to maintain growth. As new franchises entered the regional leagues and existing franchises folded, fan identification became critical. As fans became attached to the teams that stayed in their communities, commercialism began to emerge within MJH. During the final period, from the 2000s to the present day, MJH was challenged legally on its practices within member

teams and their players. The commercialism of MJH brought on legal pressures as it began focusing more on the ability to generate revenue.

The 1960s-1970s

MJH regional leagues formalized across Canada at different points in time throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The initial catalyst was the CMJHL in Western Canada. In 1966, Bill Hunter created the original CMJHL because he found a need for a new elite junior hockey league once NHL teams ceased Jr. A teams' sponsorship. In 1967, the CMJHL was renamed WCHL to indicate the teams' location in the league as it continued to expand in Western Canada. The WCHL was later renamed the WHL. Junior hockey in Canada experienced a ripple effect when, in 1969, the QMJHL was created in response to the Western league. A year later, in 1970, the OMJHL, which was later renamed the OHL, was created. 1974 saw the creation of the new CMJHL to be a governing league over the three regional leagues. The CMJHL was later renamed the CHL. It took eight years for the CHL and its three regional leagues to be created during this period. These transitions occurred during a period when Canadian nationalism and sport became integrated.

Coming off decades of war, and amid the Cold War, in the 1960s, international sport provided a similar combative rivalry (Elcombe, 2010). Global rivalries in hockey intensified Canadian national identity as the sense of nationalism became associated with Canada's success on the ice, impacting political discourse (Allain, 2016). Hockey, when teams were victorious, provided Canadians with an opportunity to identify a level of superiority over other countries (Cantelon, 2006). Winning against the Americans meant that there was "victory for the industrious Canadian beaver over the mighty U.S. eagle"

(Fitsell, 1997; p. 106). Canadian hockey nationalism grew at this time out of crisis because the amateur Canadian teams competing in Europe and the Winter Olympic Games in the 1950s and 1960s were not winning (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006). The CAHA was responsible for international play, until 1968, when the Canadian government created Hockey Canada (Hardy & Holman, 2018). Between 1962 and 1970, Father David Bauer, a former hockey star turned priest, developed a Canadian National Team of elite amateur hockey players (Hardy & Holman, 2018). Father Bauer's national team program brought mild success, such as the Centennial Tournament Championship in 1967, the bronze medal at the Grenoble Winter Olympic Games in 1968, and a fourth-place finish at the Innsbruck Winter Olympic Games in 1964 (Hardy & Holman, 2018). To that point, Canadians intensely identified hockey as an ingrained part of national identity, but excused losing on the international stage because the best players were not playing (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006).

The 1972 Summit Series involved eight matches played between Canadian NHL players and the Soviet Union national team, with each country hosting four games (Macintosh, Hawes, Greenhorn & Black, 1994; Whitson & Gruneau, 2006). Canada versus the Soviet Union was seen as a political battle between communism and capitalism, which meant that the games became less about hockey and more about societies (Robidoux, 2002). Hockey became more and more politicized in this period when the Canadian government criticized European hockey officials for overly penalizing Canadian teams for having an aggressive style of play (Ramsay, 1977). If the government is involved in, and supports, sporting debates, hockey becomes a significantly strong part of the country's identity (Watson, 2017).

Allain (2010) conceptualized national identity by saying that communities' traditions and stories bring people together through cultural understandings. Hockey plays a significant role in how the Canadian identity is conceptualized (Pitter, 2006). Gellner's (1983) conceptualization of nationalism in Canadians' experience through hockey is "the advent of shared culture on a mass scale" (Allain, 2010, p. 4). In Canada, hockey is one of the traditions that bring different communities together. Kidd (1996) wrote that, following the World Wars, Canadian nationalism was at its highest but once the wars were over, sport was deemed the new way to exhibit nationalism, to which hockey became Canada's international identifier.

What it means to be Canadian has been assimilated with hockey events that bring Canada together as a nation (Norman, 2012). Canadian nationalism was high when Paul Henderson scored his iconic goal in the eighth game of the 1972 Summit Series between Canada and the Soviet Union (Gellner, 1983). Other Canadian international victories at the Canada Cup tournaments, IIHF World Championships, and the Olympics continued to mould the country's identity and bring Canadians together. Canadians are always expected to win because hockey "belongs to Canada" (Watson, 2017, p. 296). As MacNeill (1996) noted, hockey has been considered "Canada's game". Although hockey has changed from what it was before the world wars, the games version that it became is a modern variation. For example, Robidoux (2002) explains *modern-day* sport implies that political motivations have caused changes. Modern-day hockey includes being "a highly organized event played within specific boundaries and performed with uniform rules maintained by leagues and organizations" (p. 211).

At the time of MJH's creation, the idea of an entirely Canadian junior hockey super league was created (Hardy & Holman, 2018). Sentiments that Canada had ownership over a hockey system further shows just how ingrained hockey was, and is, in Canadian national identity. New ways of displaying nationalism were sought in the years that followed the wars. In Canada's case, nationalism was displayed through sport, and more specifically through hockey. Hence, MJH reflected the nationalistic environment in which it was created.

The 1980s–1990s

The 1980s and 1990s saw much instability within the MJH regional leagues as franchises moved locations and changed ownership several times throughout these two decades. During this time, the regional leagues faced team expansion, team relocation and team disbanding. The WHL started, in 1966, as a seven-team league in Alberta and Saskatchewan. However, by the end of the 1990s, it had expanded to be an 18-team league, with teams in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and Washington state (HockeyDB, n.d.b). In 1969, the QMJHL started as an 11-team league based in Quebec, with one team located in Cornwall, Ontario. By the millennium, the QMJHL transitioned to be a 16-team league in Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The high level of team movement was exemplified especially by activity in the QMJHL. For example, from 1981 until 1994 Verdun experienced ten franchise changes which involved the team relocating, expanding, or disbanding, and the team being bought and experiencing a name change. The OHL doubled in size from ten teams in 1970 to 20 teams by the end of the 1990s. The OHL's expansion included teams in Ontario, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

This rapid and ongoing team turnover in such a short period may have posed a risk to the support of MJH in the communities where teams existed. Franchise changes, similar to those experienced in Verdun, Quebec, can affect the stability of an organization. Comparatively, in Forbes' 2020 valuation of NHL franchises, four of the ten lowest ranking teams had experienced relocations; Calgary Flames (ranked 20th), Colorado Avalanche (ranked 22nd), Carolina Hurricanes (ranked 24th), and Winnipeg Jets (ranked 27th) (Ozanian & Badenhausen, 2020). Each of the top five franchises valued highest were original six teams (in order: New York Rangers, Toronto Maple Leafs, Montreal Canadiens, Chicago Blackhawks, Boston Bruins) (Ozanian & Badenhausen, 2020). Thus, there is an argument to be made that instability and team relocation can have an effect on an organizations long-term success.

As a result of the instability experienced, the focus of MJH shifted toward stability and generating revenue. With so much change across the regional leagues, overall sustainability became a central focus for MJH's long-term success. While individual teams are responsible for competing against each other, there is an onus put on a sport league to ensure it operates in a manner that ensures teams also act in unison, and to market their product (Mason, 1999). Sport leagues that are joint ventures are meant to govern over a body of teams and create policies ensure an equal playing field for all (Noll, 2003). Ballouli and Hutchinson (2010) conducted interviews with sport marketing executives, who noted the importance of collaboration between leagues and teams in marketing their sport to fans, especially digitally. As time has gone on and MJH has continued to develop, the way junior hockey brings communities together has become a focal marketing point. Brands are taking advantage of opportunities to profit from high

sport fan identification through consumers' sentiments (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). Kidd (1996) described how leagues and teams optimizing profits from fan identification, by saying:

Entrepreneurs developed the concept of operating leagues as cartels, with an eye to maximizing joint profits as a means of optimizing individual franchise profits.

Teams were created, dropped, and moved to strengthen the overall interests of the league regardless of local interests. (p. 192)

The MJH regional leagues began marketing themselves by utilizing the member teams and their relationships in their communities. Hence, partners became involved in sponsoring events or having their logos used as advertisements in MJH arenas.

Sponsorship has been defined as “a lateral alliance characterized by an exchange of resources (Jensen & Cornwell, 2021, p. 791). Sport teams and leagues use corporate sponsorship as a source of revenue in exchange for the idea of a shared consumption of a product between fans and athletes (Madrigan, 2000).

Madrigan (2000) studied fan identification concerning how fans feel when they consume the same products their favourite celebrities or athletes are affiliated with. Fan identification provides an increase in revenue for the sponsor through advertisements related to the sport organization (Madrigan, 2000). Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson and Kennedy (1992) identified fan moods as strongly related to their sentiments towards the team, in that their identification to their team is so passionate it affects their personal lives.

Gwinner and Swanson (2003) found a fans sentiments towards their favourite team influenced sponsorship outcomes. The higher sense of identification a fan has with a team, the more likely the fan will pay to attend more games. Currently, the Memorial Cup

is sponsored by KIA. The CHL allows the tournament to be named the “Memorial Cup, presented by KIA” because the sponsorship associated with the naming rights to the event leads to high fan identification levels and increased revenues for the CHL and the regional leagues.

Fan identification also grew when the CHL and The Sports Network (TSN) reached an agreement in 1991 to begin broadcasting CHL games each week, although television networks broadcasting MJH games was not new in 1991. In 1982, the OHL and Global Television Network signed a partnership that saw Global broadcast a “game-of-the-week”, which ran throughout the 1980s (Hardy & Holman, 2018, p. 304). The CHL recognized a market for MJH to continue growing through the broadcasting of games on television. Not only could MJH attract new fans, but it could generate more revenue for the regional leagues. When the partnership with TSN ended officially in 1998, the CHL reached a broadcasting agreement with Sportsnet, a sports television broadcasting competitor to TSN, to broadcast games nationally (Canadian Press, 2014). The CHL and Sportsnet signed a new agreement in 2014 to last through the 2025-2026 season (Canadian Press, 2014). Scott Moore, President of Sportsnet, stated at the time that the agreement with the CHL is important to Sportsnet (Cushman, 2014). However, there is no doubt the agreement is even more critical to the CHL, from a financial perspective, especially when Moore stated, in Cushman (2014):

Our partnership with the CHL is a strong and important one. Together, we will build on the already strong foundation of our Friday Night Hockey brand and weave the CHL even deeper into the fabric of Canadian hockey culture. In addition to our game coverage, we will continue to tell the stories of major junior

hockey in Canada, build stars, and remain with them on their journey through the NHL. (para 8)

The sponsorship and broadcasting of MJH games certainly help the regional leagues continue to operate and continue to expand their fanbase. The broadcasting deal with Sportsnet remains in effect as of May 2021.

Despite the instability the MJH regional leagues experience with their member teams relocating and disbanding, MJH maintained the notions of nationalism and turned it into fan identification. Fan identification was both achieved and capitalized upon by the regional leagues and teams through marketing and sponsorship investments. As the MJH regional leagues continued to build member team fanbases across Canada and the United States, they began to market their teams and players in local and regional areas.

Marketing member teams and players help create a level of identification between the fanbase and member team or player. As MJH marketed to their audiences, they also began to capitalize on fan identification by taking on sponsorships. The sponsorships created a new and essential revenue source for the regional leagues and member teams.

As MJH transitioned into the millennium, the revenue became increasingly significant for the regional leagues.

The 2000s–2010s

As MJH transitioned out of the previous period, the focus on fan identification, sponsorship and revenue generation became increasingly important. Sport fan identification opens an exciting opportunity to market organizations in unique ways because fans are so loyal to their team and more likely to engage with any promotion (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012). Fans in different locations than the sports team and

sponsor are still likely to be influenced by high quality sponsorships and marketing (Wang, Jain, Cheng, & Aung, 2012). As a fans identification with a team increases, so does her/his likelihood to attend a game in person, pay to watch games online or on tv, and purchase team merchandise (Gray & Wert-Grey, 2012).

However, as MJH continued to become more corporatized through sponsorships, legal dilemmas also became a significant influence over MJH, especially the status of players as employees of members teams. For example, in 2000, the Brandon Wheat Kings owners, McCrimmon Holdings Ltd, were sued by the Minister of National Revenue, which houses the Canada Revenue Agency, to determine whether their players were considered employees. The Brandon Wheat Kings were described as “a commercial organization ... carrying on business for profit” (p. 9). The Tax Court of Canada determined that the players were employees, but the Wheat Kings were not legally forced to treat the players as such (McCrimmon Holdings v Canada, 2000).

In the 2010s, the CHL faced a class-action lawsuit over whether or not players of the three MJH regional leagues were employees (Robson, 2017). The lawsuit was filed in 2014. The CHL argued that its players were not employees, but amateur student-athletes (Robson, 2017). The CHL also argued the benefits of playing for a member team in any one of the three regional leagues far outweighed the benefits of making minimum wage, as the class action sought (Robson, 2017). The CHL argued that if the players were classified as employees, teams would need to make significant changes to their operations, and some would be forced to cease operations (Robson, 2017). The province of Ontario excluded OHL players from the province’s employment standards in November of 2018 (Canadian Press, 2018). This decision came after Alberta, Quebec,

New Brunswick, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Washington state, and Michigan all made similar clarifications to their employment standards (Canadian Press, 2018). The class-action suit came to an end in 2020 when a settlement was reached (Canadian Hockey League, 2020c). It was determined that the players had not been deemed employees (Canadian Hockey League, 2020c). However, as of October 2020, the presiding judges in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta had not signed off on the settlement (Perkel, 2020).

As sponsorship revenue became an increasingly important revenue stream for the regional league and member teams, questions of the ethics of MJH arose. Efforts by the MJH regional leagues and the team within the leagues to maximize revenue raises questions about the extent to which these entities operate as a business. In this period, the leagues were under the scrutiny of how they operated to maximize revenue and how it impacted the member teams' players.

Since the 1960s, when MJH was introduced to the Canadian hockey system, socio-historical events have influenced the nature of the regional leagues and the major junior hockey system as a whole. The MJH system first came to be when nationalism was at a high and Canadians showed their national pride through hockey. As MJH continued to evolve into the second period, the sense of nationalism turned into fan identification that provided the regional leagues and member teams with additional revenue opportunities through marketing and sponsorships. The partnerships formed to promote the regional leagues and member teams were taken to another level in the final period when questions of the system's operations' ethics emerged through legal issue. The three periods MJH has existed and transitioned through have helped MJH develop into how it

exists today. These periods have all affected MJH and the way the regional leagues operate today.

The connection between the historical chronology of the MJH system and important socio-historical events provides a deeper understanding of how the CHL and regional leagues came to be. Understanding how the system was impacted by and evolved within the environment offers greater insight into the influences on the regional leagues as they developed. The MJH system faced many challenges, including the regional league's creation at different times, instability across the member teams relocating and disbanding, and the significant focus on commercialization. The historical chronology and socio-historical influences also give insight into how the Canadian MJH regional leagues are designed. Understanding a system's history is critical when exploring how it is currently designed because of the impacts it has navigated to reach its current form. Although this study does not aim to study the MJH regional leagues' design throughout their history, the context of how the MJH system has come to exist is essential to consider. In the following section, a discussion of organizational design literature, including a brief history of how organizational design has been studied in management literature, is provided. Principles from sport organizational design literature guided this study.

2.2. Organizational Design Literature

As Burns and Stalker (1961) have described, organizational design refers to the critical alignment of structures, environment, elements, including tasks and responsibilities, change, and the role of politics in an organization. Miller and Friesen (1978) and Mintzberg (1979) were among the primary scholars to begin studying modern

organizational design, building off the earlier scholarly work of Woodward (1958), Burns and Stalker (1961), and Thompson (1967), among others. Since then, many scholars have continued to contribute to the literature.

Organizational design, rooted in organizational theory, can be defined in several different ways. Drazin and Van de Ven (1985) have described design as “basic patterns of organizing that are coherently designed to yield a systematic configuration to the components” (p. 348). Greenwood and Miller (2010) characterized design as “the way strategies are formulated or formed, and determines whether and how they can be implemented” (p. 79). The purpose of organizational design is to understand how an organization is arranged to be successful, including how departments work together to benefit the organization (Miller, Greenwood & Prakash, 2009). Design is a way of understanding how an organization can manage employees, responsibilities, strategies and resources to accomplish desired goals (Greenwood & Miller, 2010). Design is central to the way organizations build strategies and determine how they should be implemented (Greenwood & Miller, 2010, p. 79). Organizational design “is the vehicle by which firms recognize the need for adaptation, determine its course and put change into effect. It is the framework that enables and allows collective behaviour to occur” (Greenwood & Miller, 2010, p. 79).

Early organizational design studies focused on how the environment determined the structure of an organization (Chandler, 1962; Paine & Anderson, 1977).

Organizational behaviour literature also significantly contributed to design research. Scholars began studying the relationships between organizations and how they are impacted by environmental factors that in turn, influence decision-making (Burns &

Stalker, 1961; Thompson, 1967; Woodward, 1958). Burns and Stalker (1961) identified that an organization's performance and success are contingent on its structure. An organization's structure and environment must match in order for the entity to have success (Burns and Stalker, 1961). Chandler (1962) found a direct link between an organization's structure and the environment that it existed in. Environment impacted the strategy and the nature in which an organization was structured (Chandler, 1962). Thompson (1967) continued the conversation of environment impacting structure and success, finding organizations that have specified tasks and responsibilities for each role will have more success. Paine and Anderson (1977) found a strong relationship between strategy formulation and an organization's environment in determining how it will be structured, although, they did acknowledge that more aspects of the organization needed to be considered to determine whether it was successful.

Acknowledging the earlier scholars' crucial contributions in organizational theory, Miller and Friesen (1977) began to consider how these topics might benefit from a broadened scope. They suggested that literature exploring organizational design can benefit from studying different variables together. In the literature, unexplained variables had been described as errors, however Miller and Friesen (1977) proposed that changing the perspective of how different associations of variables can further the understanding of design. They attempted the alternative method to understand design by developing 10 archetypes that determined the success of an organization by examining the organizations' structure, environment and strategy making processes through different variables.

Mintzberg (1979) also created a model to address the structures within an organization specifically. Unlike Miller and Friesen (1977), who utilized the term archetype, Mintzberg referred to structural configuration and described five different structural models that reflect organizations: simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form and adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1979). Environmental factors, such as stability, hostility, age and size, were considered in determining how the configurations could be applied to an organization in practice. Although Mintzberg (1979) considered that different organizations begin as specific structures and transition into others, as their environment allows, the model does not account for how other variables may have an impact. Mintzberg (1979) notes that other design variables would have a significant impact on the structural configuration.

In the past, structure and environment were deemed the primary ways to determine how an organization is designed (Miller & Friesen, 1978). The structure was based on an industry's environment, and thus the industry context would determine the structure (Miller & Friesen, 1978). In addition to structure, other variables needed to be considered in the way scholars researched organizational design (Miller & Friesen, 1978). A variable Kanter (1984) identified as 'system' should be considered when determining an organization's design, particularly while undergoing change. Hinings and Greenwood (1987) identified 'values' as another variable that needs to be considered in studies focused on design. Other variables include 'effectiveness' (Angle & Perry, 1981; Cameron, 1986) and 'culture' (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Tierney, 1986).

As Miller and Friesen (1978) and Mintzberg (1979) discovered, a primary way of describing how an organization is designed is through classification. An organization's

variables can be studied to identify how to describe its design (Miller & Friesen, 1980b). Miller (1981) identified how an organizations design should be referred to as ‘gestalts’. Gestalts is another term referring to design types (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988). Design types “establish a particular distribution of resources and power” (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988, p. 295). Design types are classified as configurations, interpretive schemes, ideal types or archetypes. Although design types have different characteristics, there is not one that is considered a better classification than the other. Some design types, like archetypes, can be sector-specific. Kikulis et al. (1992) explained the process of determining sector specific archetypes by focusing on characteristics “which makes it possible to analyze and understand organizational phenomena in an institutionally specific set of organizations” (p. 350).

An ideal type, as Weber (1963) stated, “is not a description of reality but aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description ... it is no hypothesis, but rather it offers guidance to the construction of a hypothesis” (p. 396). As Astley (1985) described, ideal types can exist as one specific model for design or a set of multiple models. Mouzelis (1968) described that ideal types are created conceptually and have theoretical or intuitive bases (as cited in Astley, 1985, p. 224). Doty and Glick (1994) identified that ideal types are used to describe dimensions that can be apparent in an organization. Early literature hypothesized about how ideal types can exist, and in recent literature they have been criticized for being a theory, at best (Hinings & Meyer, 2018).

Archetypes were also used early in organizational design literature by Miller & Friesen (1978) focused on how an industry’s environment can impacts an organization’s structure. Hinings and Greenwood (1988) have defined archetypes as a “a particular

composition of ideas, beliefs and values connected with structural and system attributes” (p. 18). Archetypes are considered to be very similar to ideal types in that they are both conceptually based and meant to determine an ideal model of organizing (Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2002). In theory, archetypes typically represent an ideal form or organization but are not likely to be found ideally in an actual organization (Miller & Friesen, 1984; Mintzberg, 1979). A critical characteristic of archetypes, however, is that they are likely to be institutionally specific although organizational theory has sought to generalize archetypes across many different types of organizations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1993). Due to the institutionalization within different sectors, it is anticipated that few archetypes exist at the same time in the same area (Kikulis et al., 1995a).

Configurations were one of the early classifications of design types. Mintzberg (1979) utilized the term configuration to describe the structural design of different organizations. Since then, configurations have developed to describe an organization’s design as a whole, acknowledging there are different types (Miller & Friesen, 1980a). Miller and Friesen (1984) found configurations are “composed of tightly interdependent and mutually supportive elements such that the importance of each element can best be understood by referring to the whole configuration” (p.1). Configurations are described as “common alignments of elements” (Miller, 1996, p. 506). However, when all characteristics are mixed, there is no guarantee that an organization may successfully function (Greenwood, Hinings & Brown, 1994).

When values, interests, and ideas are strategically represented, an interpretive scheme is formed (Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980). Interpretive schemes are bound with the organization’s processes to make up the design type (Hinings &

Greenwood, 1987). Ranson et al. (1980) found that when interpretive schemes can aide in the understanding of an organization's structure and system. Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012) indicated that interpretive schemes are another way of talking about institutional logics. Institutional logics are patterns of an organization's values and beliefs as they relate to the structure and system (Hinings, 2018).

While the above design types are used to describe how an organization is described, typologies are different. Typologies are a system that encompasses multiple design types that can be used to describe an organization (Woodward, 1965). Pinder and Moore (1979) argued that typologies are based on theories with narrow boundaries. The theories could also be considered ideal types (as cited in Doty & Glick, 1994). Doty and Glick (1994) explained that typologies can be hybrid types that are "conceptually derived interrelated sets of ideal types" (p. 232). It is possible to identify other design types within a typologies set, like the configurations found in Mintzberg (1979), but ideal types are the most common (Doty & Glick, 1994). Typologies are expected to be based on generalizable, relevant theory (Doty & Glick, 1994). Typologies, according to McKinney (1969) have been criticized for that "lack of specification of the operations performed in the construction of the types ... has undoubtedly contributed to the ambiguities surrounding the relationship of the types to the phenomena they purport to represent" (p. 7).

Miller and Friesen (1984) determined two essential aspects of producing an organizational design type. These aspects include a limited number of organizational element configurations and coherence between the elements. Coherence are is the relationship between meanings, structures and processes (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988).

Greenwood and Hinings (1988) described the relationship between an organization's structure as "the nature of the environment in which an organization is placed is almost always conceptualized as something to be adapted to or controlled" (p. 298).

Organizational coherence has led to better overall performance (Van de Ven, Ganco, & Hinings 2013).

Design determines how an organization operates and achieves its goals. Design types are the primary way for determining how an organization is designed. Although there are several different classifications of design type, there is not one that is considered to be better than the other. A consideration for determining what design type is presented within an organization is identifying the values, structure and system through design principles. Another consideration is understanding how other organizations in the same industry or sector have been studied in the past. Principles of organizational design, specifically in the context of sport organizations will be explored in the following section.

2.2.1. Principles of Organizational Design in Sport

Organizational design is an area of literature that has been studied across a multitude of sectors. These sectors include management (Boudreau, 2004; Jaques, 2010; Escriba-Moreno, Canet-Griner, Morena-Luzon, 2008; Visscher & Irene, 2010), education (Davies & Hentschke, 2002; Strange & Banning, 2001), engineering (Olguin, 2011), and sport (Sarson, 2005; Thibault & Babiak, 2005). In the past, the term 'variables of organizational design' have been used; however, in the sport organizational design literature, the term principles is prevalent. Kikulis et al. (1992) studied design through three principles, which were used to guide this study. The principles of organizational

design are: organization values, organization structure, and organization systems. Kikulis et al. (1992) focused research on these principles, more specifically, through elements.

Values are a principle that indicates the extent to which an organization demonstrates a coherent design (Hinings, Thibault, Slack & Kikulis, 1996). A coherent organization is one where values are consistent throughout all departments and are easy to identify (Enz, 1988). Values need to be coherent throughout the entire organization (Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2002). Without a congruent values system, the organization can become disarranged (Enz, 1988). The four elements of values within an organization utilized in this study, as identified by Kikulis et al. (1992) and Cousens (1997), are; domain, criteria of effectiveness, principles of organizing, and orientation.

The domain of an organization is related to those whom the organization is seeking to reach. In Kikulis et al.'s (1992) study on Canadian national sport organizations, the domain was influenced strongly by the government, which was invested in the preparation of high-performance athletes. Kikulis et al. (1995a) used domain to describe change in Canadian National Sport Organizations (NSOs) as they prepared for the 1988 Olympic Games, based on the services they could provide from the government funding received. Domain was indicated by Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle & Giauque (2015) in study European sport federations, identifying different services provided three different services to their athletes.

The second element of the values principle, criteria of effectiveness, relates to the strength of an organization's operations as a way to determine if it has effectively achieved its goals (Kikulis et al. 1992). Madella, Bayle & Thome (2005) utilized several steps for their criterion of effectiveness to establish a stable 'organizational effectiveness

measurement system' because they saw that several other studies only measured effectiveness over a limited length of time. Quinn and Cameron (1983) explained that empirically the concept of organizational effectiveness has not been "well developed or defined, and there has been little agreement as to the criteria that serve to define organizational effectiveness" (p. 41). They also noted that the criteria of effectiveness changes over time. Different measurements are not always the most appropriate way to determine organizational effectiveness (Quinn & Cameron, 1983).

The principles of organizing refers to the "proper roles, rules and reporting relationships" (p. 350) within an organization (Kikulis et al., 1992). Kikulis et al. (1992) continue explaining principles of organizing as the planning processes and execution that reflect an organization's values. Cousens (1997) further explained principles of organizing as how an organization's roles impact the planning and execution processes. Parent, Naraine and Hoye (2018) identified Kikulis et al.'s (1992) description of the principles of organizing, focusing on the usage of governance boards where members are hired to govern over operational responsibilities in a NSO. Parent et al. (2018) referred to the principles of organizing as professionalized when governors are hired to sit on boards and become responsible for significant aspects related to operations, identifying Kikulis et al.'s (1992) executive office archetype. There is a direct correlation between the principles of organizing and an organization's structure and systems because of the relationship between formal roles and responsibilities and the way organizations plan to execute policies and procedures (Kikulis et al., 1992).

The final element of the values principle of organizational design is orientation. Kikulis et al. (1992) identified the orientation as an element that shapes "the underlying

values about how controls, decisions, and authority are exercised in these organizations” (p. 350). Stevens (2006) explained orientation as “the traditional principles of an organization and highlights the foundation values and focus of an organization” (p. 76). Cousens (1997) found that orientation was the baseball franchises’ source of legitimizing. The orientation was found to be focused on revenue generation and a minor league baseball organization’s sport operations (Cousens, 1997). Ruoranen, Klenk, Schlesinger, Bayle, Clausen, Giauque, and Nagel (2016) utilized orientation to understand the cultural differences between for-profit and non-profit organizational autonomy and the concept of professionalization. It was found that multiple sources of legitimacy existed in their sample, such as for-profit orientation, service and customer orientation, quality improvement, rationality and efficacy orientation (Ruoranen et al., 2016). Strittmatter, Stenling, Fahlen and Skille’s (2018) empirical study on sport policy processes in European sport federations found that their sources of legitimacy ranged from policy-making strategies to the domination of their federations on the sports field.

The structure principle of organizational design includes elements that complement the four elements of organizational values. As explained by Kikulis et al. (1992), the elements of structure are specialization, standardization, and centralization. Specialization represents the roles and tasks associated with an organization (Amis et al., 2004a; Kikulis et al., 1995a; Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1991). If there is a high degree of specialization, each employee performs only a narrow range of tasks (Fiedler & Welppe, 2010). However, if specialization is low, employees would perform a wide range of tasks (Fiedler & Welppe, 2010).

Standardization represents the rules, policies, and procedures to ensure the organization operates effectively and ethically (Kikulis et al., 1995a). Fiedler and Welpke (2010) acknowledged standardization as being routines that can determine new organizational practices. These rules or procedures can be formal or informal. Finally, centralization refers to the hierarchical level at which decisions are made (Kikulis et al., 1992). Centralization helps determine which decisions are decentralized and made by lower-level decision-makers (Amis et al, 2004a; Kikulis et al., 1995a; Thibault et al., 1991). Andrews, Boyne, Law and Walker (2009) noted that some decision making power should be delegated to lower-level employees. Centralization is an indication of authority and level of participation in decision making (Andrews et al., 2009).

Cousens (1997) provides examples of how specialization, standardization and centralization became apparent in a sport organization. As demonstrated in Cousens' (1997) study on the design of AAA baseball franchises, the sport-centred archetype was found to have low specialization and low standardization because employees were required to be able to perform many tasks regardless of education or qualification. The sport-centred archetype was found to have centralized decision making. Simultaneously, the business-centred archetype was found to have a high degree of specialization, standardized operating processes and decision making was decentralized (Cousens, 1997).

In this study, decision making was reviewed as the only element within the system principle. Decision making is, arguably, one of the essential elements of the organizational design because it can influence organizational goals, priorities, relations and communication processes (Kikulis et al., 1992; 1995b; Stevens, 2006). Nagel et al.

(2015) used decision making as a system while studying the professionalization of sport federations at the national and international level in Europe. Stevens (2006) utilized decision making as an element of the system principle while tracking organization design changes that resulted from the merger changes between the CAHA and Hockey Canada. Decision making in organizations can be strongly correlated with the organization's core values when considering design coherence (Kikulis et al., 1995b). While centralization is related to where decisions are made, decision making focuses on the processes and their importance. Within the context of a radical transformation in Canadian NSOs over 12 years, Amis et al. (2004a) found that decision making process within an organization can significantly impact one part of the operations while having no impact on another.

These principles and elements are vital to understanding how an organization is designed. Although separate, the principles and elements connect to reveal the overall design, or as previously mentioned, configuration, of an organization. The elements within each principle address the different aspects of the values, structure and system to show what an organization fundamentally needs to operate successfully. Understanding these principles and considering the historical review of MJH in Canada is essential to this study's context. Canadian MJH has existed for several decades. The history of MJH provides context to how the regional leagues are designed now. This review of organizational design principles and elements provides insight into how this study was carried out and indicates how the design of Canadian MJH regional leagues was framed.

Chapter III: Methodology

Given the way MJH has developed in Canada, this exploratory study aimed to examine the design of regional major junior hockey leagues in Canada. The methodology and practices to achieve this study's purpose are presented in this chapter.

3.1. Methodology

This study utilized the qualitative single case study investigative tool. Qualitative studies rely on inferences made from the data and require insight, logic, and creativity to form reasonable interpretations of the findings that have emerged (Morse, 1994).

Understanding the MJH regional leagues' organizational design was examined through the knowledge and experiences of those currently or have recently been employed by a member team. To date, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the MJH regional leagues, and more specifically, their design, has yet to be studied empirically. According to Gagnon (2010), a novel research topic is an essential aspect of a single case study because it brings an opportunity to "investigate an unexplored phenomenon" (p. 41).

Yin (2003) described a case study as an informative method of representing the case under question. Case studies are a useful methodology to study an organization, an individual, or a group based on political or societal-related phenomena. Case studies are identified as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Case study inquiry, as described by Yin (2003):

 copes with the technical distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as

another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (pp. 13-14).

Case studies are the preferred methodology to examine contemporary events in which the phenomena cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009).

A case study is an in-depth description of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Here, Merriam's definition is applicable when studying an organization. Jones, Torres and Armini (2014) clarified that a single case study should be focused upon a specific phenomenon that provides clear bounded lines of what is being intrinsically studied, which the case of the MJH regional leagues provides. For the purpose of this research, MJH is studied as one case that the regional leagues operate within.

Yin (2009) indicated, case studies with similar characteristics can be studied differently. Qualitative case studies are frequently utilized to study sport in different contexts. These include corporate social responsibility in professional sport organizations (Heinze, Soderstrom & Zdroik, 2014), community sport organizations (Casey, Payne & Eime, 2009; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006), and social inclusion in community sport organizations (Maxwell, Foley, Taylor & Burton, 2013). Each of these studies presents a unique case to be explored, although not they are not exploratory.

Exploratory case studies are used when there is no single set of outcomes (Yin, 2009). Exploratory studies are also used when a study seeks to gain an in-depth description of a new phenomenon (Yin, 2009). "What" and "how" types of questions are those asked when inquiring for an exploratory study (Yin, 2009). Yin (2014) stated that exploratory studies are best when the goal is to "... develop pertinent hypothesis and propositions for further inquiry..." (p. 10). The exploratory case study criteria are present

in this study on MJH regional leagues. In the existing organizational design literature, MJH is a new phenomenon which has not yet been explored. This research opens a new opportunity for future studies to continue examining the regional leagues through organizational design. Following Yin's (2009) recommendations for inquiry in exploratory case studies, the interview guide was structured with "what" or "how" questions to elicit more descriptive responses from the participants.

This study sought to explore a phenomenon in an in-depth manner that had not yet been explored and opened a new hockey research area. Exploratory case studies have been used in a sport context (Barrick & Mair, 2019; Shipherd, Wakefield, Stokowski & Filho, 2018; Franco & Pessoa, 2014). Barrick and Mair's (2019) study on learn-to-curl leagues indicated the introductory sport programmes and how the participants experienced them. They acknowledged that their exploratory study builds on normative sport development theory that already existed but provided the adult introductory programs with the opportunity to be studied in other contexts or other sports. Shipherd et al.'s (2018) exploratory study sought to investigate how coach turnover affects student athletes in the NCAA. In this study, Shipherd et al. (2018) provided an analysis that suggested that the program's culture needs to be a focal point in future sport coach hirings and recommended this as a new research area for future studies. Franco and Pessoa (2014) studied the impact of partnerships in university sport and contributed to growing literature on collaborative entrepreneurship. Franco and Pessoa (2014) showed how partnerships can help grow university athletic programs and build more substantial integrations with society and stakeholders.

3.2. Sample

When determining the sample for this study, literature guided the decisions made on elements such as selection criteria, size, and acceptability.

3.2.1. Selection Criteria

A purposeful, criteria-based sampling strategy was implemented to ensure the group of individuals selected for this study would provide the most relevant information to the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The sample selected to participate in this study was involved or had recently been involved with one of the three regional leagues of the CHL. Specifically, the criterion for participant selection was as follows:

1. The participants must have been employed by a CHL regional league member team.
2. The participants must have been involved with the CHL regional league member team for at least one season.
3. The participants must have been employed with the CHL regional league member team within the past two years

Employment with regional league member teams was essential to this study because participants in those roles have the best knowledge of how their respective regional league operates. Member team employees have knowledge that no one would have apart from those who work directly in the league office. Holding employment within two years of recruitment is important because it allows the participants to provide a recent perspective of the regional leagues' design.

“Stakeholders” are people who have a vested interest in an organization (Crane & Ruebottom, 2011). Stakeholders, as de Chernatony and Harris (2000) identified, are either internal or external. Internal stakeholders are directly involved in or affected by an

organization (de Chernatony & Harris, 2000). They might include supervisors or other employees in an organization (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015). External stakeholders are indirectly involved with or affected by an organization (Mazur & Pisarski, 2015). They might include suppliers or consumers (Harrison & St. John, 1996). Due to their practical experience within an organization, internal stakeholders have unique insights and perceptions when compared to external stakeholders (Costa & Menichini, 2013), allowing them to play an integral role in promoting initiatives and branding the organization (Kavaratzis, 2012).

Member team employees in this case, are considered internal stakeholders. They have direct communication with their respective regional league. The regional league can assist with marketing and communications, player recruitment, and other initiatives. Member team employees have direct access to their counterparts on other teams within their league and are knowledgeable of how the league operates. Due to their inside access, the insights member team employees have of their regional league is much more in-depth than that of fans, sponsors, or other external stakeholders, who know only what the league shares with them.

3.2.2. Sample Size and Recruitment Process

While Patton (2002) stated that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244), Gagnon (2010) expressed the importance of having a broader sample with many participants than what a single case study would warrant to account for prospective participants’ potential to refuse participation or for participants to change their minds about participating. Patton (2002) also explained that sample size could be

determined only by the study's purpose, methodological approach, and what can feasibly be done with the available time and resources.

With that in mind, 75 individuals were purposefully contacted to participate in the study. Individuals who held employment or involvement at any level with English-speaking member teams and the MJHL league offices were contacted. Their position titles included coach, coordinator, manager, senior manager, director, senior director, vice-president, president, governor, and commissioner. The individuals were contacted through email addresses found on open access websites and the networking platform LinkedIn using messaging approved by Brock Research Ethics. In addition, through a gatekeeper at Brock University, alumni from the Sport Management program were sent an email that invited them to contact the researcher if they had any experience working within the CHL's regional leagues. A Brock Research Ethics approved message was sent to the alumnus. Each potential participant was given a letter of invitation (found in Appendix B) and asked to provide her/his informed consent (found in Appendix C) before participation. Every person invited to participate in this study was made aware that participation was voluntary, without obligation to participate. Efforts were made to follow up with individuals who did not respond to the initial invitation.

Participant recruitment began in February 2018 and finished in November 2018. Three rounds of participant outreach were conducted. Round one of recruitment took place from February until March 2018, in which 18 individuals were approached. Regional league staff (including roles such as manager and commissioner) as well as member team representatives (governors, owners and high-level staff such as presidents) were contacted with the intention of generating support and insights from those most

influential in MJH. At the conclusion of round one of recruitment, one participant was enlisted. Round two of participant recruitment took place from April until June 2018, in which 45 individuals were approached. Although some regional league staff were included, recruitment was broadened in this round to include representatives from member teams who held employment at all levels (such as directors, managers, coordinators, and coaches). At the conclusion of round two, an additional three participants were enlisted. Round three of participant recruitment took place from July until September 2018, in which 11 additional individuals were contacted, including member team employees at all levels, as well as one journalist who reports on MJH. In this round, an email was also circulated to Brock Sport Management Alumni who worked in MJH and based on their work experience were viewed as gatekeepers who might facilitate outreach in order to extend invitations on behalf of the researcher. Four additional participants were enlisted at the end of round three. In November, 2018, an additional MJH member team employee reached out with interest to participate in the study and was recruited. Data collection completed with nine participants.

3.2.3. Participant Recruitment Challenges

Following the recruitment process described above, a total of nine (n=9) people agreed to participate in the study. All participants were guaranteed confidentiality in order to protect their identities, as recommended by Baez (2002). The release of identity through a study could have repercussions, including an adverse impact on ones professional reputation (Baez, 2002). As shown in Table 3, each participant has been labelled with a pseudonym to further protect her/his identity. Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) recommended the use of pseudonyms because “if researchers are

maintaining the principle of beneficence, overseeing the potential consequences of revealing participants' identities is a moral obligation" (p. 95). Pseudonyms are an effective participant identification protection strategy to provide as much anonymity as possible (Orb et al., 2001).

Table 3: List of Participants

Participant	Name	Role with League	Regional League
1	P1	Member Team Executive	OHL
2	P2	Former Member Team Executive	OHL
3	P3	Member Team Executive	QMJHL
4	P4	Member Team Executive	WHL
5	P5	Member Team Manager	QMJHL
6	P6	Member Team Coordinator	OHL
7	P7	Member Team Manager	OHL
8	P8	Member Team Manager	WHL
9	P9	Member Team Assistant Coach	OHL

To recruit the participants, the researcher used networks available to gain access and gatekeepers who were willing to make introductions. Although these networks did not reach far into Western or Eastern Canada, the researcher was able to recruit four participants from provinces outside of Ontario – necessary to give a complete understanding of the regional MJH leagues across Canada. Despite the use of these networks and gatekeepers, recruiting participants from the MJH regional leagues proved to be quite challenging, just as it had been for others doing research on hockey in Canada. For example, Allain (2014) cited several challenges in gaining access to former and current players to share their CHL experiences: team officials being non-committal or refusing to allow their players to participate, others requesting interview questions or a transcript from another interview before participating. MacDonald (2012) cited that she

was required to provide all data collection materials to the head coach of the team she wanted to study before contacting any players, although this was not viewed as a major challenge by the researcher. Robinson (1998) explained that junior hockey is an exclusive community and those seeking to study it are often met with suspicion. Similar challenges were experienced during participant recruitment for this study. In multiple instances, it was requested that the interview guide be provided before committing to an interview. During a phone call to offer more context about the study, a potential participant questioned the intent of the study itself.

Small sample sizes are not uncommon in exploratory case studies in sport. For example, in a study on adult learn-to-curl leagues in Canada, Barrick and Mair (2019) concluded data collection with 11 participants, who accurately informed the researchers. Agyemang, Singer and DeLorme (2010) utilized the insights of just six Black male NCAA athletes to study racism and athlete activism in American sport.

Literature that discusses difficulties recruiting participants has been focused on environments in which the researchers acknowledge there was a fear of being exposed (Shedlin, Decena, Mangadu & Martinez, 2011), or that there was a general mistrust of the research process (Ellard-Gray, Jeffrey, Choubak and Crann, 2015). The politicized nature of some research environments can be a reason for difficult recruitment, as participants may fear sharing sensitive information (Butera, 2006). According to Newington and Metcalfe (2014), a limitation to participant recruitment is the amount of time that can be allotted to recruitment. In addition, Bodewes and Kunst (2016) indicated that there are instances in which researchers must complete data collection with fewer participants than

expected despite their best efforts, indicating that researchers must accept the participation they are able to gain.

3.3. Methods

The data collection method for this study was interviews. As Yin (2003) explained, interviews should be considered as guided conversations rather than as structured queries. Rather than a mutual discussion of the topics at hand, interviews are conversations constructed to allow the participant to discuss their experience or knowledge on a subject (Yin, 2003). Before the interview, the researcher must earn a participants respect and trust (Gillham, 2000; Glesne, 2015). This process is considered rapport building. Rapport can be built when the participant is invited to participate and continue leading up to the interview (Glesne, 2015). Rapport building can also include a guarantee of participant confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Semi-structured, open-ended interview strategies were implemented. Open-ended questions were prepared for the interview, but some questions were probed from the responses given. The strategy of open-ended, semi-structured interviews was utilized to make the interview flow naturally (Gillham, 2000; Glesne, 2015). The questions asked in the interviews were drawn from the previously discussed organizational design literature. The questions were strategically asked to give a thorough understanding of the values, structure and system of the MJH regional leagues. An example of a question used to determine the league's values would include asking about the hierarchy of authority (determining principles of organizing) or who the regional league's significant stakeholders are (to determine domain). A full interview guide that was used can be found in Appendix A.

Due to the difficulty experienced in recruitment, the first interview was conducted to collect data, replacing a traditional pilot interview. After the first interview finished, additional questions were asked to gauge if the interview guide needed further development before future interviews. Due to the challenging recruitment environment that existed with the sample, it was essential to use every interview for data collection purposes. Thus, after the first interview finished, a feedback discussion was essential to help develop the interview guide in place of a pilot interview. Powell, Fisher and Hughes-Scholes (2008) indicated that interview feedback is beneficial to enhance the researchers interviewing skills. The interview guide did not change, but the researcher learned how to situate better prompts or follow-up questions that already existed in the interview guide. This feedback highlighted the need for the researcher to remain calm and actively listen to the participant for probes on additional questions.

Payne (1951) gives a vital account of the importance of asking the right questions, formulating good questions, and actively listening during the interview. The interviews averaged 45 minutes in length, with the most extended interview being 70 minutes and the shortest lasting 25 minutes. The interviews took place over a telephone feature on the researcher's laptop to optimize the audio recording software installed. Telephone interviews provided the most convenient way to connect with participants, especially those located outside of Ontario.

All interviews were recorded using the researcher's laptop and transcribed verbatim, using transcription software called ExpressScribe. DeFelice and Janesick (2015) used this software and explained the software is beneficial because it allows users to slow down the audio files' speed to transcribe efficiently. While transcribing the

interviews, the speed was reduced to 50% or lower, at times, and the transcription was typed manually into a Word document. ExpressScribe also allows for playback, so the audio file could be re-listened to as often as necessary. Each interview was re-listened to at least twice to verify the transcription was correct.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis are interconnected processes that can co-occur (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Rather than approaching data analysis as a process that cannot begin until all data are collected, a cyclical approach was taken, similar to the strategy recommended by Creswell and Poth (2017). The first step in analyzing the data was to organize it. The researcher read through the transcripts of the interviews and the content collected from the documents several times before coding, otherwise known as managing and organizing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). While reading over the data, written memos in the margins helped build the data's themes. Memos were used to capture ideas from reading segments in the data, develop concepts within different data files, and integrate different ideas.

A priori coding and thematic line-by-line coding strategies were used in this study. Researchers (Stemler, 2001; Saldana, 2013) have identified a priori coding as establishing the categories a researcher will be using during coding before analyzing the data. The categories are based upon theory (Stemler, 2001). In the instance of this study, the pre-determined categories were based on the aforementioned organizational design literature. Saldana (2013) cited a priori analysis as useful while coding research because the researcher understands what type of themes may become apparent in the research. For example, Saldana (2013) explained how using a priori coding in the analysis was

beneficial because it enables “an analysis that directly answers your research questions” (p. 62). Although the categories are pre-determined when using a priori analysis, the researcher still needs to critically think about whether the data fits within the category on a deeper level rather than at first glance (Saldana, 2013). Lyles and Mitroff (1980) utilized a priori analysis in an exploratory study on how organizations identify and work through problem formulation.

Thematic line-by-line coding was used to sift through the data to find recurring themes and emerging themes that became apparent while coding. Boyatzis (1998) described thematic coding as “a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (p. 161). Line-by-line open coding is the process through which a researcher coded transcribed interviews line by line for recurring concepts, typically action words, that took place in the interviews (Jones et al., 2014). The use of a priori coding made emergent themes more apparent while coding. Throughout the analysis process, some codes emerged as more significant than others.

Following the initial thematic line-by-line coding, pattern matching analysis was used to match the codes and combine all data within that code to find the emerging pattern. Pattern matching is “comparing an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (or with several alternative predictions)” (Yin, 2009, p. 136). Pattern matching does not need to be a precise comparison of data, but it provides a researcher with interpretive discretion (Yin, 2009). Researchers should use clear patterns so matches and mismatches of subtle patterns can become evident in the data. A priori coding allow emergent themes to be clearly identified while comparing to the patterns that became apparent in thematic

coding (Saldana, 2013). Having a priori knowledge helped identify if the emergent themes were similar or dissimilar to the themes identified in line-by-line coding.

The third step in data analysis was to develop and assess the interpretations of each category of patterns. The analysis used in this study was an interpretive process that “begins with the development of codes, the formation of themes from the codes and then the organization of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 195). Developing interpretations of the data abstracted far beyond the patterns the data were placed into and understanding what each piece of data meant (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Linking the data interpretations and their patterns to the available literature on the topic generates conclusions from data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2017). While assessing the analyzed data with the literature, possible rival explanations would emerge (Yin, 2009). Opposing explanations, empirically, could arise and were considered while assessing the interpretations of the researcher.

The cyclical process of data collection and data analysis allowed for identifying saturation once it was achieved. Glaser and Strauss (1967), Jones et al. (2014), and Yin (2009) explained that maximizing sample sizes can be done through saturation. Glaser and Strauss initially introduced saturation to research using grounded theory, but it has since become a concept used to culminate data collection qualitative research using interviews (Rowlands, Waddell, & McKenna, 2016). Saturation is the concept related to deciding to stop sampling when the researcher begins to repeatedly hear the same information and no new data emerges (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Urquhart (2013) defined saturation as “the point in coding when you find that no new codes occur in the data. There are mounting instances of the same codes, but no new codes” (p. 194).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to saturation as sampling to the point of redundancy. Morse (1995) explained that saturation was subjective to the researcher determining the “comprehensiveness of the results” (p. 147) because there are no specific guidelines for reaching saturation in qualitative studies. Instead, Morse (1995) states that all data must receive equal consideration during analysis (p.147). The researcher should continue to collect data until no new insight is presented (Morse, 1995). Morse (1995) indicated that narrower samples can help the researcher identify when saturation has been attained. Morse (2015) viewed saturation to have been reached based on how rich the quality of the data was and attained by an appropriate and adequate sample. Once saturation was reached, the researcher’s decision to stop sampling and collecting data is justified (Jones et al., 2014). This study aimed to gain as much insight into the design of the MJH regional leagues, from the member team employees, as possible. Data collection continued until no new themes became presented and saturation was reached.

The research findings were represented within the text as a story of what was “learned” (Creswell and Poth, 2017, p. 199). Creswell and Poth (2017) recommended researchers select the form of data representation that best suits the study. Using a narrative to represent the findings added emphasis to the data because the participants understanding of the regional leagues operations is best explained through the text and shows where similar or dissimilar responses were made.

3.5. Trustworthiness

Case studies and, on a larger scale, qualitative studies have faced criticism for lacking rigour in the literature (Yin, 2009). Often, case study researchers have faced criticism because it has “been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has

allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 14). However, ways to judge a case study’s quality include in-depth description (Creswell, 2003; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011) and member checking (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Measures to improve the trustworthiness of this study were member checking, in-depth description, and reflexivity.

3.5.1. Member Checking

Trustworthiness can be found in member checking because it refers to how the researcher ensures accuracy in the findings presented (Creswell, 2003). Hancock and Algozzine (2011) found member checking to be one of the most effective forms of trustworthiness because it provides participants with the opportunity to share their input on the accuracy of how their perceptions were represented. Van den Hoonaard and Van den Hoonaard (2013) critiqued member checking because participants are asked to give more of their time to dedicate to the study. However, member checking allows participants to review how their spoken words are reflected in written form. Participants were each provided with a verbatim transcription of the interview for their review. Each participant was allotted time (14 days) to review the transcript and provide the researcher with feedback. The participants then ensured their identities had been well protected and they were comfortable with the information presented (Glesne, 2015; Jones et al., 2014; Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). Member checking will be complete when the researcher provides the participants with a summary of the findings and a copy of the thesis.

3.5.2. In-depth description

In-depth description allows the reader to reflect and make connections to the data to understand the study’s collection, analysis, and results (Creswell, 2003). Through in-

depth description, the reader can make their own decisions about what they believe the organizational design of MJH regional leagues is through specific details of the themes and the case's context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The researcher provided in-depth descriptions through the incorporation of participants transcribed quotes directly in the findings.

3.5.3. *Reflexivity*

Reflexivity allows the researcher to critically reflect and understand their role in the research process (Daley, 2007). It is an essential aspect of trustworthiness in a study where “the human is an instrument” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 45). Mauthner and Doucet (2003) described reflexivity as the opportunity for the researcher to understand where their assumptions or views might have affected their interpretations of the participants words. Reflexivity allows the researcher to connect with their experiences and share their perceptions during the study, creating a connection between readers and the participants (Glesne, 2015). If the researcher can better connect with the participants, trustworthiness is present in the study. In this study, reflexivity occurred through the careful construction of the interview guide and consideration of the researcher's own bias.

Some risks were present during the analysis process. The researcher was actively involved with a member team in the OHL for five years and employed on a full-time basis for three. There were times when the researcher needed to remind herself of the difference between what she knew from professional experience and what she knew from the participants. Being mindful of her pre-learned understanding of the MJH regional leagues, she made a conscious effort to separate what the participants said from what she knew from experience. This separation allowed for the participants to tell their full

perceptions, as they understood it (Liamputtong, 2009). Despite her best efforts, there was still the opportunity for her understanding of the regional leagues to come through. She attempted to prevent her biases from coming through in the analysis by reading through the interview transcript several times, coding line by line, and following the themes that presented themselves in the data.

Through member checking, in-depth description, and reflexivity, the trustworthiness of this study is enhanced. In addition to the three methods, regular consultation with the researcher's supervisor created ample opportunity for valuable feedback and ideas. The supervisor is considered an expert in this field of study, so her input was critical in ensuring the researcher made decisions in the best interests of this study's trustworthiness.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive understanding of the case study methodology, the recruitment and sample strategies, and the data collection process used in the study. Using a priori and thematic coding allowed for emergent themes to become apparent during the analysis process. Three forms of trustworthiness were presented in this study, including member checking, in-depth description and reflexivity, to reinforce the rigour applied to this study. The purpose of this chapter was to ensure confidence in the data collection, analysis processes and trustworthiness strategies implemented in the research. In the following chapter, the findings are presented.

Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the design of Canadian major junior hockey regional leagues. Data were obtained through the responses of nine semi-structured interviews. Employees of MJH regional league member teams were interviewed between March and November 2018. The interview data were categorized based upon a priori and thematic coding methods. Specific themes within each organizational design principles emerged distinctly from the data.

In this chapter, the MJH regional leagues' design findings are reported through the organizational design principles (values, structure, and systems) and its more specific design elements. The data were examined to show how the regional leagues are configured. The values principle was examined through four elements: domain, criteria of effectiveness, principles of organizing, and orientation. The structure principle was investigated through three elements: specialization, standardization, and centralization. The systems principle was examined through one element, decision making.

The findings from this study are rich and useful. Each participants insights helped to understand how MJH regional leagues are designed, through perceptions, of the regional leagues they interact with most. To show how meaningful each participants insights were, a chart of how frequently the data were used is provided in Table 4. Getz and Frisby (1988) used a frequency chart in their qualitative study about effective volunteer management at community-run festivals to show how many festivals indicated their theme in events titles. Frisby and Hoeber (2002) also included a chart to describe how frequently women on low incomes, municipal recreation staff and community partners attended workshops focused on introducing women from marginalized populations to

community resources to promote health, in three communities. Table 4 indicates that data from all nine participants contributed to the findings in this study. While some participants data were used more than others, Table 4 also demonstrates that insights from each participant was integrated in the findings.

Table 4: Frequency of Participant Quotes by Org. Design Principle

Participant	Organizational Design Principles			Total
	Values	Structures	Systems	
P1	12	18	4	34
P2	9	4	2	15
P3	18	14	6	38
P4	11	14	3	28
P5	6	4	1	11
P6	1	5	1	7
P7	5	-	-	5
P8	7	5	1	13
P9	5	4	5	14

The findings indicate that the organizational design of each regional league resembles the design of the other regional leagues, suggesting a consistent design for this type of organization throughout Canadian MJH. It became evident through data analysis that there are significant similarities among the three regional leagues. As such, the WHL, OHL, and QMJHL will be further referred to as the MJH regional leagues as a whole, rather than analyzing their designs separately. Haveman (1993) showed that organizations of the same size identify mimetic processes. Organizations which rely on the same body for resources will typically resemble similar practices. Naraine and Parent (2016) identified this particularly in the social media use of Canadian NSOs, that rely on funding from the government. DiMaggio & Powell (1983) described that organizations that draw upon the same resources and standards for professionalization are likely to be

similar, which is considered normative isomorphism (as cited in Naraine & Parent, 2016, p.144). Thus, the sameness across the MJH regional leagues is unsurprising.

4.1. Values

4.1.1. Domain

The services that most participants considered significant were education packages provided to former players of the regional leagues, the sponsorship opportunities the regional leagues provided the member teams, and player development on and off the ice. There is a significant reliance on the players and their development for the regional leagues to provide their services. Player-focused services, like the education package and player development, were found to be increasingly important. Simultaneously, revenue-generating sponsorship opportunities focused on the player's success and that of the member teams.

First, the education package was identified by participants as a useful service offered due to its associated costs paid by the member teams. The cost of an education package is negotiated by the players and their representation with the member team. A participant from Ontario, P1, indicated education has become necessary because “our focus is making sure that we develop great hockey players, which gives these kids the opportunity to go as far as they can [after leaving the regional league]”. Another Ontario-based participant, P2, stated that the educational packages provide a future for its players off the ice and “the opportunity to play at the highest level of hockey”. While the educational packages are offered to players upon graduation from the regional league, P7, another participant from Ontario, believed teams could choose to provide different

players with scholarships of varying amounts, depending on their likelihood for success on the ice when drafted to an MJH member team. P7 explained this by saying:

There are different levels of scholarships depending on how high of a pick you are. If you're a first or second-round pick into the OHL, you would get a bit higher in terms of scholarship packages. But for the most part all of these kids get packages to get post-secondary educations in Canada.

The most valuable education packages are given to players who are most likely to pursue a professional hockey career and not use the package offered. If a player is drafted in the last round of an MJH draft, he would be less likely to sign a professional contract and more likely to use his education package. That player's package would be worth significantly less than a package for a player drafted earlier in an MJH draft. In this way, the member teams save money on education packages owed.

Education through formal training opportunities is also provided to players in MJH regional leagues. These initiatives are organized internally and touch upon topics to maintain players and MJH's reputation, such as "safe talk and sexual consent", as P9, a participant from Ontario indicated. P9 also stated that educational opportunities outside of the formal classroom "that [the regional league] comes out and [coordinates] with the players, that the league facilitates, is one that players always seem to have the most positive feedback from" as they continue to mature. Other educational tools concerning a player's psychological, physical and spiritual development were provided. P3, a participant from the QMJHL, stated that it is through these types of tools that MJH regional leagues make sure the players have the educational opportunities they need while competing on a team. "We keep sending players to school and pushing them to go

to school” (P3) and “looking after guys, the way that allows them to develop as student athletes” (P4). A participant from the WHL, P4 believed the member teams rely upon the regional league “to continue doing the things they’re doing around education ... we need constant input from our board”. P9 noted that it is believed the education in and out of the classroom provided in MJH regional leagues “makes a real impact on those guys”.

Overall, the educational support that the regional leagues and member teams provide the players is meant to extend outside a classroom. Although there is a significant focus on post-secondary education, these initiatives also focus on challenges an individual may face as an MJH player. The packages offered are mutually beneficial to the regional league, member teams, and especially to players, to whom education is a priority. As a service designed to compete with the NCAA, P5, a participant from the QMJHL, indicated the education packages allow the players to “play hockey and put themselves in positions for university scholarships” if professional hockey does not work out. The education packages allow the MJH regional leagues to put forward a service. At the same time, the member teams can choose which type of education package to provide each player after playing in a MJH regional league, which can be interpreted as a cost reduction strategy.

Second, sponsorship opportunities were another service provided by the regional league to its member teams. This service is centered on maximizing profits earned by the member teams, which also benefits the regional leagues. Several participants indicated the regional leagues provide member teams with sponsorships that generate revenue by connecting the teams with potential consumers. P5 believed that junior hockey is an enticing opportunity for sponsorship because “it gives sponsors a venue to connect with

their customers”. Especially for teams trying to connect with their supporters, sponsors give the opportunity to engage fans with “an exciting product they can enjoy” (P5). Sponsorship deals are also used strategically to appeal to an existing audience in a new way. P8, a participant from the WHL, mentioned the CHL hired a third-party marketing agency to find national or regional sponsorships from which the regional leagues and member teams can benefit. From sponsorships generated from a third-party marketing agency, P8 said, “the club teams get a portion of the revenues ... and the league gets a portion”.

A third service that participants described is developing players relates to their athletic training. The goal is to develop players on and off the ice. Junior hockey serves as a step on the development ladder in hockey toward playing professionally. P7 believed “at the end of the day, without the players, the league would not be able to run”. The development of its players was considered crucial because the number of players drafted in the NHL Draft from MJH was significant to the success of each regional league. P2, in particular, believed this in stating:

The players that are taken from the CHL, the OHL, the WHL, and the Q always have the number 1 number of players taken. The most first-round picks taken with Europe and the USHL coming closely in behind that. So, it’s always, the numbers are the proof in the pudding there as far as the league produces hockey players.

P3 stated that “it really comes down to the player”, when considering who benefits from the regional leagues the most.

Another measurement of the domain is understanding who the regional leagues’ stakeholders are. The stakeholders were understood as the member teams, players, and

teams' fanbases. As a stakeholder of MJH, the member teams utilize the regional leagues to ensure that all teams were equally supported. The level of communication provided to its stakeholders was representative of their relationship. Several participants explained the importance of the relationship between the member teams and the MJH regional leagues through how the regional leagues can bring the teams together. P3 said "the order that it [the league] creates" is vital to the member teams. P1 continued that the "continuity within our league" is provided by the regional league is essential to member team success. P4 included the promotion and recognition of grassroots hockey the regional league provided as a way the member teams were brought together. The member teams rely on the regional leagues to provide opportunities to them for success and governance to ensure that each team is operating in a way that can be regulated. P4 acknowledged that each team is in a different situation but is reliant on the regional league to show uniformity among all member teams. According to P4, who said:

A major stakeholder is the franchises and the ownership group of those franchises.

We have, in our division, these are all privately owned teams ... some of the others in the [location], there are a couple community-owned teams, but definitely, stakeholders would be the ownership groups that put the work into individual franchises.

Players were also considered significant stakeholders to the regional leagues because, as P3 explained, "it's all about the player and their development". This was also confirmed by P2, who also believes that the regional league operates to provide services to all players, in saying:

I think it always comes down to the participants in the league. I mean, there's 700 players – I don't quite know what the number is but roughly in that kind of range. They would dominate sponsors – it's not really a highly sponsored league, so the players would have that along with ownership of the 20 teams would be the driving force of the league.

Some services, like development and education packages, are directed to the players. The regional leagues can attract more sponsors to teams because they provide a compelling product on the ice. P2 believed the players are the driving force behind the regional league and the teams. This sentiment was echoed by P3, who exemplified how important the players are to the regional league, in saying:

You could probably do a sunshine graph and put the player in the middle and have a whole bunch of lines and rays pointing out to all the people who benefit from that... It really comes down to the player.

P3 also acknowledged fans as a significant stakeholder:

Not just junior hockey fans, but pro hockey fans too because we're a development league. Our schedule's most similar than any other league to the pro schedule.

Although, it's student-athletes, we do have 68 games schedules, we have training camps, we have resources we invest in – owners invest in you to develop the next stars, to develop the most professional players than any other league in the world.

So, for me, the biggest stakeholders are the fans because we're producing the future professional talent.

Finally, P7 explained fans are a significant stakeholder because of the impact the MJH regional league has within the communities where a team exists.

Fans and everyone are engaged and constantly aware of what's going on. Junior hockey is this – are small towns in the [location]. Junior hockey has a huge impact on communities. It's a very big economic driving force in a lot of places. It's a lot for something that the city is very proud of. We've seen that in various junior cities across [province], if not the country.

P3 made a correlation between member teams' fandom and the importance of the players. If the players do not develop well, fans will stop attending games, affecting the member teams and regional league's ability to operate. Without having strong players on the ice, "fans aren't getting their experiences because the eyeballs aren't there" (P3). From team success on the ice to regional league success with sponsors, everything comes down to the players.

4.1.2. Criteria of Effectiveness

The criteria of effectiveness of the MJH regional leagues were evident by how the Board of Governors, and other leaders, such as the President and Vice Presidents, attempted to standardize operations. Alternatively, financial success was also an identified goal that dictated whether MJH was successful. Finances were considered one of the most important criteria of effectiveness. Without money, P3 suggested, the regional league could not continue to operate. At least "from the league [perspective], their success should be measured on revenue". Further, P3 also noted that if it does not operate to make money each season, it should measure its effectiveness on revenue to continue its stability, by saying:

From the perspective of, not because of 'let's make a whole lot of money,' but mostly from a sustainability perspective. So, a lot of junior teams, like 40-60

teams don't make or lose money. So, I'm not saying revenue from a 'let's make as much cash as you can get and run with it' but, I mean, 'let's make sure junior hockey is sustainable'.

P5 also identified that the regional league needs revenue for themselves and the member teams to continue operating. However, many participants did not believe the regional leagues operate to maximize profit. P5 stated "I don't think there's a whole lot of teams in the league that are in it to make money". P5 also believed for the regional league "to provide the services that they do for their communities and the players is certainly a way to measure effectiveness".

While finances were found as a decisive criterion of effectiveness, P4 explained the importance of having good players on the ice. Having a strong product for stakeholders to consume is just as important as measuring the effectiveness of the organization's performance because "you don't want to lose money, but you're certainly more concerned with the success of the teams and the individuals within those teams" (P4). Whether it be a strong team on the ice or good individual players, a good product is essential for the regional league to determine its effectiveness, particularly when it comes to stakeholders. P2 described the importance of sponsors considering the regional league to be effective, stating "the measurement of how they keep selling the league so strongly is by what it produces, and it produces first-round picks and NHL players. That's the appeal that the league does a good job in that".

Another measurement of effectiveness was the strength of the regional leagues and their leaders. In this instance, strength is described as the way the regional leagues can support their stakeholders with communication to member teams. Both P1 and P4

explained a way to judge the regional leagues' effectiveness because it was "only as strong as our weakest link". In this case, the "weakest link" was identified as a member team. This comment underscores the importance of the regional league's leadership having a strong connection between the regional leagues, the member teams and the Board of Governors, and the value placed on their reputation. P1 explained that if one team ran "'rick shaw' and did not have the same focus or values as the rest of the league, then they would very quickly tear down the fabric of what the league, as a whole, has worked so hard to put in place".

The data revealed that if MJH was ineffective, it would handle the situation differently, depending on the context of the situation. Different situations could pertain to organizational performance, managerial skills, goal achievement, and following core beliefs and values. It was found that, if something happened to the regional league that was seen as "being a detriment to the league, there are a number of things that it would do to correct any issue, such as levying fines, if rules are broken", according to P1. P3 understood that the regional league, Board of Governors, or member teams discuss "what's been acceptable, what's a good job, and what isn't a good job". Although, it was not clear what is a good job or what is acceptable. It was P2' understanding that once the leaders determined what was acceptable or unacceptable, "they would get rid of people within the league". The Board of Governors and owners, according to P2, "have the power to vote guys in and out, so if they didn't do a good job, they would get rid of them". With its heavy reliance on leaders, and the ability to vote on differing situations as they occur, the regional leagues provide the member teams with a significant amount of authority.

4.1.3. *Principles of Organizing*

In conjunction with the Board of Governors, the regional leagues implemented formal planning procedures that were professionally led and assisted by the member team representative on the Board. P3 described the authority within the regional leagues by stating,

The Commissioner reports into a Board of Governors and members, so the distinction between the two is the Board of Governors are people who are appointed by the owners of each team, and they say, ‘you represent us.’ The members are the actual majority owners of the teams ... The Commissioner has a whole lot of power, and, so, in all sports organizations, I would say that the most influential person there is, undoubtedly, the Commissioner... So, they have a whole lot of power.

A participant from the OHL, P6 stated that the regional league’s business side follows the same organizing principles, having specific roles such as communications, social media, marketing and business development. P7 identified similar organizing principles on the league’s hockey side, as “they have Directors of Player Recruitment, Director of Hockey Operations”.

The way the MJH regional leagues coordinate with the member teams is similar. Each department of the regional leagues coordinates operations with appropriate departments within the member teams to ensure that the Board of Governors’ recommendations are passed down. More specifically, the regional league’s communications staff coordinates with member teams’ communications staff when it comes to notices that need to be circulated to each teams’ media networks. The regional

league's marketing department coordinates with the member teams' marketing staff to promote the league, games or sponsor messages. On the hockey side, the regional league coordinates appropriate recruiting policies, rules of play, and trade deadlines with the member teams. If the member teams or the regional league notice discrepancies between the way each party coordinates with the other, P4 said either the league or the member team would "make recommendations to Governors on certain things that need to happen".

The Board of Governors and committees, such as the Executive Committee (a voted on higher-level committee of Governors), are in place to professionally assist the regional league. P8 explained that since every member team is represented by a Governor sitting on the Board, the member teams have significant stakes in their respective regional league. P8 believed the Board of Governors decides on all significant issues, such as changes in game presentation or play rules. The decision is then brought down to the regional league, so "I would say it's a large reliance on the Board for sure to make those decisions collectively". It was noted by multiple participants that there are also member committees that are made up of Governors that meet outside of Board meetings (P1) to address different issues before the Board discusses them (P2) to ensure that the regional league is properly assisted (P8). There are committees on the hockey-side as well, as P9 indicated, "whether it's a competition committee or a development committee" to help guide the hockey-related operations, such as new strategies to implement in on-ice discipline or recruitment.

Stakeholders assisted with the marketing planning. For example, the three regional leagues contract major sponsorship campaigns to a third-party marketing agency.

If the Governors tell the regional league to address something specific with the [third-party marketing agency], the league will assist. P7 explained the relationship by saying:

[Third-party marketing agency] is a middleman, and they reach out to companies around [location] and sell things such as rink board or ice logos, tv time-out promotions, game night sponsorships, and they go through the league to help secure those [with] various teams.

The only group outside of the regional leagues or Board of Governors identified in the data is the CHL's third-party marketing agency to assist with sponsorship acquisition.

The agency exists externally from the Board of Governors, member teams, or committees.

4.1.4. Orientation

This study's findings revealed the orientation was corporate because the way the regional league's legitimation is exercised through its revenue. Regional league funding comes from the member teams, special events, and sponsorship. P1 indicated that the member teams provide financial stability to the regional leagues through annual assessments. The assessments are "of a certain dollar amount we need to pay back to the league to ensure the league can still run" (P1). P3 provided more information about the assessments by saying that each team's assessments provides funds in the event that "if the league ever has deficiencies or a lack of operating funds". The amount of the assessment paid by the member teams to the regional league is determined annually. On top of the annual assessments, P3 stated that the regional league generates funding from a "ticket tax during the regular season and playoffs based on ... whatever's announced as attendance".

The regional leagues also generate revenue from different national and international events that involve players across the three regional leagues. Multiple participants noted that the regional leagues receive a portion of the profits from different streams. P8 specifically mentioned “revenue-generating events”, as well as the sponsorship money from naming rights and other sponsorships associated with events such as “the Memorial Cup”. P3 noted the regional leagues also receive a percentage of profits from the IIHF World Junior U20 Hockey Championship (World Juniors), “when the World Juniors are in Canada”. P1 also explained that the regional league and member teams also receive “player development money from the NHL”. P3 expanded on this form of revenue for the regional league, saying the amount received for players drafted varies “depending on the round they’re taken [in the NHL draft]”. P3 also mentioned that the “CHL could not prosper ... if the NHL pulls back on how much they give”.

Sponsorship, which has expanded in recent years, contributes to the revenue generation of the regional leagues. As P1 stated, “the league gets its revenue from league-wide advertising deals”. P1 and P4 explained that portions of “league-wide advertising deals” (P1) are “used for operations” (P4). According to P8, the purpose of the [third-party marketing agency] is to secure sponsorships year over year, and, in exchange, “the club teams get a portion of the revenues and the league gets a portion”. P4 explained how critical sponsorship is to the regional league office because “without that we don’t have a league”. As the regional league continues to develop the game nationally, there is a necessity to find sponsors whose brand image is “consistent with the league and its member teams”, said P9.

Concerning the underlying values aspect of orientation, the findings revealed a dualism of values in the MJH regional leagues. One value is focused on the development of players on and off the ice. Another value prioritizes the revenue generation of the regional leagues, as it seeks to make money by marketing the players. Both values are interconnected with an underlying focus on the players, but, the decisions driven by the values are different. One value is centered on the players' growth, and the other is centered on generating revenue through the promotion of the players.

MJH regional leagues make their services accessible to the member teams, players, fans and sponsors, as stakeholders. The player development focus of the regional leagues' services is explicitly directed to the member teams and players. In contrast, the regional leagues' revenue generation focus is targeted to meet sponsorship criteria directed to the member teams and reach fans through marketing and special events, such as the Canada-Russia Series and the Top Prospects Game. The regional leagues are meant to serve through both values. An indication of strong player development is focused on the number of players drafted into the NHL. Simultaneously, the regional leagues also determine their strength if they have generated revenue each year. The Commissioner and the Board of Governors direct and manage the regional leagues and the member teams. The findings predominantly revealed a greater focus on the revenue generation of the regional leagues, efficient operations, and their sustainability. As demonstrated by the emphasis on sponsorship, member team assessments, and special events, revenue generation is focused on making the regional leagues profitable and sustainable. With the special events provided by the regional leagues, the primary focus is on the revenue generated instead of allowing the players to show their skill.

The interconnected values of the regional leagues work simultaneously. The development of players and the focus on revenue generation coincides with guiding the regional leagues' direction. The development of the player's value is a stronger focus of the domain. The orientation focus is on revenue generation because without players, there is no MJH, as all participants noted. There is a balance between player development and generating revenue with the principles of organizing, although there is more focus on making money. The focus of the criteria of effectiveness is balanced between both values.

4.2. Structure

4.2.1. Specialization

The data in this study revealed that the MJH regional leagues are highly specialized. Specialization refers to specific roles based on committees and departments. Within the MJH regional leagues, many roles contribute to the operations. The roles are designated to departments specific to the hockey side and the business side, as P4 explains:

We have many different departments within our league. We have a head of officiating... monitoring what's going on across the league. In the business side, sponsorship being one, but also just administration and looking at how we get together and talk about marketing ideas.

The regional leagues have a Commissioner, who, P1 explained, is the "overseer of everything that it would entail". The Commissioner overlooks the business and hockey operations, ensuring both are running smoothly. Although, the Commissioner delegates tasks to other managers, P1 further explained that there is the Vice-President who controls "a lot of the hockey side things". Under the Vice-President, P1 said there are

people “in charge of different aspects of the league that make it all work”. P4 added there exists “a number of different departments, and they all have responsibilities, they all feed up to a different level”. P4 continued explaining the roles within the regional league, by saying “one side is the business operations; the other side is the actual hockey and staging the games...”. On each side, “there’s just different people in charge of different aspects of the league that make it all work”, said P1. These different roles include directors, managers and coordinators. The departments on the hockey side include “player safety and discipline, scheduling ... statistics” according to P3, “officiating, scheduling” according to P4, as well as “player recruitment” according to P9. On the business side, P3 indicated finance and player education packages are essential roles that would be occupied. There are also roles in administration, communications, sponsorship, marketing, and, with the emergence of technology and the internet, there are staff who do “a lot of social media and stuff like that for the league, and they have someone who does images” said P9.

The regional leagues offices were relatively small, consisting of around 20 people, each with their own responsibilities. P3 made a point of indicating just how small the regional league offices are, saying, “when we talk about departments, it’s normally just one person” in each. To provide more context as to the size of each department, P3 said, “marketing is one person, communications is one person, discipline, safety, and scheduling is one person”. The regional leagues must provide many different services to their member teams and stakeholders, but each department is one person ensuring each responsibility is complete.

According to P1, the tasks associated with the roles across the regional leagues were considered “all continually ongoing tasks” that adapt depending on the time of year. Different tasks that need to be achieved annually “are stimulated by the time of year”, said P4. P4 also indicated, although the tasks are all continuous, “projects tend to pop up every once in a while”. P6 factored in special events “like the Canada-Russia series with the [regional league] teams and you have to have the right ... event timeline for that”. P4 indicated that while some tasks occur during the off-season and others occur during the season, they are still tasks that get done every year. P8 expanded upon this, saying, “there’s a lot of time-specific things, being that we work on in a season, but there’s a lot that happens during the non-hockey season in terms of sales and player recruitment and those types of things”. Multiple participants noted that the continuity of the tasks throughout the season is dependent on the role and time in the hockey season. P4 stated, “there’s a kind of template to how we do this and what we do at certain times of year and how do we fill blanks”.

The findings revealed that many participants believed that each role’s tasks were ongoing and continuous each year. The findings also revealed the roles are carried out by those who are most qualified to perform them. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that the regional leagues are highly specialized. Despite specialization, the data also indicated some disagreement about the importance of the roles with the regional leagues business and hockey sides. As it pertains to specialization, the importance of a role is understanding how they interact. The hockey side relies on the business side to efficiently market or communicate with sponsors and stakeholders. The business side relies on the

hockey side to continue providing an on-ice product to market. If one side of MJH operations believes it is more important than the other, the dynamic may not work.

Several participants agreed that there was not one role that would be more important than another. P4 stated, “I wouldn’t say there’s a more important part than anything else”. P8 expanded by saying, “we need the hockey to have the business, and we need the business side to keep the hockey operations going. So, I would consider them equal”. P5 believed that all departments are “necessary and play an important role”. P9 used a wheel analogy to describe the importance of the hockey side and the business side by saying, “if one [spoke] is out of place, I’m sure the whole thing falls apart. They all hold equal importance”. P6 continued this thought, saying,

You can have each department all working together, ultimately, for the end goal of bringing in more revenues. So, I’d say they’re all very important because you might not have great equipment or the right marketing materials, so then they need to bring in more revenue for ticket revenues. I feel like they’re all very important.

However, other participants disagreed. It was found some participants believed marketing roles were the most important. P3 elaborated through a revenue-based perspective, saying, “I’d say that the marketing and sponsorship arm is important because they bring in sponsors, they bring in money”. Another perspective was provided by P2, who noted how player recruitment and development and marketing roles were combined, making them both important. Specifically, P2 stated that “the marketing of the league is extremely important, and that’s got to do with player recruitment and development”.

4.2.2. Standardization

The findings revealed the regional leagues to be highly standardized organizations. The standardization of the regional leagues indicates formal rules, policies, and programs to ensure that all roles operate similarly. P4 stated these rules, policies, and programs are “very definite standards and practices that the league is very adamant about ... but once things are agreed upon at the board level, we move forward with that”. The policies range from the governing constitution, policies related to member voting, player recruitment, and on-ice regulations. P3 explained that the league has a “constitution which governs and provides direction on relationships between Governors with the league office, members voting, changes”. The Board’s governance is best provided through proper communication with the regional leagues and the member teams. Communication is how the regional leagues have been able to standardize; accordingly, effective communications have been identified to have a significant role in helping the continuation of operations. P1 explained that “the liaising of league department heads to their corresponding team department heads [such as the Director of Communications to the Coordinator of Communications] to their corresponding team department heads to ensure that our body of rules and regulations are being observed and followed”. P3 echoed this understanding by saying:

... Bringing order and bringing all the teams together on one page ... they bring [number of teams] together, [number of owners], [number of different ownership structures] that all come to agreement on one thing. I think, for me, the most beneficial part of having the league is the order that it creates.

P3 showed how the regional league relies on the member teams to operate with consistency and uniformity. The regional league ensures those involved are “following all

the guidelines of what's been put in place by the Board of Governors and following everything that's on paper," according to P6. P1 believed that the communication was:

Very well-orchestrated with the league to try to touch base with all different people that are in charge of different aspects of the teams to make sure, again, that if we want to be successful, we have to make sure that we're all on the same page.

P1 also noted that communication in MJH between the regional league and the member teams is critical when a new team joins a league because "there is only one set of rules that we must obey equally". P5 indicated he felt the "communication with the [member] teams is good".

The findings revealed that many policies must be followed on both the hockey and the business sides. P1 explained that, regardless of whether the role is hockey or business operations, "there's policy and rules for everything". On the hockey side, P2 acknowledged there are strict guidelines for recruiting "and what we can pay players and what we can do for them and that kind of stuff". From the business side, P3 noted there are constitutions to govern the league, as well as codes of conduct. P6 included the importance of having policies, saying:

Making sure you're being professional on social media but obviously the standard of treating everyone with respect and following all the guidelines of what's been put in place by the Board of Governors and following everything that's on paper to make sure that you're being professional at all times.

Many participants said the policies are formal, but only some are written down. P1 explained, "it's not like we all have a minute book that, every time something changes, we get a piece of paper to put into our minute book to highlight what that was".

As P4 stated, the policies are formally made to support decisions made to follow defined goals. P1 explained that, regardless of the policy, the important aspect to consider is that a policy is circulated. When considering the regional league, the member teams, and the Board of Governors, P4 explained that it requires formalized and defined “strategic plans to reach those goals, policies that support decisions that are made on a daily basis”.

Participants indicated the rules, regulations and policies laid out by the regional leagues are well followed. P3 believed that the policies were well-governed, and if a policy was unclear, then “the onus is on the owners to maybe appoint stronger, more vocal members, if they want to see some drastic change”. P1 noted that a critical characteristic of the standardized operations across the regional league and member teams is to remain “consistent across the board”. While P2 explained that there are rumours of some member teams operating in opposition to the policies, investigations are put in place to determine the truth behind them when evidence is presented. If rules were not followed well, “then the league will hand down a fine. Depending on what rule is that’s not being followed, the fine could be quite steep, and we don’t make enough money to be able to afford fines”, P1 expanded. P1 also believed that MJH regional league’s standardization comes down to the member team owners and Board of Governors. The goal in continuing to be standardized is for the regional league to ensure that, from P1’s perspective, “we’re all handling things the same, and no one is going rogue”.

4.2.3. Centralization

The findings indicated the regional leagues were highly centralized. There was a strong focus on critical decisions being centralized to the Board of Governors and the Commissioners and, to a lesser extent, regional league staff. Multiple participants noted

that the individuals making decisions would change, but P9 said it “depends on what’s being decided upon”. P5 provided more explanation, saying, “a lot of decisions would be made at the Board of Governors level. In other situations, they’d be made at the general managers level. In other cases, it would be the marketers or the owners that would make the decisions”. If it was a hockey side decision, and depending on what type of decision, P8 said it is made at the manager or director level. P4 explained different types of decisions would be made at certain levels, “the Board of Governors is the ultimate decision making body” based on recommendations.

According to the data, the Executive Committees and the Board of Governors were the primary decision makers. However, smaller decisions focused on the day-to-day were made by regional league staff. P1 indicated, “if something’s going to change or be added, that’s when it goes from the Executive to the Governors”. P4 acknowledged that the Board of Governors were the primary decision makers but that “recommendations are made from our Senior Executives and the Executive Committee”. Once the Board of Governors makes their decision, it would then be filtered down to the Directors and all regional league office departments accordingly.

The Commissioners and Vice-Presidents hold significant power, but participants did not believe that they were always the final decision makers. It was believed that the regional leagues staff would be able to make decisions based on their areas of expertise because the Commissioners or Board of Governors/Executive Committees would not get involved in the smaller aspects of each position. P2 indicated some decisions are brought “to the Executive and the Commissioner to listen to the input from the Board”. Not all decisions would need to be decided upon by the Board of Governors or the

Commissioners. However, in other situations, P5 noted, “it would be the marketers or the owners”, or, as P6 explained, “it filters down to the Directors and all departments from there” to make other decisions. P8 also thought that managers and directors could make low-level decisions.

There were differing opinions as to who would make important decisions. P3 believed the Commissioner holds all the power to make decisions, despite the levels of seniority, saying:

The Governors technically have more say in terms of voting, and all that. I mean, the Governors technically, nothing happens without the Governors’ vote. Nothing major happens. But, I’d say, it all starts and ends with the Commissioner. He holds the hammer. He’s the iron fist.

Although the Board of Governors holds superiority over the Commissioners, P1 stated there is a necessity for one central decision maker:

There has to be someone who is ultimately responsible to keep everyone in line, give direction, etc. There are several others below [Commissioner] to run the different divisions, but you need a ‘number one’, otherwise it would be very difficult to get things done.

The regional leagues are not a dictatorship. It is “a ruling by committee by committee by committee, but, as I said, [Commissioner] is still the guy who spearheads everything because he has to be”, P1 continued. P3 explained the necessity for the Commissioners to be the most senior decision maker, saying, “if they didn’t wield that power, they would not be able to get everyone on the same page. They have to have that force”. P3 also acknowledged the relationship between the Board of Governors and the Commissioners

regarding the way decisions are made, noting that “the thing to consider is they (i.e. Board of Governors) typically never vote against the Commissioner”. Given this, even though the Board of Governors is more senior to the Commissioner, it appears the Board may not actually be the most senior level of decision makers in the regional leagues.

The findings indicate that the structure of the MJH regional leagues is highly specialized, standardized and centralized. The findings also indicate that the presence of dual values of the regional leagues in the structure. The specialization show that tasks and responsibilities within the regional leagues are specialized by role within departments. The departments were shown to fit in one of two areas. One side focuses on hockey operations, including player development, player recruitment, player safety, discipline, and referees, while the other side focuses on the business operations, namely prioritizing marketing, communications, finance and administration. The standardization of the regional leagues indicates policies and procedures that have been put in place as a guideline for employees and member teams to follow.

On the hockey side, findings demonstrate that there are policies for player safety and game rules and player recruitment. On the business side, the findings show that a constitution is in place to govern the MJH regional leagues, including the process that the Board of Governors follow when making decisions, as well as how the member teams operate. The findings indicate that the regional leagues are highly centralized because all the significant decisions are made at the highest level by the Commissioners or the Board of Governors. Some believe that the President and Commissioners would bring significant issues to the Board of Governors’ attention, and they would vote accordingly. Others believe that the Board of Governors makes decisions based on recommendations,

and would not decide against them. All participants agree that the highest level (i.e. Commissioners or Board of Governors) make decisions of authority within the regional leagues.

4.3. System

4.3.1. Decision Making

MJH regional leagues have to consider the hockey side perspective and the business side perspective when making decisions. P3 identified that the business perspective should supersede the hockey perspective. For the regional leagues to be sustainable, instead of focusing solely on the hockey side and winning games, the business side also needs significant consideration.

I think it would be wise for the league to make stronger, and more stringent rules to better protect the owners from themselves – from making some decisions.

When we're talking about the sports or the hockey decisions, that's where you become irrational and it generally harms or dilutes what we do in the business.

(P3)

Several participants believe that the decisions made on the hockey side and those made on the business side, go hand in hand. P1 gave an example to show this with regard to games played and selling tickets, stating "let's say, on the hockey side, the leagues say ... instead of 68 games, we're only going to have 48 games. It's not going to cut it for me, from a financial standpoint for my company". P6 relayed these sentiments, stating:

You need the business operations to put the people in the seats as well as bring in that sponsorship revenue. The hockey team needs to perform. They impact each

other both ways, so obviously it's not all about winning, but if you have a winning team, it does help the business side of things.

Other participants further explained the relationship between hockey-based and business-based decisions. For example, the hockey side's decisions impact how the business side operates and reflects a member team in their community. P4 indicated a team could "only put so many people in seats or keep your organization viable if you're not winning".

According to P4, if a team loses too frequently, the "experience begins to dwindle and people aren't happy". That said, as long as the team continues to build and be competitive, "the people keep coming back". P9 gave an example of on-ice fighting to show how the business side has to market the hockey side without being contradictory, stating "if the league is trying to get away from fighting ... then you probably don't want your business department purchasing a giant billboard in the city with a fight [on it]".

The data indicates that the Board of Governors' decision making process is quite simple, as many participants stated. P1 said the league would work through ideas to decide how the ideas can be implemented and enacted and then propose their ideas to the Commissioner and the Executive Committee. Ultimately, for the ideas presented to become a priority for the Board of Governors to vote on, P3 said, "it would be something that becomes a priority of the Commissioner". The Commissioners would then bring it to the attention of the Executive Committee and Board of Governors' proposal for discussion and a vote to represent the member teams as best as they can, P2 explained. P9 indicated that information would be gathered "as it relates to the topic at hand and [the stakeholders, league staff] put forth a proposal that ultimately gets voted on before anything would be ratified". The voting process, P4 mentioned, would be made based on

“information put before the Board (of Governors) on recommendation by senior staff as to how they think [it] would work”. Participants were not familiar with the decision making process for less critical decisions. P1 noted that collaboration between the regional league and the member teams would likely decide in this circumstance. P8 stated, “situations come up at the league office level and they review them within the [league] office of the appropriate people and they, I believe, would go to [member] club teams and sort a decision with those teams”.

All decisions, regardless of the situation, need to be made with the same considerations in mind. All decisions have to be made, P1 believed, for “what’s best for the good of the whole and not necessarily the good of the few”. The decision makers need to ensure that the regional leagues, member teams, and key stakeholders are taken into consideration during this process. P9 believes that sponsors are considered in the decision making process. However, P3 supposes that the athletes are the most significant priority during this process. The regional league’s most significant stakeholders are the “younger players and people we’re developing”, from P3’s perspective, about providing development. P2 provided the example of the consideration put into place for elite players and the effects exceptional status players bring to the regional league and each member team, saying, “Connor McDavid brought a lot of money to this league. Everywhere he played, he sold out rinks”. P5 explained that decisions are made with all stakeholders in mind, but they would consider the players the most by saying:

They do value all stakeholders ... I don’t think anybody is above the players and their development. I think that’s priority number one. But I know that, they do – they do care that those guys are taken care of and they are on the right tracks.

P9 indicated that the regional league would also take their sponsors and other consumers into consideration when making decisions. The regional league needs to ensure their brand is not being affected. In this regard, P9 stated that “when selling sponsorship or selling the product [on the ice] to consumers or finding corporate partners, you have to be mindful of the image of the brand”. A strength of the regional leagues and member teams is that everybody has a say and decisions are made to ensure everyone is on an equal playing field. P3 said that “once [the Commissioner] decides on something – whether it be something we all agree with 100% or not, at least everyone is moving in the same direction”, if only to keep the peace.

The MJH regional leagues focused on developing the players on and off the ice and the leagues’ revenue generation. Through the services provided to players and member teams, the financial support they received, and the support they can provide, the regional league’s two focuses came to the forefront. The regional leagues’ structure was found to be highly specialized, standardized and centralized, especially in consideration of the reliance it has on the Board of Governors. MJH has specific roles fulfilling particular responsibilities and formal policies and procedures determined by the key decision makers, the Board of Governors, and the Commissioners. Although the decision makers consider all stakeholders when addressing concerns, only the member teams can provide their input to the regional leagues, as they each have a representative on the Board of Governors.

Chapter V: Discussion

Findings from this study, according to the organizational design principles: values, structure, and system, were presented in the previous chapter. The data showed that the MJH regional leagues – the OHL, WHL, and QMJHL – are all designed similarly and did not propose any differences. In this chapter, the findings are analyzed to address the purpose of this exploratory study; to examine the design of major junior hockey regional leagues in Canada. In this chapter, the following research questions are answered:

1. What are the organizational values, structure, and system of the major junior hockey regional leagues?
2. What type of design is reflected in the major junior hockey regional leagues?

5.1. What are the organizational values, structure, and system of Major Junior Hockey regional leagues?

Understanding design principles, values, structure, and system, is vital to examining the design of MJH regional leagues. This study identified the values, structure, and system and elements within each principle of design to provide more clarity as to how the MJH regional leagues are organized. The findings showed the MJH regional leagues have dual values with the structure and systems supporting player development and revenue generation's interconnectedness.

5.1.1. Organizational Values of the MJH Regional Leagues in Canada

Values, as Hinings and Greenwood (1988) identify, help to outline what an organization seeks to accomplish through services, and how it should be accomplishing them. Coherent values of an organization are stable because they are not wholly fixed or fluid (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; p. 497), which means they are able to continually adapt to

meet changing environmental demands. Values was described by Junginger (2015) as driving an organization's design. Values set the tone for the entire organization's make up. As previously identified, four elements of values were utilized in this study: domain, criteria of effectiveness, principles of organizing and orientation. The domain "reflects the area of operation that an organization emphasizes and includes specific explanations of both the scope of organizational operations and the target client(s)" (Stevens, 2006, p. 76). Slack and Parent (2006) defined criteria of effectiveness as the "extent to which an organization achieves its goals" (p. 41). Dowling, Edwards, and Washington (2014) defined the principles of organizing as "the values undergirding organizational structures" (p. 523) of an organization.

Orientation, as Cousins (1997) refers to it, is the way an organization represents its "source of legitimization" (p. 322). Sources of legitimization can range from strategic innovation to meeting stakeholder expectations to resource acquisition (Wang, Thornhill & De Castro, 2017). In sport, legitimization can also come from on-field successes, the integrity of the sport (Soebbing, Mason & Ratten, 2009). Cousins (1997) found that a source of legitimization for one AAA baseball franchise under study was to increase its investment value and to generate revenue. In this study, participants indicated that the MJH regional leagues' priorities with technological and sponsorship opportunities were developed in order to meet industry demands, which in turn impacted the regional leagues' revenue generation and profitability.

The data indicates the values of the MJH regional leagues are reflected through two interconnected complimentary focuses. The focuses are player development and revenue generation. First, the player development focus includes the players education

packages, which are owed to every regional league player. Player education extends academically and practically to include training opportunities to learn outside of the classroom. Player development on the ice is another consideration to the player development value. The MJH regional leagues were found to base their effectiveness on how many players have been drafted into the NHL, and having good players to market to stakeholders. There are roles in place to ensure that the regional leagues have executive responsibilities focused on player development and revenue generation overseen by the Board of Governors and Executive Committee.

Revenue generation is the second focus of the two values, but it relies upon the player development focus. Developing players on the ice makes the MJH regional leagues a more marketable entity. Having talented players on the ice allows for a more robust product on the ice for fans to follow. If a team is not developing and getting better, fans will not want to buy tickets, concessions or merchandise. Without fans in the building to watch games, not only will a team miss out on essential sponsorship opportunities, they will begin to struggle financially. Other participants noted that while revenue generation is an essential value of the MJH regional leagues, the focus should be ensuring MJH is sustainable financially. The revenue generation and player development values are interconnected because the other cannot exist without one.

To conclude, the data indicates there are two interconnected values reflected in the organizational design of the MJH regional leagues. There is a stronger focus on player development values in the domain, but the focus is predominantly on revenue generation in the orientation. Between principles of organizing and criteria of effectiveness, the two values are balanced relatively even between player development and revenue generation.

5.1.2. *Organizational Structure of the MJH Regional Leagues*

The organizational structure, which complements the values, is the principle that determines what types of roles exist, which roles are the most important to the hierarchy of authority, and the roles which make the most critical decisions. The elements used in this study that explore the MJH regional league's structure are specialization, standardization, and centralization. Kikulis et al. (1992; 1995a) utilized these elements extensively in their work on Canadian NSOs, and their research has since been expanded upon in sport-focused studies, including European sport federations by understanding professionalisation (Nagel et al., 2015) and North American minor professional baseball (Cousens, 2007).

Specialization refers to the degree to which personnel within an organization are oriented toward specific tasks (Albers, Wohlgezogen & Zajac, 2016). Specialization of roles and tasks in an organization of any size, as Ruoranen, et al. (2016) explained, applies to responsibilities such as “dealing with external players, ensuring organizational learning and knowledge management, and implementing modern technologies” (p. 57). Highly specialized organizations will have several roles dedicated to different tasks, while low specialization occurs when fewer roles exist to accomplish a wider variety of tasks (Cousens, 1997).

Standardization is determined when an organization works in uniform as directed by rules, policies and procedures put in place (Hsieh & Hsieh, 2001). In a sport governing body, Schroeder (2019) found that standardization existed when it was ensured all organizations operating within it were following the standards put in place, for

uniformity. Standardization can be formal or informal. In this study, the data suggests that all the MJH regional leagues followed the same standardized procedures.

Centralization occurs when “all important decisions, not just those of strategic but also those of operative importance are made by the leader, alone or with the aid of his closest associates” (Janicijevic, 2013, p. 48). Janicijevic (2013) explains that the advantages and disadvantages of decentralized decision-making, such as an increase in equal distribution of power and only being competent to make decisions in a specific area of expertise. Baum and Wally (2003) found that strategic decisions should be centralized while operational decisions should be decentralized (p. 24). However, there is less control by high-level employees and increased risk the corporate brand could be weakened depending on the decisions made. There are arguments to support decisions being delegated to many levels of employees, but the decision making process would become decentralized in that case (Csaszar, 2012).

The interconnectedness between the player development and revenue generation focuses shown in the values was also exhibited in the structure of the MJH regional leagues. The interconnectedness was divided into two central departments, structurally, the hockey operations, and the business operations. The hockey operations, which fit the player development focus, had roles specific to player recruitment, development, safety, discipline, and refereeing. The business operations’ roles aligned more closely to the revenue generation focus, prioritizing marketing, communications, finance, and administration.

There were policies specific to the interconnectedness of focuses as well. There proved to be policies on player safety, recruitment and game rules, and rules that govern

the MJH regional leagues. The process of determining rules and major issues was done through the Board of Governors and the Commissioner, although the Commissioners' significance to the governance of the regional leagues was less clear. Some participants believed the Board of Governors would be the most senior-level at which decisions were made, with recommendations from the Commissioner. However, others believed the Commissioner was the highest level. All participants agreed that the decisions were made at the highest level. As a result, the conclusion can be made that the MJH regional leagues' structure is highly specialized, standardized and centralized.

5.1.3. Organizational System of the MJH Regional Leagues

The system principle was investigated through decision making. System has a strong correlation to an organizations values (Kikulis et al., 1992) and influences decision making processes (Kikulis et al., 1995b). Decision making should influence an organizations ability to achieve their goals (Ejimabo, 2015). Decision making processes are dependent on which actors are involved (Egli, Schlesinger, Splinter, & Nagel, 2016). Decision making processes can be open or closed (O'Brien, Clarke & Kamieniecki, 1984) to the interests of different stakeholders (Beyers & Arras, 2021). Decisions are to be made strategically to meet the organizations goals (Jansen, Curseu, Vermeulen, Geurts & Gibcus, 2013).

The findings revealed that the MJH regional leagues' decision making is both open and closed, but mostly closed. It is an open process because the MJH regional leagues and member teams can provide input to the key decision makers. The member teams are the only stakeholder group that decisions are open to because each team has a representative on the Board of Governors. However, it is closed because it is

predominantly the same people who make significant decisions. While it was found that the other stakeholder groups (players, sponsors and fans) are taken into consideration, they cannot provide any input, especially not in the way the member teams can. The regional leagues take both the hockey (player development) and business (revenue generation) operations into consideration. However, the findings did not indicate which side was more important to the decision making process because each decision was meant to be for the greater good of the MJH regional leagues and their stakeholders. Although the Commissioners and Board of Governors were found to be the key decision makers for the MJH regional leagues, it was found that the member teams do have a say in the decisions that are made.

In conclusion, the MJH regional leagues were found to have interconnected values, focused on player development on and off the ice, and revenue generation. The dualism of values was exhibited throughout the values, structure and system. It was shown through the relationships the regional leagues have built with the member teams, sponsors and communities. The MJH regional leagues' structure is highly specialized because there are specific roles responsible for tasks and formal policies and procedures determined at the league level by the Board of Governors, Executive Committee and the Commissioner. Although the Board of Governors and Executive Committee were found to consider all stakeholders when addressing concerns, only the member teams can provide their input because they each have a representative on the Board of Governors. The Executive Committee is comprised of Governors who have been elected to serve on the higher-level council.

5.2. What type of design is reflected in the Major Junior Hockey regional leagues?

This exploratory study aimed to examine the design of Canadian MJH regional leagues based on the perceptions of member team employees. Earlier in this chapter, the two interconnected values, determined from the findings, were identified as player development and revenue generation. The ‘dualism’ of findings was identified through the values, structure and system principles. In this section, two areas of literature will be discussed: the different designs of organizations are explored to determine the design of the MJH regional leagues and the interconnected values found in this study are explored through the historical context of MJH over time.

The first area of literature pertains to the organizational design type of the MJH regional leagues. This study sought to uncover the MJH regional leagues’ organizational design through three principles: values, structure, and system. Design, however, can be further explained through configurations. Configurations have been classified as generic building blocks for theory on organizations (Hinings, 2018). Configurations are a framing structure based on patterns found within elements in an organization (Miller, 1999). Configurations are found “because organizational elements are tied together by a primary goal, and all-encompassing culture, a primary function” (Hinings, 2018, p. 504). Configurations have been used in a sport context to explain the design of different types of organizations.

Multiple values can work together in a configuration to show organizational connectedness. Lord and Brown (2001) explained how values work together to become connected, through patterns. Jaakson (2010) displayed interconnected values to show a managerial style committed to different priorities. Values have dual roles in an

organization (Hinings et al., 1996, p. 911). The interconnected values identified within the MJH regional leagues were focused on the on-ice and off-ice development of the players and how the regional leagues make money, equally. Past research indicates that a combination of sport and business operations goals exists in sport entities. For example, Frisby (1986) found that sport organizations were focused on performance excellence and funding support, in the case of effective Canadian NSOs.

The literature shows that values are an essential principle of an organization's design, as exhibited by Amis et al. (2002) who noted that without congruence amongst all aspects an organization will revert back to its original values. The values significantly impact the system, indicating how the organization is structured (Amis et al., 2002). The structure of an organization indicates who makes the decisions (Lunenburg, 2012). The structure demonstrated there are many roles that exist for the MJH regional leagues to operate. However, the Commissioners and Boards of Governors are the roles that significantly impact the system. The findings indicate that the Boards of Governors, Executive Committee and Commissioners are primarily responsible for making the critical decisions within the MJH regional leagues. The findings resemble the closed decision making system within the regional leagues, wherein member teams can have a significant impact through the Board of Governors and Executive Committee.

In response to the research question "What type of design is reflected in major junior hockey regional leagues?", the design is a hybrid of two values because of the balanced interconnectedness of the revenue generation focus and the player development focus of the regional leagues. Although a revenue generation focus is mainly represented in the values, the strong representation of the player development focus in the structure

and system balances the hybrid. Greenwood and Hinings (1988) indicated that values are the most essential principle of an organizational design, by saying “the basic structure and processes of the organization were underpinned by, and reflexive of, a set of values as to what ought to be” (p. 298). Kikulis et al. (1995a) stated, while describing how to identify archetypes, design is to be “identified by isolating the distinctive ideas, values and meaning that are pervasively reflected in and reproduced by structures and systems” (p. 69). This means that without values, structure and system a design cannot be identified. Thus, revenue generation found predominantly in the regional leagues’ values, does not affect the hybrid with player development because there exists a balance between the two focuses.

With the determination that the MJH regional leagues’ design is a hybrid, there is now a shift to understanding hybrid designs. What are hybrid designs? How can a hybrid best explain the design of the MJH regional leagues? Are hybrids found in organizational design? These questions will be answered in the following section.

5.2.1. The Hybrid Organizational Design of the MJH Regional Leagues

Hybrid designs are well supported in organizational design literature across various sectors. Battilana and Dorado (2010) explained that hybrids as organizations that have combined different logics in new ways. Jay (2013) has characterized hybrid organizations as “combining institutional logics and therefore multiple ways of acting and making sense of organizational outcomes” (p. 140). Jay (2013) indicates that hybrid organizations can address challenges that would otherwise “dwarf the capability of organizations hewing narrowly to one logic” (p. 137). In Meyer and Hollerer (2010), hybridization was described as a ceasefire of different logics in response to complexities.

Bunderson, Lofstrom, and Van de Ven (2000) created a conceptual framework, the model of organizing, that identified four design types: the bureaucratic system type, the market enterprise type, the professional group type, and the community service type. Using Bunderson et al.'s (2000) model of organizing, Popp (2016) found that the Quebec hospital under study was a hybrid of each type. Popp (2016) found that the hospital was bureaucratic in coordinating and planning between different units, such as intensive care and surgical units, and dealing with constraints like the budget and government funding allocations, which also fits the market enterprise type. The professional group type was found through the hospital staff, who require special education and training to complete their responsibilities. Finally, the hospital serves a community in need, aligning with Bunderson et al.'s (2000) community service type. Each type is uniquely displayed in the hospital, showing they are necessary and serve a purpose in the design.

Much of the literature on organizations with hybrid designs is focused on the public sector and social enterprises. However, there are examples of hybridized organizations in other sectors. Andre (2010) noted that government-sponsored enterprises in the United States have strong political influences on public and private organizations. Andre (2010) found that government sponsored enterprises can have hybrid structures that are either controlled politically or by the market, citing Amtrak and the American Postal Service as two hybrid organizations that have blended influences from the public and private sectors. Joldersma and Winter (2002) also compared hybrids in Dutch public service organizations to non-hybrid organizations regarding the innovative strategic management and governance structures. Other studies have found hybrid organizations within state-owned enterprises (Bruton, Peng, Ahlstrom, Stan & Xu, 2015) and social

services (Evers, 2005). Research has also examined the sustainability of hybrid organizations (Haigh & Hoffman, 2011; Haigh & Hoffman, 2014), blended business models (Boyd, Henning, Reyna, Wang, Welch, & Hoffman, 2017), and governance structures in hybrid organizations (Cornforth & Spear, 2010; Ebrahim, Battilana & Mair, 2014).

Hybrid organizations, while once considered to be fragile, are capable of being sustainable and existing long-term (Santos, Pache, & Birkholz, 2015). It is acknowledged that hybrids sometimes hold incompatible logics (Gumusay, Smets & Morris, 2020) and have trouble becoming financially sustainable, but some organizations can align themselves to meet their goals to become sustainable (Santos et al., 2015). While the stability of organizations with multiple logics, hybrids have been questioned. Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury (2011) indicated that mature sectors are more likely to exhibit stability “so long as the relationship between the logics is well understood and predictable” (p. 335). Hybrid organizations are utilizing the strengths of businesses industrial and innovation abilities to effect change (Haigh & Hoffman, 2011, p. 25). A strength of hybrid organizations is that they serve markets that typically are underserved (Haigh, Walker, Bacq, & Kickul, 2015). Hybrids have the ability to tailor their goals as being oriented to their market and their mission, however there are instances in which all goals cannot be reconciled (Haigh & Hoffman, 2011). Smith and Besharov (2019) showed how stable and adaptive organizations sustain hybridity through structured flexibility. By creating a model for identifying structured flexibility, Smith and Besharov (2019) are able to identify the interaction of stability and adaptation to sustaining hybridity long term (p. 28). Miller, Kurunmaki and O’Leary (2008) identified

that hybrids “have distinctive and relatively stable attributes and characteristics, and are not merely intermediary or transitory forms that are trending towards one pole or the other” (p. 943-944). Haigh and Hoffman (2011) identified that hybrids are becoming more prevalent in the for-profit and the non-profit sectors.

Previously, hybrid organizations had been studied and considered risky ventures, especially in literature focusing on the public and private sector (Brandsen & Karre, 2011). The three common risks associated with hybrid organizations, identified through a literature review by Brandsen & Karre (2011), were financial, cultural, and political. Brandsen and Karre (2011) found that the assertion that hybrids were not viable organization designs was an over-generalization of the cases studied. Hybrid organizations do not pose more of a financial, cultural or political risk than non-hybridized organizations (Brandsen and Karre, 2011). In a study of public sector organizational design, Denis, Ferlie & Van Gestel (2015) found that “hybrids thus appeared to be a viable organizational form over time” (p. 277).

Organizational design hybridity has been found to exist in organizations across multiple organizational design literature areas. These sectors include healthcare, microfinance, social enterprises, and public organizations. Bunderson et al.’s (2000) model of organizaing was utilized, particularly in the healthcare sector. Utilizing Bunderson et al.’s (2000) conceptual framework, studies containing a combination of the administrative and professional ideologies in some capacity, exhibiting a form of hybridity, exist (O’Donohue, 2007; Deboever, Gemmel & Trybou, 2015; Popp, 2016). Battilana and Dorado (2010) studied the evolutions of two microfinance organizations as they transitioned into hybridity. The study’s focal points were understanding the hiring

priorities, and socialization policies to create an overall identity as the organizations undertook different approaches to hybridizing (Battilana and Dorado, 2010).

Hybridity in social enterprises has been exceedingly prevalent. Gidron (2017) proposed conceptual frameworks to guide organizations toward accomplishing goals in a study on market-oriented social enterprises focused on providing work opportunities for marginalized communities. Karre (2018) studied the risks and opportunities associated with hybridizing social enterprises in the Netherlands. Similarly, Ebrahim et al. (2014) studied accountability challenges when hybrid social enterprise organizations drift from their initial mission. Doherty, Haugh, and Lyon (2014) examined the challenges social enterprises face as hybrid organizations and identified the difficulties associated with handling conflicting logics as well as the opportunities hybridity can create. Hybrid public organizations are also widespread because of the relationships different public service organizations need to maintain for the design to work. Denis et al. (2015) identified contrasting theoretical perspectives on hybridization in public services, which determined that competing logics create tensions in the organization. Skelcher and Smith (2015) proposed new ways of explaining how hybrids exist in public and nonprofit organizations using institutional logics. While hybrids have been studied in many different ways and sectors, Ocasio and Radoynovska (2016) believed that “hybridity is the norm, not the exception” (p. 302).

The literature on hybrid designs of sport federations is also prevalent. A study on international sport-related organizations Casini (2009) found the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is a hybridized design. The WADA is considered a hybrid design type because it is governed by and received funding from international governments and other

ventures (Casini, 2009). Lucassen and de Bakker (2016) studied the level of hybridity in Dutch NSOs. It was found that hybridization occurred in some NSOs to meet the demands of the government and stakeholders, but that not all federations evolved into hybrids. However, it had a substantial effect on the internal structure and decision making processes of the organizations studied, as well as the relationships between NSOs and their member clubs (Lucassen & de Bakker, 2016). Svensson and Seifried (2017) studied sport for development organizations that displayed hybrid forms in their design through legal structures, for-profit structures and non-profit structures. Amis et al. (2004a) followed Canadian NSOs as they transitioned over 12-years from being small informal organizations to becoming formal executive organizations and how they were designed at the end of the period.

In sport organizational design literature, hybridity has been embraced (Lucassen & de Bakker, 2016; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011; Svensson & Seifried, 2017), described using different terms (Cousens, 2007; Stevens, 2006), or overlooked as a design type altogether (Kikulis et al., 1992). In a Norwegian multisport club KIL study, Skirstad and Chelladurai (2011) explored how the club continues to exist as a hybrid. The multisport club had to adapt to servicing many people with different priorities and meeting each different sporting environment's needs, which led to the club's transition to hybridity. The club has had to change during its organizational life to adapt and survive (Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011).

Cousens' (2007) study on AAA baseball franchises developed an archetype with three types; the sport-centred type, the business-centred type, and the indeterminant type. The indeterminant type reflected aspects of both the sport-centred and business-centred

type equally, reflecting characteristics of a hybrid organization. While not intentionally exploring the possibility of hybridity in the AAA baseball franchises, Cousens (2007) was able to determine that organizations can exist with a balance of interconnected priorities between sport and business. However, the term “indeterminant” gives the impression that the type is not an acceptable way of organizing because the design may not reflect coherence.

Language relating to hybridity that was similar to “indeterminant” was also found in Stevens’ (2006) study on the Hockey Canada and Canadian Amateur Hockey Association merger. During the merger, a “schizoid” stage was found. Stevens (2006) discovered that this stage was a time of design incoherence because of the transition, as two very different organizations became one. As change occurred, the new merged organization entered into stages of incoherence, or “schizoid”. As the merged organization underwent more change, it was found that it had become a coherent design that reflected hybridity, without Stevens (2006) specifically calling it a hybrid .

In both Cousens (2007) and Stevens (2006), the designs that are now understood as a hybrid have been described as a state of uncertainty. Alternatively, in a study on Canadian NSO’s, Kikulis et al. (1992) created three institutionally specific archetypes to show how the NSOs are organized. The three designs described the size and organizational functions of different NSOs; the kitchen table design, the boardroom design, and the executive office design. Kikulis et al. (1992) identified the NSOs fitting into each design correctly, yet Levermore (2008) argued that all sport organizations have emerged as hybrids. In some way, it provides the notion that perhaps some of the NSOs examined by Kikulis et al (1992) were hybrids. In an extension of Kikulis et al.’s (1992)

institutionally specific archetypes, Amis et al. (2004a) did not extend the archetypes to consider the potential for hybrids existing in Canadian NSO's. Rather than considering hybridity as a possible design outcome, it may have been confused with deeming an organization that was found to fit two of the archetypes as schizoid (Amis et al., 2004a). Nagel et al. (2015) stated that hybridity was most likely to be found in sport organizations that are focused on only sport and administrative domains (pp. 424-425). Along with Kikulis et al. (1992), Stevens (2006) and Cousens (2007) did not intentionally seek hybridity as a form of organizing. However, the latter two allowed for the data to suggest that a hybrid existed.

The above studies have shown that hybrid designs have existed across several industries, within and outside of sport. Thus, the argument that hybrids are not viable ceases to be relevant as the study of organizational design continues to evolve. However, there is a discussion as to whether or not the sport-specific design models can account for changes the sport industry has faced (Parent et al., 2018). In this study, the MJH regional leagues do not fit as an NSO, professionalized league, corporation, or amateur sport organization. Parent et al. (2018) summarized several different design models across NSO design literature and indicated that one model does not fit all sport organization studies, moving toward a new era of sport governance. Thus, studying the MJH regional leagues as a hybrid through the two interconnected values discovered in the findings provides the greatest opportunity to understand their design without the biases of pre-existing configurations.

Hybrid organizations are interesting in how they have developed. Organizations with multiple institutional logics may have otherwise assimilated differently, which has

been referred to as forms of complexities (Greenwood et al., 2011). In the case of the MJH regional leagues the hybrid design involves coordination between the hockey and business operations to achieve its common goals of player development and revenue generation. The MJH regional leagues were found to have a strong governance structure, garnering support from the regional leagues' offices, Board of Governors and Executive Committee, Commissioners, and the CHL Executive Council for its member teams and players. The governance provided by the MJH regional leagues is two-fold. The member teams make up the Board of Governors and Executive Committees for each regional league. The regional league's Commissioners make up the Executive Council, who ultimately oversee the operations of MJH with support from the CHL President. Financial resources were found to be acquired from sponsorship, team assessments and special events.

When it was formed in the 1960's, Canadian MJH may not have been designed as it is now. Although the CHL has existed as a governing body over three regional leagues (WHL, OHL, and QMJHL) since 1975, the design of MJH may not have always been as the findings of this study revealed, but rather that it may have developed as MJH evolved. Although it was not the intention of this study to track the design of MJH over time, the findings from this study provide an opportunity to explore developments that may have influenced MJH into becoming the hybrid evident in the findings of this study.

The second area of literature explored in this section pertains to how additional literature around the historical context of MJH displays the interconnected values discovered in the findings. As the Canadian MJH hockey system changed, internal and external developments shaped the organizational design of the regional leagues across

various periods. Internally, the regional leagues adapted to mimic the operations of professional sport leagues, especially the NHL. Externally, significant social, economic and cultural changes occurred, which drove changes in the regional leagues as they responded to the developments.

5.2.2. Internal Developments to the Canadian MJH System

Internally, the MJH regional leagues are heavily influenced by the Board of Governors that represents its respective regional league. The Board is comprised of the owners of each member team or a team-appointed representative. Having the member teams identify who represents them on the Board of Governors signifies the level of control the teams have in the regional leagues. The member teams are the only group outside of the regional league's internal office represented on the Board of Governors, despite the board making decisions that impact other stakeholders, such as players. Pearce and Zahra (1992) identified that boards are typically comprised of insiders or outsiders to be representatives of the organization. Insider board representatives were identified as current members of the organizations management team, and outsider board representatives are considered affiliated or non-affiliated from the organization (p. 412). For the MJH regional leagues however, the Board of Governor's composition is predominantly insiders involved with member teams and as such, the teams heavily influence their respective regional leagues' operations.

Corporate Boards of Governors have been criticized for acting in the best interest of top-level management rather than in the organization's interest as a whole, as they are designed based on the executive team's preference (Patton & Baker, 1987). Pearce and Zahra (1990) indicated executives will nominate their friends and protégées to be

representatives on corporate boards. The objective of a corporate Board of Governors is to effectively “perform its stewardship responsibilities and protect the interests of the shareholders” (Abdin, Kamal & Jusoff, 2009, p. 150). Comparatively, in nonprofit boards, there is not one board structure to describe every type of organization, however Nicholson, Newton, MacGregor-Lowndes (2012) created a diagnostic tool that can identify behaviours nonprofit boards. The composition should be a collective group of “goodwill ambassadors” (p. 45) who bring expertise to the organization in order to best serve their target constituents (Klausner & Small, 2004). Klausner and Small (2004) explained nonprofit boards “advise the organization on how best to deliver services to fulfill its mission, and how best to be a good member of the community” (p. 45). In the case of MJH, the Commissioners are the most top-level management within each regional league and need to work with the Board of Governors closely. A participant indicated that the Board rarely sides against the Commissioner, which supports Patton and Baker’s (1987) statement that boards can work in the interest of the executives.

Kouloukoui, Marinho, Gomes, de Jong, Kiperstok, and Torres (2019) also found that board members composed of completely independent members of the organization are likely to implement more effective strategies. To that end, Geletkanycz and Boyd (2019) found that there are advantages and disadvantages to both having a board comprised of affiliate members and independent members. However, Hoye and Cuskelly (2003) showed that boards who have good working relationships with an organization’s executives are more likely to be effective because they will have more trust. It was supported that boards with insider or affiliated members, especially those with long

tenures, were more likely to promote insular thinking based on the industry (Geletkanycz & Boyd, 2019).

MJH is a developmental level of hockey for players looking to play in the NHL. As a step in the development process for hockey players and staff, the MJH regional leagues tend to model themselves and their processes after the NHL. The NHL also has a Board of Governors who represent the league's teams as a "ruling and governing body" (Bettman, n.d.). Like within MJH, the NHL Board of Governors comprises member team owners or an appointed Governor (Bettman, n.d.).

The idea of a league being designed similarly to another is not a new concept. Joo, Larkin, and Walker (2017) studied similarities in practices of three major sport leagues in South Korea. Organizations will mimic other organizations to comply with norms and their environment (Soebbing et al., 2009, p. 144), stated in a study on the legitimacy in the National Basketball Association's draft lottery system. Although MJH and the NHL are different levels of hockey, Mabry (2015) noted that minor leagues often resemble their affiliated major league operations, citing the relationships between Major League Baseball and its minor league affiliates.

Another explanation for the internal resemblance between the NHL Board of Governors and the Board of Governors structure displayed in MJH is the level of control the NHL has over North American hockey. Kidd (2013) identified the stronghold the NHL has over the sport in North American that essentially shapes the way hockey is played. Additionally, the NHL controls "the development of talent for the NHL's entertainment industry" (Kidd, 2013, p. 355). Thus, it could be determined that the NHL set the standard for the way MJH Board of Governors are structured, such as the boards

within the MJH regional leagues. By giving such firm control to the member teams through the Board of Governors, there is a sense that the regional leagues' most significant decisions are made by those most entrenched in it. The level of control signifies that only those closest to the member teams, who are affected by the Board's practices, have the most input in the MJH regional leagues' inner workings.

5.2.3. External Developments to the Canadian MJH System

The literature review (Chapter II) explored a brief historical chronology and additional socio-historical influences that could have impacted the CHL. The historical chronology focused on how MJH, and the regional leagues, came into existence. Additionally, other significant socio-historical influences occurred during specific periods of MJH's existence. The influences may have impacted how MJH continued to develop into how the regional leagues are designed today. Reflecting on the three periods discussed earlier, there are signals of the two interconnected focuses that may have existed throughout MJH's existence. In the following sections, how the player development and revenue generation focuses within the organizational design of a MJH regional league may have been present is explored .

The 1960s-1970s

When the original CMJHL was created in 1966, it represented an entirely Canadian junior hockey super league (Hardy & Holman, 2018). In the early stages of creation, the regional leagues would have determined the values on which they sought to focus. Values are created at the origin because the values drive the rest of the organization (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988). Although values may develop over time, they will consistently remain the same as the organization incorporates the core values in

their change (Amis et al, 2002). When Canadian identity was so strongly tied to sport, and more specifically hockey, the MJH regional leagues were still being created. Bill Hunter created MJH to provide an elite level of hockey for junior-aged players before they turned to the professional leagues, aligning with the player development value discovered in the findings of this study. In this era, the focus was on the regional leagues' growth and developing NHL players. Hockey players were trying to be drafted by NHL teams, and MJH was becoming established as the best Canadian junior hockey development league (Drinnan, n.d.). Drinnan (n.d.) indicated that MJH was first created to grow the game rather than have member team owners benefit financially.

The 1980s–1990s

In this era, the CHL and the regional leagues experienced instability with teams relocating, changing ownership groups or disbanding. Despite this instability, it became increasingly important for the regional leagues to establish a fanbase for the member teams. Developing sport fan bases is important for the growth of the game, Mastromartino, Qian, Wang and Zhang (2020) identified that it is the responsibility of the league and the team to establish fan identification. This case is especially true because the MJH regional leagues are a governing body over the member teams. Gwinner and Bennett (2008) noted that to grow, sports brands take advantage of high levels fandom as revenue opportunities, notably through sponsorship. As the MJH regional leagues continued to market their league and create a strong sense of fandom, they began to take advantage of fan identification. In this period, there was a focus on revenue generation, as sponsorship came to the forefront. From broadcasting deals to naming sponsorship rights, the regional leagues' opportunity to connect with their communities had never been more

significant. The sponsorship opportunities created a new way for businesses, local or not, to connect member teams with fans. Throughout this era, the regional leagues continued to grow, and new revenue generation opportunities became critical to MJH's survival.

The 2000s–2010s

Throughout this era, the focus remained on both player development and revenue generation. Although there was a strong focus on the legal dilemmas throughout the 2010s, the MJH regional leagues needed to rely heavily on their Boards of Governors to navigate how best to continue developing their players and keeping the regional leagues active. There was still a strong focus on the commercialization of MJH, making the revenue generation focus significant in this period. Commercialization was also prevalent in the previous era, where sponsorships and fan identification were essential but has continued to be prevalent to the present day. Yoshida, Gordon, Nakazawa and Biscaia (2014) found that when a fan achieves strong identification, the fan is likely to pay to go to games, watch games online or buy fan merchandise. This makes the commercialization of hockey easier to occur. Fans are also likely to engage with brands that sponsor the sports teams they identify as fans of (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). The commercialization of the MJH regional leagues and the revenue generation focus prompted the legal and ethical dilemmas the regional leagues faced in this period regarding players' status as employees.

The developments highlighted the two interconnected values, player development and revenue generation, and drove the focus through each of the identified periods. From the findings of this study, the two interconnected values were explained through a discussion about the internal and external developments of the MJH regional

leagues. Internally, the regional leagues are organized to focus on both the player's development and the regional leagues' viability as a business. Externally, throughout the time periods from the 1960s to the present day, it can be determined that the MJH regional leagues focuses on player development and revenue generation have developed over time. Initially, the regional leagues were most concerned with the player development focus, but as MJH continued to expand throughout Canada, the business focus has become more critical. These developments have led to a greater understanding of the MJH system and gave context as to how the regional leagues have developed a hybrid configuration that incorporates the dual values.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the design of Canadian MJH regional leagues from the perspective of member team employees. This study intends to contribute to hockey literature in the context of organizational design. A summary of the research, contribution to research and practice, future research recommendations, and limitations are explored in the following sections.

6.1. Summary of research

Junior hockey, as Gruneau and Whitson (2012) declared, “is a longstanding part of the Canadian hockey subculture” (p. 164). When MJH emerged in 1966, Bill Hunter and a group of western Canadian businessmen and hockey team owners created the CMJHL, sought to fill a gap in the Canadian hockey system, to replace the NHL junior amateur hockey team sponsorship (Drinnan, n.d.). MJH was created to provide more opportunities for elite junior-aged hockey players to develop their skills to eventually play professional hockey at a level higher than Junior A (Gruneau & Whitson, 2012). Although MJH has been entrenched in the Canadian hockey system for more than 60 years, it continues to be an under-explored subsection of hockey literature. Given this, MJH offers a significant opportunity to gain greater insights about how the organizational design literature can be further explored through the context of the regional leagues.

In regard to the first research question, “what are the organizational values, structure and system of major junior hockey regional leagues?”, the findings identified two interconnected values that focused on player development and revenue generation. It was determined player development was on and off-ice, with educational opportunities and on-ice training services provided. The MJH regional leagues created services to

generate revenue focused on the player's on-ice capabilities. Effectiveness was measured through player development and revenue that is generated each season in order to remain sustainable. The Commissioners and the Board of Governors of each regional league are among the most influential roles. The Commissioners and Board of Governors' responsibility was understood to ensure that the regional leagues operate efficiently and sustainably. The regional leagues' revenue generation came from the member teams paying an annual assessment, a portion of member teams ticket sales, sponsorships, and CHL events.

The MJH regional leagues have several specialized roles that are responsible for their operations. The roles within the regional leagues are separated into departments, whether they are hockey-related or business-related. The roles are focused on tasks that needed to be completed year round. All functions of the regional leagues are standardized through constitutions and policies. They are required to be followed by the regional leagues and member teams. All constitutions are determined and ratified by the Board of Governors. The Board also makes all of the significant decisions, with the Commissioner's support. Decisions are deemed to be important but are also a predominantly closed process. Only the member teams can provide recommendations during the decision making process because each team is represented on the Board of Governors. All other stakeholders are considered but cannot provide input in the way the member teams can.

The second research question, "what type of design is reflected in major junior hockey regional leagues?", was answered by the interconnected focuses. The way the MJH regional leagues prioritize revenue generation and player development indicated a

hybrid design. While the revenue generation focus was specific to the regional leagues' priority of making money, the player development focus was meant to serve the players directly. The hybrid design identifies what the MJH regional leagues consider to be their main priorities. The hybridity in the regional leagues allows them to operate in a beneficial way to the member teams and continue being sustainable.

6.2. Contributions

Multiple contributions to research can be drawn from this study. These include contributing to the existing literature on design and hybridity and expanding these discussions to the study of Canadian MJH. Additional contributions to practice that relate to the MJH regional leagues are also discussed in this section.

6.2.1. Contribution to research

Several research contributions can be derived from this study. These contributions include introducing the phenomenon of Canadian MJH to organizational design research and extending the existing design principles to this research that have previously been used in sport design literature. Other contributions to research on hybrid design types are provided in this section.

Organizational design literature in sport is found commonly in Canadian NSOs (Kikulis et al., 1992; Kikulis et al., 1995b; Kikulis, 2000; Amis et al., 2004a; 2004b), Voluntary VSOs (Amis & Slack, 1996), European sport federations (Nagel et al., 2015; Lucassen & de Bakker, 2016; Ruoranen et al., 2016; Ruoranen, 2018), European community sport (Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011), International sport federations (Casini, 2009) and professional sport (Cousens, 1997). However, a gap exists in the sport design literature pertaining to hockey. In Canadian hockey, MJH is significant to the

development of professional sport design literature but there has been a lack of research explicitly focused on it. This study provides the opportunity for more design research to continue investigating MJH.

Another contribution of this study is advancing the utilization of hybrid designs in sport organizations. Criticism has existed, suggesting that hybrid designs are risky and lack control, although there is research that says otherwise, there continues to be a need to explore this. Raw, Sherry and Rowe (2019) and Svensson and Seifried (2017) called for additional empirical research on hybridity in sport for development organizations, nonprofit or for profit, to further the literature to benefit future research and practice. This study did not contribute to the sport for development literature, but it, in part, acknowledges this call and meets it, providing additional insights about hybridity in the overall sport organizational design literature. The hybridization found in the MJH regional leagues contributes to the sport organization literature as a whole by showcasing how business and player development aspects contribute to the design.

In a study on Dutch national sport federations, Lucassen and de Bakker (2016) similarly called for future research to include the local member clubs they govern in hybridity research. The call for future research was extended to studying the relationship between the national sport federations and the local member clubs. Although they acknowledged that the study of hybridity in sport organizations is provocative, it is important for future design research. This study addresses this call, in part, by using the member team employee perspective in understanding the design of the regional leagues, where a hybrid was found. Since some previous sport design literature has not considered a hybrid as a possible outcome when determining an organization's design, this study

acknowledges the hybrid designs' existence. This study contributes to the existing literature that has found the validity of hybridity in design.

6.2.2. Contributions for practice

Multiple contributions for practice for the MJH regional leagues can be made from the findings of this study. These contributions are focused on the sustainability of the MJH regional leagues. Many participants mentioned the importance of sustainability to Canadian MJHs survival, so providing contributions that will serve the regional leagues in practice is important to this study. The practical contributions of sustainability are focused on the hybrid design found in the MJH regional leagues, maintaining the design, and how this study can help educate those who want to work within the regional leagues.

The MJH regional leagues' organizational design was found to be a hybrid of two focuses, revenue generation and player development. While the hybrid was deeply entrenched in the regional leagues' design, maintaining the hybrid is even more critical. Shifts or changes can occur but it is important to maintain a hybrid design to continue achieving its goals (Minkoff, 2002). Several participants indicated that without either the hockey-specific roles or the business-specific roles, the leagues would not continue operating.

Maintaining the hybrid design that focuses on revenue generation and player development is essential for each regional league's existence. The balance between the dual values of the league is very much interconnected. Without the player development focus of the regional leagues, the revenue generation focus would not exist. There is a delicate balance between the two in maintaining the hybrid that is important to the

regional leagues' sustainability. The interconnectedness binds nearly every aspect of the regional leagues' operations, from the services provided, how revenue is generated, the policies that exist, and how decisions are made. Both player development and revenue generation are consistently the main priorities. Building resilience is an important aspect of organizational design for survival (Mallak, 1998). Without resilience, an organization will not maintain its design through any shifts in the industry. Putting too much additional emphasis on one of the values would mean overshadowing the other. This would negate the hybridity of the regional leagues.

There is potential for competitive pressures in hybrid organizations where tensions arise as they seek to accomplish both market and mission goals (Doherty et al., 2014). Pressure in the regional leagues' can arise from either the hockey side (player development) or the business side (revenue generation). Pressure could exist if one side considers its responsibilities more important than the other. This is exemplified in Stevens' (2006) study on the CAHA and Hockey Canada merger. The pressures that developed due to the merger going through several stages of uncertainty changed the Canadian Hockey Association's priorities. Before the organization could settle into the design that currently exists, forces were trying to implement priorities directly reminiscent of either Hockey Canada or the CAHA rather than finding a combination of the two that would work. The MJH regional leagues need to ensure that both revenue generation and player development are given attention and resources and are not separately prioritized to sustain the hybrid design found in this study.

Another practical contribution this study provides is an inside view of the exclusive system that is MJH. For young professionals looking to enter the system, this

study offers a way to better understand how the MJH regional leagues operate. Due to the lack of research on MJH, those eager to learn more about the regional leagues do not have many resources. Business models have been studied in other sport contexts that can provide information for professionals wanting to learn about the sector or industry. For example, in NASCAR, there is extensive literature available specifically on the business model and operations (Giangola & O'Connell, 2007; Hagstrom, 2001; Mahar, Paul & Stone, 2005; Yost, 2007). Giangola and O'Connell (2007) explain the importance of understanding NASCAR's business and its relationship with sponsors and other stakeholders to continue operating. Having literature available on the design of MJH regional leagues would allow those wanting to work in MJH to understand what the priorities are and give more opportunity to make the regional leagues better. Similar to the studies on the business of NASCAR, this study can better provide context to the operations of MJH. Learning about an industry or an organization before starting to work in it is important to be an effective employee (Pelczarski, 2017). This study allows for MJH regional leagues to improve their sustainability because their employees can be better educated on the league's operations and design within the context of the environment MJH has faced in the past as well as the present. Thus, this study can help MJH regional league employees, current and incoming, have a new perspective to contribute to the regional leagues more effectively.

6.3. Future Research

The importance of this study is heightened by how many different areas of research are brought together. Before this study, MJH had not yet been studied in the context of organizational design. This research extends sport organizational design

research and provides more support for the validity of hybrid organizations. This study, focusing on member team employee perceptions, creates the opportunity for future research to explore MJH in several different ways. In this section, five recommendations about how future research can expand upon this study are discussed. These recommendations are provided through changes to the sample, the research design, and by incorporating other design principles.

First, one direction for future research on the design of MJH is to expand the sample of participants. In this study, the sample consisted of MJH member team employees. Future research could include using a broader sample to include regional league staff. Rather than limiting the sample to member team employees, considering the regional league staffs perspectives could build further understanding of how the MJH regional leagues are designed. In this case, the league staff would be the most internal level of stakeholder, whose perspectives would offer insights that contribute to the discussion of MJH regional leagues' design. This could offer different explanations to the design or contribute to a greater understanding of the revenue generation, and player development interconnected focuses found in this study. A sample of regional league staff could also further explore the distribution of balanced hybrid found in this study. Insights from the regional league staff could more deeply reveal if the hybrid is balanced, as this study concluded, or if there is an unbalanced distribution between the dual values evident in the findings of this study.

Another direction for future research is to implement a different research design. This study was conducted using an exploratory case study method, but there is an opportunity to study the MJH regional leagues' design in other ways. Firstly, future

studies could include using a longitudinal study design. While this study drew upon historical events to explain how the regional leagues may have come to be designed as a hybrid of the revenue generation and player development values, a longitudinal study would allow for researchers to track the design over a period of time. A longitudinal study could start researching the regional leagues' design from the beginning of the original CMJHL in the 1960s through to the present day.

Secondly, future research could shift the study's focus from the three regional leagues to a narrower scope. Rather than focusing the study on the three regional leagues' design, future research could look at one regional league independently, whether it be the OHL, WHL, or QMJHL. Studying one regional league at a time will allow for an in-depth exploration of one definite case. Studying the regional leagues independently can also lead to a future study comparing the regional leagues. Finally, future research can further narrow the organizational design scope in MJH to studying the member teams individually. Although this suggestion will change the scope from studying the regional leagues to studying the MJH member teams, a worthwhile investigation would be pursued. Studying the design of member teams will allow this study to be extended to determine if the member teams have a similar or different organizational design compared to the regional league design found in this research.

A third recommendation for future research could combine the first two; by implementing a historical longitudinal study to examine MJH member team designs. Future research could identify the design of the member teams which are community owned or the member teams which are privately owned. An extension of that research

could come involve comparing the design of the member teams with different ownership structures.

A fourth recommendation for future research is to expand upon this study with another organizational design principle: organizational effectiveness. While this study did not consider the effectiveness of the hybrid design, future research could be extended to determine if the interconnected focus of revenue generation and player development is a practical design for the regional leagues. There is no single definition of organizational effectiveness, but effectiveness has been measured through criteria, though Cameron (1986) has deemed them to have holes. Literature has emerged, creating models to evaluate effectiveness. Cameron and Whetten (1982) offers a comparison of effectiveness models that could be a useful approach to assessing organizational effectiveness applied to the hybrid design of MJH regional leagues. Future research incorporating organizational effectiveness could explore the effect long-tenured leaders have had on the organizational design of MJH regional leagues or teams. The historical chronology of MJH showed that the MJH regional league commissioners

A fifth recommendation for future research is to determine if the hybrid design of MJH regional leagues is conducive to providing solutions for the challenges previously identified. As outlined in the introductory chapter, the number of CHL players drafted into the NHL has declined over the past decade. Although the CHL competes against the NCAA to recruit the best junior-aged hockey players in North American, the number of NCAA players selected by NHL teams has remained relatively the same over the past ten years. Statistics indicate that more European hockey players have been selected since 2010. Future research could investigate if the hybrid design found in MJH regional

leagues is effective in reaching the goal of developing elite junior-aged hockey players to be selected in the NHL Draft. Future research could also explore if changes to the MJH regional leagues design are required to enhance player development in order to compete with European and American development leagues.

Future research could also explore how the recent NCAA policy change to allow athletes to accept endorsement deals and profit from the use of their likeness will affect an athlete's decision between playing in the NCAA or the CHL. Literature has discussed the growing commercialization of the NCAA as a tax exempt entity (Kurrass, 2020), and how NCAA athlete endorsements may impact the programs commercialization (Corgan, 2012). Previously, the NCAA did not allow athletes to accept personal sponsorship deals or to receive payment for the use of their name, image or likeness, but, in June 2021, that policy was waived (Blinder, 2021). Future research could explore how this policy change affects an already growing concern to MJH, if junior-aged athletes are able to play hockey in the NCAA on scholarship and make money through endorsement deals.

A final recommendation for future research would be to use the historical context of MJH provided in this study to be the driving force in the study of the regional league's design. The MJH historical chronology and socio-historical contexts outlined in the literature review provides a foundational understanding of the MJH regional leagues. Future research could use that literature to be the focal point of the study, doing a historical review of how a regional league's design evolved as it reacted to the social, economical, and cultural changes occurring over time, such as the MJH periods discussed earlier. These studies could utilize documents from the initial creation of the regional leagues, such as meeting minutes, media releases and policies to show the

evolution. Gaining access to those who were involved in the regional leagues when they were first formed would round out the story of how the design of the regional leagues evolved.

6.4. Limitations

This study accomplished a great deal to advance our understanding of the organizational design of MJH regional leagues, but three limitations need to be addressed. These limitations include the researcher's knowledge of the research context, the exploratory case study research design, and the sample size. Like many research studies, this study was created out of personal interest. As was mentioned in the trustworthiness section of Chapter 3, the researcher is very close to the topic. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) indicated that any form of researcher influence or biases would be detrimental to the study. An interview guide was followed to help the researcher limit her own biases and knowledge during the data collection process to limit her influence on the discussion (Liamputtong, 2009). A conscious effort was made to prevent the researcher from interrupting or guiding the conversation too far away from the interview guide with the researcher's pre-existing knowledge of the regional leagues.

Another limitation of this study pertains to the criticism that surrounds the nature of exploratory studies. Exploratory studies are a form of case study that is meant to be used the first time a phenomenon has been studied (Yin, 2009). There is criticism that exploratory studies are too open-ended and do not have a sense of finality (Yin, 2009). However, Raeburn, Schmied, Hungerford and Cleary (2015) explained that exploratory studies are typically meant to be a starting point for future research. As described in the

Future Research section of this chapter, there are several ways for this study to create an opportunity for more investigation.

A final limitation of this study was the small sample size of this study. Data collection was completed with nine participants. There are no rules on how large or small a sample size should be in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), but there is discussion about what is an appropriate sample size (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Despite having a small sample size, other exploratory studies also have a smaller number of participants, as previously discussed in chapter three. Barrick and Mair (2019) concluded data collection with 11 participants in an exploratory study on Canadian adult introductory curling leagues. Agyemang et al. (2010) had a sample size of six in an exploratory study of black NCAA athletes. This suggests that exploratory studies allow for a smaller sample size due to exploratory studies' introductory nature.

In this study, data collection continued until saturation was reached. As was discussed in Chapter 3, saturation was reached through a cyclical process of collecting and analyzing data. The cyclical approach allowed saturation to be identified easier (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Morse (1995) explained that saturation is dependent on the researcher determining how rich the data were and when themes became recurrent, but that there are no rules defined to estimate the sample size necessary to reach saturation. Despite facing challenges recruiting participants, data collection would have continued as long as necessary had saturation not been reached.

The sample size was impacted by the sensitive and exclusive nature of MJH in Canada. The environment surrounding MJH is very closed off to those who are perceived as outsiders. Distrust of outsiders to an exclusive environment can occur because

outsiders no longer remain complete outsiders (Mullings, 1999). Thus, the environment becomes less exclusive. The exclusive nature of MJH has previously been noted in the literature (Allain, 2014; MacDonald, 2012; Robinson, 1998). This affected the ability to recruit and the distribution among the participants across the regional leagues. Of the nine participants, five were from the OHL, two were from the WHL, and two were from the QMJHL. The findings indicated that the insights from each participant were similar, with no new understandings presented. With saturation reached, the distribution across the regional leagues is acceptable for an exploratory study.

A recruitment method that was exercised in this study was utilizing gatekeepers. Agbebiyi (2013) cited the use of gatekeepers to help recruit participants in politically challenging research contexts. Gatekeepers can help potential participants feel more at ease participating because of their willingness to connect them with the researcher (Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin & Murphy, 2016). However, a gatekeepers help can only extend so far for a multitude of reasons (Dempsey et al., 2016), only two participants were gained through the gatekeeper.

Elmir, Schmied, Jackson and Wilkes (2011) indicated that building rapport with potential participants begins at the recruitment stage for studies of a sensitive nature. When potential participants were first invited to participate in this study, a clear message about the context and the goals were presented. The purpose of this directive was to inform and to answer any immediate questions or concerns. In some cases, the emails were responded to asking for more information, which was seen as an opportunity to continue building rapport and having more discussion. Initiating several informal conversations before the interview can lead to stronger rapport and a higher likelihood

that potential participants will accept invitations to participate (Elmir et al., 2011). Peters, Jackson and Rudge (2008) indicated that, with sensitive research topics, reciprocity could achieve higher levels of rapport and trust between the potential participant and interviewer. Reciprocity took place as many participants required informal email exchanges or phone conversations to ask more questions about the study. These conversations were intended to provide the potential participant with more context about the study and to reassure that confidentiality would be provided. After these exchanges, the potential participants accepted their invitations.

Although the closed community within MJH made participant recruitment challenging, the sample met the criteria outlined for this study. Could other methods of recruitment have been more effective? Potentially. However, the member team employees who did participate met the criteria, and they provided reliable, rich insights on the MJH regional leagues. Considering the sample size of other exploratory studies, the sensitive nature of MJH and that saturation was reached, the sample is not a concern.

6.5. Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine how the Canadian MJH regional hockey leagues were designed from the perspective of member teams' employees. Another motivation of this study was to help contribute to the academic hockey and MJH literature and provide an opportunity for future scholars to build upon this study in an organizational design context and extend our understanding of this part of the Canadian hockey system. This purpose was achieved through semi-structured interviews and a priori, thematic line-by-line coding.

MJH regional league design was identified through two interconnected focuses of revenue generation and player development. Revenue generation was indicated as a significant priority of the regional leagues because they were concerned for financial sustainability. Player development was exemplified through the on, and off-ice development services the regional leagues provide and the responsibilities of ensuring the services are carried out. Player development was found to be a significant priority of the regional leagues because, if the leagues do not take care of their players, on and off the ice, it was found that the league may not be able to exist. The hybridity of the MJH regional leagues shows the importance of interconnected values as a key part of an organization design. This study aided in extending the academic literature on how MJH is studied and contributed to an additional organizational design context, which had previously not been explored. Findings from this study provided important contributions for the regional leagues to examine the sustainability of MJH.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Get verbal consent

- 1) Which league offices do you feel confident speaking to their values, structure and systems?
 - a. If you feel confident speaking to multiple leagues while answering a question, please be specific about which league you are speaking about.
 - b. If, for any question, you do not feel confident speaking to a specific league, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Values:

- 2) Speaking from experience, which would you consider to be the most impactful services provided by {league office}? (Repeat for each league office, if appropriate)
 - a. Can you explain why?
 - b. Who do you consider to be the most significant stakeholders of the league offices?
 - i. What significance do these stakeholders have on the league offices operations?
- 3) In what way is the effectiveness of the {league office} measured?
 - c. Can you provide an example?
 - d. What has been done if they haven't been measured as effective? What steps were taken to increase the effectiveness?
- 4) What roles are exhibited in the league office? (Principle of organizing)
 - e. Are the league office reliant on specific groups to help aide operations? To what extent?
 - i. Staff
 - ii. Team owners?
 - iii. Governors/Board
 1. Can you share an example with me when these league office were reliant on a specific group for help?
 - iv. Other roles apart of how the league office is organized?
- 5) In each league office, what do you believe to be the hierarchy of authority?
 - f. Can you give an example of this?
 - g. Why do you believe this to be the hierarchy of authority?
- 6) Where do main sources of league office revenues come from?
 - h. How are these sources of revenue secured?
 - i. What other sources of financial support are provided?

Structure:

- 7) In the league office, are there specific departments that focus on different aspects of the organization?
 - j. Can you tell me what these different aspects are?
 - k. Do you think one department is more important than another? Why?
 - l. Are they specific to certain time-specific projects or are they ongoing tasks?
- 8) What do you believe to be the rules and regulations/policies in the league office?

- m. Rules and regulations/policies, in this instance could be codes of conduct, employee conduct, substance abuse, and the like.
 - n. Other policies could be sport specific, rather than business-specific
 - o. Would you consider them to be formal or informal policies?
 - i. Are they written policies or are they understandings?
 - p. Do you believe the league offices follow them well? Why or why not?
- 9) Drawing back to the hierarchy of the positions within the organization, at what level do you believe decisions are made? Why?
- q. How do you believe decisions are made?

System:

- 10) How important do you believe decision making to be?
- 11) Decision making, in organizations, can influence all aspects of its operations. How do you believe sport-specific decisions impact the business-specific operations, and vice versa?
- r. Can you give me an example of this?
 - s. Why do you believe this?
- 12) Is there a specific process put in place to make a decision?
- t. If so, what is it?
 - u. If not, how are decisions made?
- 13) Coherence in all decision making is key when determining what the goals of an organization are. How do you think the decision makers control this aspect of the league offices when deciding a different direction, the league office should be heading in?
- i. Why do you think this?
 - ii. Do you believe the league offices consider the key stakeholders in their decisions?
 - 1. What makes you believe this?

Do you have any additional comments you would like to make?

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

<insert date>

Title of Study: Analyzing the Organizational Design of Major Junior Hockey Leagues in Canada

Principal Investigator: Dr. Julie Stevens, Associate Professor, Department of Sport Management, Brock University

Student Principal Investigator: Jordyn Moussa, Graduate Student, Department of Sport Management, Brock University

I, Dr. Julie Stevens, Associate Professor, from the Department of Sport Management, Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled Analyzing the Organizational Design of Major Junior Hockey Leagues in Canada.

The purpose of this research project is to examine how the historical change has impacted the organizational design of major junior hockey leagues in Canada. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in individual interviews.

The expected duration is approximately an hour of your time.

This research will provide a clear understanding of how the organizational design of the CHL, OHL, WHL, and QMJHL league offices are designed.

This study is a part of a Master's thesis, conducted by Jordyn Moussa, Graduate Student, Department of Sport Management, Brock University.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca) Please refer to Brock University Research Ethics Board (REB) file number #_____

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

Thank you,

[Insert Principal Investigator's Signature]

Jordyn Moussa
Graduate Student
613-850-6484
jmoussa@brocku.ca

Dr. Julie Stevens
Associate Professor
905-688-5550
jstevens@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board <insert ethics file number>.

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Date: <insert>

Project Title: **An Analysis of the Organizational Design of Major Junior Hockey League Offices in Canada**

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Julie Stevens
 Department of Sport Management
 Brock University
 jstevens@brocku.ca

Faculty Supervisor Dr. Julie Stevens
 Moussa
 Department of Sport Management
 Brock University
 (905) 688-5550 Ext. jstevens@brocku.ca

Student Principal Investigator (SPI) Jordyn
 Department of Sport Management
 Brock University
 (613) 850-6484 , jm16xp@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this case study is to examine how Canadian major junior hockey league offices are currently designed.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to be available for interviews. Participation will take approximately an hour of your time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation include understanding how the organizational designs of major junior hockey league offices in Canada, and to provide insight as to why each organization is designed the way they are. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Shortly after the interview has been complete, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

Data collected during this study will be stored in password protected folders on my laptop, as well as backed up on an external hard drive prior to, and during the analysis process. Data will be kept until this thesis is completed, after which time the files will be permanently deleted from my laptop and external hard drive.

Access to this data will be restricted to myself, as well as Dr. Julie Stevens.

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.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available through communications with myself.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Jordyn Moussa or Dr. Julie Stevens using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University <insert file #>. 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 the Information-Consent Letter. 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: _____

**Appendix D: A Summary of Canadian Hockey League Teams for the
2019-2020 season**

Western Hockey League Teams:	Ontario Hockey League Teams:	Quebec Major Junior Hockey League Teams:
Brandon Wheat Kings	Barrie Colts	Acadie-Bathurst Titans
Calgary Hitmen	Erie Otters*	Baie-Comeau Drakkar
Edmonton Oil Kings	Flint Firebirds*	Blainville-Boisbriand Armada
Everett Silvertips*	Guelph Storm	Cape Breton Screaming Eagles
Kamloops Blazers	Hamilton Bulldogs	Charlottetown Islanders
Kelowna Rockets	Kingston Frontenacs	Chicoutimi Saugueeneens
Kootenay Ice	Kitchener Rangers	Drummondville Voltigeurs
Lethbridge Hurricanes	London Knights	Gatineau Olympiques
Medicine Hat Tigers	Mississauga Steelheads	Halifax Mooseheads
Moose Jaw Warriors	Niagara IceDogs	Moncton Wildcats
Portland Winterhawks*	North Bay Battalion	Quebec Remparts
Prince Albert Raiders	Oshawa Generals	Rimouski Oceanique
Prince George Cougars	Ottawa 67s	Rouyn-Noranda Huskies
Red Deer Rebels	Owen Sound Attack	Saint-John Sea Dogs
Regina Pats	Peterborough Petes	Shawinigan Cataractes
Saskatoon Blades	Saginaw Spirit*	Sherbrooke Pheonix
Seattle Thunderbirds*	Sarnia Sting	Val d'Or Foreurs
Spokane Chiefs*	Sault Ste Marie Greyhounds	Victoriaville Tigres
Swift Current Broncos	Sudbury Wolves	
Tri-City Americans*	Windsor Spitfires	
Vancouver Giants		
Victoria Royals		

* Indicates team based in the United States